

SEPARATED PARENTS POLICY



Next Review:

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Contents

Page

1. Introduction and school ethos
2. Parent Responsibility
3. Court Orders
4. School Communications
5. Collecting a Child from School

1
1
2
2
3

1. Introduction and school ethos

At Laurence Jackson School we aim to promote the best interest of the child, working in partnership with all parents where possible. This policy is an attempt to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the school and its staff.

2. Parent Responsibility

In order to help us look after children whilst they are in our care, Laurence Jackson School staff are required during the admission process to ask parents to provide certain information such as name of both parents, address, contact details etc. They are also required to ask who has Parental Responsibility for the child. This is important information because it allows the school to be sure who has the right to make decisions about a child's education and medical treatment. However, this is a very specific legal term and many parents may be unaware of how it is applied.

- All mothers automatically have Parental Responsibility
- If a child's parents were married at the time of the birth, both parents automatically have Parental Responsibility
- For children born from 1 December 2003 where the father's name is on the birth certificate, the father and mother will both have Parental Responsibility
- In all other cases, fathers are required to officially obtain Parental Responsibility
- Parental Responsibility cannot be lost, except by legal adoption, although it does not guarantee contact

Parents as defined above are entitled to share in the decisions that are made about their child and to be treated equally by schools. In particular, these entitlements include:

- Appeal against admission decisions
- Ofsted and school based questionnaires
- Participation in any exclusion procedure
- Attendance at parents' meetings/school events
- Access to school records and copies of school reports, newsletters, invitations to school events, school photographs relating to their child and information about school trips

This entitlement cannot be restricted without a specific court order. The school does not have the power to act simply on the request of one parent to restrict another.

The school will not seek to make judgements about individual circumstances but will treat both parents equally unless there is a specific ruling in existence. Staff will never pass judgement on either parent to the child.

We will maintain our open-door policy with all parents, and the class teacher, Year leader, Student Manager and/or Assistant Headteacher (Inclusion) will be available by appointment to discuss any issues. The school is under no obligation to inform the resident parent of the absent parent contacting the school. Any such information will be given at the discretion of the Headteacher.

3. Court Orders

Upon receipt of any court order restricting access to a parent, the school retains the right to consult the Local Authority before taking immediate action. The school is only obliged to comply with an order if it is properly notified and has received a copy for its files, and only to the extent that it relates to the school. In the event that the school is not informed of the existence of such an order, neither parent will have rights superior to the other. Only a Court Order stating the arrangements is deemed to be valid; a letter from a solicitor is not sufficient.

4 School Communications

The school recognises that, whilst the parents of some students may be divorced or separated, both have a right to be informed of, and involved in, their child's education. However, we expect that parents, whatever the nature of their separation, will do all they can to communicate with each other and share information from and for the school, for the benefit of the child. It is assumed that the parent with whom the child principally resides will keep the other parent informed.

We do, however, recognise that communication between parents is not always possible,. If an estranged parent wishes to receive information from the school such as progress reports or attending parent/teacher meetings they should contact the school in writing with a specific request for separate communication as it is assumed that the parent with whom the child principally resides will keep the other parent informed.

We would not expect to send emergency text messages to absent parents, which give information on cancelled activities and reminders.

It is the responsibility of the parents to inform Laurence Jackson School when there is a change in family circumstances. The school needs to be kept up to date with contact details, arrangements for collecting children and emergencies.

We encourage parents to tell us at an early stage if there is a change in the family circumstances. Whenever possible, staff will be informed of such changes so that suitable support can be offered to students. We will, however, recognise the sensitivity of some situations and maintain the level of confidentiality requested by parents as far as possible.

Newsletters and general school updates are available to all parents via the school's website and are also distributed via our students. These updates will contain all the main events within school including; productions, sports days, parents' evenings etc. When letters are sent to individual classes/students regarding subject specific trips/events we would expect parents to communicate these messages to each other as and when appropriate.

We would not expect to send general text messages, e-mails and letters to both parents unless specifically asked to do so.

We hold a yearly parents' evening for your child in KS3 and a twice-yearly parents' evening at Key Stage 4. These dates are published on the school calendar which is available on the school website. Appointments are made by the student directly with each subject teacher or where necessary parents can contact the Year Leader/ Student Welfare Manager if they require assistance with making appointments. We would expect parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements. Whilst Laurence Jackson School will consider separate appointments for parents at these events by prior agreement this will be subject to

availability, or when a court order is in place restricting contact between both parents. The school has no obligation to do so.

We expect that parent should liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the ordering of school photographs, tickets for performances, enrichment activities and other instances.

A parent, as defined in this policy, has the right to receive progress reports and review the student records of their children. If the parents are separated or divorced, progress reports will be sent to the separated parent at the address held in the school's records. This also includes information relating to attendance and exclusions, unless outside agency advice has been sought and it is felt that it would be detrimental to the child to communicate this information to the parent the child no longer resides with.

Should an un-named parent seek information or access to his/her child, the school will always inform the main carer of this to check Parental Responsibility and ensure no court order is in place. For the avoidance of doubt, we will seek written confirmation from the main carer. Proof of identity of the non-resident parent will always be required in these cases.

Disagreements between parents must be resolved between the parents and cannot be resolved by the school or local authority.

5 Collecting a Child from School

The school will release children to parents in accordance with arrangements notified to the school. If one parent seeks to remove the child from school in contravention of the usual arrangements and the parent to whom the child would normally be released has not notified the school of any change to the following steps will be followed:

- Where a separated parent, who has Parental Responsibility and no court order in place, wishes to take the child during or at the end of the school day, the resident parent will be contacted in order to ensure that they are in agreement with the arrangement. If the parent to whom the child would normally be released agrees, the child may be released and the records will reflect that the permission is granted orally. If the parent opposes the other parent wanting to take the child, the school will advise that without a court order we cannot prevent them from doing so.
- In the event that the parent to whom the child would normally be released to cannot be reached, the staff member/ Year Leader dealing with the issue will make a decision based upon the relevant information available to him/her.
- During any discussion or communication with parents, the child will be supervised by an appropriate member of school staff in a separate room.
- In extreme circumstances if there is a belief that a possible abduction of the child may occur or if the parent is disruptive, the police will be notified immediately.