



# St. William of York Catholic Primary School

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*The purpose of St William of York Primary School is to educate children in an atmosphere of Christian love, within the Catholic tradition.*

*We respect and rejoice in the uniqueness of each child, and aim to make learning a happy and positive experience for everyone in our community.*

## SEPARATED PARENTS POLICY

### Introduction

Research and experience have shown that it can be a very difficult time for all those involved when parents separate and that these personal family problems can have an impact on the schools attended by the children.

This policy is an attempt to minimise any impact and to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the school and its staff.

At St. William of York Catholic Primary School, our sole wish is to promote the best interests of the child, working in partnership with all parents unless otherwise directed by a court order.

The school's management of separated parents is subject to guidance, and we have to comply with this <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dealing-with-issues-relating-to-parental-responsibility/understanding-and-dealing-with-issues-relating-to-parental-responsibility>

### Definition of Parent

The definition of a parent for school purposes is much wider than for any other situation. The Education Act 1996 defines a parent as:

- All natural parents, including those that are not married;
- Any person who has parental responsibility but is not a natural parent e.g. a legally appointed guardian or the Local Authority as named in the care order;
- Any person who has care of a child i.e. a person with whom the child resides and who looks after the child irrespective of the relationship.

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 & school based questionnaires;
- Participate in any exclusion procedure;
- Attend parent meetings/school events;
- Have access to school records and receive copies of school reports, newsletters, invitations to school events, school photographs relating to their child and information about school trips.

## Parental Responsibility

The information provided to the school when the child was enrolled detailing parents with parental responsibility for the child will be presumed to be correct unless a court order or original birth certificate proving otherwise is provided to the school. Similarly, the information provided on the address(es) where the child resides will be presumed to be correct unless a court order proving otherwise is provided to the school.

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. The school also has no responsibility for enforcing any court order. 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.

Parents are encouraged to resolve contact issues without involving the school directly. The interests of the child will always be paramount when deciding whether to accommodate a request from an estranged parent.

Change in parent responsibility:

- It is the responsibility of the parents to inform school when there is a change in family circumstances. The school needs to be kept up to date with all contact details and arrangements for collecting children.
- We encourage parents to tell us at an early stage if there is a change in family circumstances. Whenever possible, staff will be informed of such changes so that suitable support can be offered. We will, however, recognise the sensitivity of some situations and maintain the level of confidentiality requested by parents as far as possible
- Newsletters & general school updates can be sent to all parents via email. It is the responsibility of the parent to request that newsletters etc are sent out via email. These updates will contain all the main events within school, including productions, sports' days, parents' evenings, class trips, etc. Occasionally letters are sent to individual classes, and these would be sent out to both parents.
- Both parents are welcome to attend a parents' evening appointment. We would expect parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements. However, the school will arrange separate appointments if tensions are detrimental to a conducive discussion, or if there is a court order in place restricting parents attending the same appointment.
- We expect that parents should liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the ordering of school photographs; tickets for performances and other instances.

## School reports

Any parent has the right to receive school reports and review pupil records of their children. School reports are sent home with each child with the expectation that the report will be shared with both parents.

The school will send copies of the school report to a parent with whom the child does not reside only if that parent requests a separate copy.

Disagreements between parents must be resolved between the parents and cannot be resolved by the school or local authority. In the event that the parents are unable to agree with one another on decisions regarding their child's education, including but not limited to placement, participation in extracurricular activities, and consent to evaluation and services, the school will arrange a meeting with all parents (preferably together or separately if required) to attempt to assist the parents to resolve the situation and if it cannot be resolved, the school will advise the parents to seek legal advice and a court order.

The school will release children to parents in accordance with arrangements notified to the school. If there is no court order in place, both parents with parental responsibility will have the legal right to collect their child from school. Parents are asked to inform the school of the usual arrangements and when there are any changes, temporary or otherwise. In the case of parental conflict, and one parent seeks to collect the child from school in contravention of the usual arrangements, and the parent to whom the child would normally be released has not consented the following steps will be followed:-

- The Head Teacher or designated deputy will meet with the parent seeking to collect the child and, in his/her presence, telephone the parent to whom the child would normally be released and explain the request.
- 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 was granted verbally.
- In the event that the parent to whom the child would normally be released to cannot be reached, the Head Teacher or staff member dealing with the issue may make a decision based upon all relevant information available to him/her.
- The Head Teacher or staff member may have to refuse permission if the main carer cannot be reached and the situation may cause the child upset.
- 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 should be notified immediately.

All parents can have equal access to all school information or request in writing additional copies of communications which are not available on the school website (all parents are recommended to regularly use the school's website – the website contains back dated newsletters and has a range of information and links).

We will maintain our open door policy with all parents, and the class teacher and/or Head Teacher will be available by appointment to discuss any issues.

