Old Dalby Church of England Primary School

Separated Parents Policy

Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good.
Hebrews 10:24

Approved by:	Governing Body	**Date:**	September 2024
Next review due by:	September 2026		

Kind hearts. Open Minds. Courageous Spirits
Together, we will explore life in all its fullness.

Our Vision

Kind hearts. Open minds. Courageous spirits.
Together, we will explore life in all its fullness.

This a promise that we, as a whole school, will educate children to be accepting, thoughtful and courageous. Our pupils will show kindness and love to everyone around them, our pupils will understand, accept and celebrate diversity, they will recognise injustices and speak up when they see them.

This will be achieved through a curriculum based on a skills progression of our eight Christian values. We will ensure that the pupils build the skills to live our values. Our curriculum will provide knowledge of historical and current events to provide our children with context and understanding of the values. Children will learn to challenge what they see as an injustice and seek to right this. They will be ambitious, have the courage of their convictions and be empathetic to others. Through working closely with the local community and church, we will provide a warm, nurturing environment to foster ambition, curiosity, spirituality and love.

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Old Dalby C of E Primary School recognises that children from families who have separated, or are under going separation, may experience difficult or traumatic changes during their time at school. With this in mind, we will make every effort to work in partnership with parents to promote the welfare of all the children.

This policy has been created to demonstrate how our vision can help minimise the impact of separation on learning and wellbeing, and to clarify for all parties what is expected from separated parents and what they can expect from the school.

Definitions:
Schools have a legal duty to work in partnership with families and to involve all those with parental responsibility in their child's education. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines a "parent" as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child)

Parents, as defined above, must be treated equally, unless there is a court order limiting an individual's exercise of parental responsibility. 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.

Individuals who have parental responsibilities, or care for a child, have the same rights as natural parents. This includes the right to:

- Receive information eg pupil reports, school events etc

- Participate in activities eg elections for parent governors
- Give consent eg for school trips
- Be involved in meetings concerning the child eg participate in SEND meetings, admissions appeals

The School's responsibilities:

- To ensure that the school has arrangements in place to ask parents or guardians for the names and addresses of all parents when they register a pupil
- To ensure that names and addresses of all parents, where known, are included in the admission register and also in pupil records, and are available to the pupil's teachers
- To ensure that names and addresses of all parents are forwarded to any school to which the pupil moves
- To ensure that the details of court orders are noted in the pupil's record
- To ensure that, where the address of a non-resident parent is unknown, the headteacher will tell the resident parent that the non-resident parent is entitled to be involved in their child's education and request that information is passed to them
- To ensure that, where there is a court order in place, the school will not release the child to any individuals named in the court order as persons who do not have parental responsibility
- School will always reserve the right to refuse entry or enter into communication with parents who are abusive and use inappropriate language or aggressive behaviour towards any member of staff
- School will send routine school information, general letters and newsletters to all parents listed as "Primary Guardians" on Arbor.

Parents' responsibilities:

Parents may be asked to show school the child's birth certificate to confirm who has parental responsibility.

- It is the responsibility of parents to inform school when there is a change in the family's circumstances. The school needs to be kept up to date with contact details, arrangements for collecting children and emergencies. We do recognise the sensitivity of these situations and will maintain confidentiality as far as possible. The school will also not make any judgements about individual circumstances, both parents will be treated equally.
- Parents are responsible for making sure that the school has a copy of any up to date court orders.
- Parents with joint custody should keep school informed, in writing, of any disputes they have with each other regarding the collection of children.
- If a leave of absence is requested, both parents should sign the request. If it is only signed by one parent, school will contact the other parent to seek confirmation that they are aware.
- Children's welfare and safety are paramount, where there are issues over access to children, the parent with whom the child resides should contact the school immediately. In the case of equal custody, both parents are expected to keep school informed of issues.
- Parents are expected to liaise with each other and communicate directly with each other in matters such as ordering school photographs, tickets for performances and other such instances.
- The school's policy is to offer one parent's evening appointment per child, where both parents are welcome. Separated parents may request separate appointments and the school will do their best to accommodate this. Parents are expected to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements.
- The parent with whom the child lives is responsible for making all payments to the school for dinners, education visits and residential trips. The school will not pursue the non-resident

parent for payments, the main carer is expected to collect any money from the non-resident parent. In the case of equal custody, school will pursue both parents for payment.

The information provided to school when the pupil is enrolled, detailing whether both parents have parental responsibility, will be presumed to be correct unless a court order or original birth certificate proving otherwise is provided to school.

Progress reports and pupil records
Any parent has the right to receive progress reports and review pupil records of their child. In the case of separated or divorced parents, end of year reports will be sent to the parent with whom the child resides. An electronic copy will be emailed to the other parent upon receipt of a written request from them. In the case of joint custody/residence order then end of year reports will be printed and given to both parents.

Where information is requested by one parent for medical or SEND purposes, both parents will receive a copy of information sent.

Collecting a child from school
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, 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 they are in agreement with the arrangement. If the person to whom the child would normally be released agrees, the child may be released and the records will reflect that verbal permission was granted. If the parent opposes the other parent wanting them to take the child, then 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 cannot be reached, the Headteacher or staff member dealing with the issue will make a decision based upon all relevant information available to them.
- During any discussion or communication with parents, the child will be supervised by an appropriate member of staff in a separate room.
- In extreme circumstances, where 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.
- If a parent wishes to collect their child during or at the end of the day and is in breach of any court order, the child will not be released and the police will be contacted immediately.

Consent
Where parental consent is required for sharing images, off-site visits or residential trips, the school will seek consent from the resident parent. A non-resident parent can request to be asked for consent in all circumstances.
In the case of equal/joint custody, the school expects the parents to communicate with each other and reach an agreement. In situations where one parent gives consent and the other withholds it, the school will assume that parental consent has not been given.

Student information
Parents are responsible for resolving potential conflicts involving student details they have access to via Arbor eg legal name, dietary requirements, consents.

In the case of disagreement over dietary requirements or medical conditions, the Headteacher will use their discretion and err on the side of caution where necessary.

In the event of a name change, there must be consent from both parents after divorce or separation for registering a name change of a pupil. The school will ensue that the change in name is supported by written evidence. A separated parent who has parental responsibility, but no longer lives with the child, may refuse to consent to changing the child's surname. In such a case, the parent wishing to change the child's name would need to apply to the courts for permission to do so.

In all cases, any decision made by the school will always be made with the child's safety and best interests at the heart.

Disputes and disagreements
Disagreements between parents must be resolved between the parents and cannot be resolved by the school.

In the event that parents are unable to agree with one another on a decision regarding their child's educational programme, including but not limited to placement and participation in extracurricular activities, the school will assist by facilitating a meeting with all parents if it will assist in resolving the situation and is in the best interests of the child.

Where, in the opinion of the school, the issue regarding parental consent is likely to have a long term and significant impact in the child, the school may require the consent of all those with parental responsibility for the child who are known to school. Circumstances where joint consent is required includes the decision to withdraw a child from sex education or religious education within the school curriculum.

The school will maintain an open door policy with both parents and will be available to discuss any issues.