



# **Jacksdale Primary School & Nursery**

# **Separated Parents Policy**

Reviewed May 2026

Next review due: May 2028

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## **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure that pupils with separated/divorced parents are supported effectively and that all parties involved understand their rights, responsibilities and processes related to the child's education.
  - Provide a framework for how the school will work with separated/divorced parents to ensure the best interests of the child are met.
  - Clarify the school's position on communication, information sharing, and decision making regarding pupils with separated/divorced parents.
- Clarify the school's neutral position in parental disputes and ensure staff are not placed in situations where they may be perceived as supporting or advocating for one parent over another.
  - Ensure that all individuals who hold Parental Responsibility (PR) are treated fairly, equally and in accordance with current legislation and safeguarding guidance.

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## **Legislation and Guidance**

This policy takes into account the following legislation and guidance:

- Children Act 1989
  - Education Act 1996
  - Data Protection Act 2018
  - GDPR Regulations 2018
  - DfE Guidance on Parental Responsibility (2018)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
  - Keeping Children Safe in Education

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## **Parental Responsibility**

Parental Responsibility (PR) refers to the legal rights, duties, powers and responsibilities a parent has for a child.

Mothers automatically hold PR. Fathers hold PR if they were married to the mother at the time of birth or are named on the child's birth certificate in accordance with relevant legislation. Other individuals may obtain PR through legal agreements or court orders.

The school may request evidence of Parental Responsibility where required.

All individuals with PR are entitled to information regarding their child's education unless a court order limits this right.

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## **The School's Neutral Position**

The school will remain professionally neutral in all matters relating to parental separation or dispute.

The school will not act as mediator, advocate, investigator or decision-maker between parents where both individuals hold PR.

Staff will avoid becoming involved in disputes through personal opinion, informal commentary, subjective interpretation or written statements which could later be used to support one parent's perspective over another.

Where disagreement exists between parents, the school will remain child-focused and may seek advice from the Local Authority, safeguarding professionals or legal services where appropriate.

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## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **School Leadership Team**

- Ensure this policy is implemented consistently across the school
  - Provide training and support for staff to handle sensitive situations effectively
  - Monitor the effectiveness of the policy and make updates as needed
  - Remain neutral to both parents
- Establish reasonable and proportionate communication boundaries where parental communication becomes excessive, repetitive or conflict-focused.
  - Ensure that safeguarding, attendance and educational decisions are made in the best interests of the child.
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### **Teaching and Support Staff**

- Familiarise themselves with this policy and follow the procedures outlined
  - Communicate sensitively with both parents, where appropriate
  - Escalate any concerns or issues to the designated lead
- Maintain factual, concise and professional records.
  - Avoid providing subjective opinions or becoming involved in parental disputes.
  - Refer repeated or complex communication requests to senior leaders.
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### **Parents/Carers**

- Provide the school with up-to-date contact information and living arrangements
  - Communicate respectfully with the school and each other regarding educational matters
  - Inform any other parent who holds PR (Parental Responsibility) of all information relating to child's health, education or housing – at the earliest possible time.
  - Work collaboratively with the school to support the child's wellbeing and progress
  - Refrain from attempting to manipulate school into taking a non-neutral stance or decision making based on one parent's preference
- Ensure that all adults with PR are informed regarding significant educational decisions affecting the child.
  - Avoid placing staff in the middle of parental disagreements or requesting staff to support one parent's interpretation of events.
  - Communicate respectfully and proportionately with school staff.
  - Understand that information shared with the school may also be shared with another individual who holds PR where lawful and appropriate.
  - Ensure emergency contact information and collection arrangements remain accurate and updated.
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## **Pupils**

- Understand that the school will communicate with both parents, where appropriate
  - Seek support from staff if they are struggling with family separation
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## **Procedures**

### **Identifying Pupils with Separated/Divorced Parents**

- During the admissions process, parents/carers will be asked to provide details of living arrangements and contact information for both parents.
  - This information will be recorded on the pupil's file and updated as necessary.
  - The school will be proactive in identifying any changes to family circumstances that may impact a pupil.
- Admission forms will request details for all individuals who hold PR.
  - The school may request legal documentation where there is uncertainty regarding PR, living arrangements or court orders.
  - Admission to the school does not remove the rights of another individual who also holds PR.
  - Where only one parent completes admission documentation, the school may request confirmation that all individuals with PR are aware of the school placement.
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### **Communication and Information Sharing**

- The school will communicate with both parents, regardless of living arrangements, unless there is a court order in place that prevents this.
  - Both parents will receive copies of school reports, newsletters, and other relevant information unless otherwise specified.
  - Sensitive information will only be shared with those who have parental responsibility or a legitimate need to know.
  - Parents will be encouraged to communicate respectfully and work together regarding educational matters.
- Information shared with the school by one parent who holds PR may also be shared with another individual who holds PR where lawful and appropriate i.e. if a parent requests an assessment of the child, then school is within its rights to inform the other parent that this request has been made and whether or not the assessment will go ahead. Both parents will be asked to contribute and updated with regards to the assessments.
  - Parents should not assume that information shared with the school will remain confidential from another individual who also holds PR unless there is a court order, safeguarding concern or lawful restriction preventing this.
  - If one parent requests specific information regarding a child, the school may share the same information with the other parent who holds PR.
  - Routine day-to-day matters such as minor playground incidents, emotional upset or low-level first aid may initially be communicated to the parent collecting or residing with the child.
  - The school is not ordinarily required to duplicate all low-level verbal communications to both parents unless there is a safeguarding concern, significant incident or agreed arrangement in place.
  - The school expects parents to appropriately share relevant information with one another where both individuals hold PR.
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## **Professional Recording and Written Communication**

Staff will maintain factual, concise and professional records relating to children and families.

The school is not obliged to retrospectively recreate verbal conversations in writing where no formal record was required at the time.

Requests for extensive written summaries, repeated personalised accounts or detailed commentary relating to low-level incidents / situations / conversations may be declined where:

- the information has already been appropriately shared with at least one parent verbally;
- the request is disproportionate;
- the request risks drawing staff into parental conflict;
- or the request places unreasonable demands upon school staff or operational capacity.

School records will remain child-focused and factual and will not include speculative, emotive or opinion-based statements regarding parents or family disputes.

Where necessary, the school may provide standardised summaries rather than ongoing personalised written communication.

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## **Safeguarding and Welfare Recording**

The school records safeguarding concerns in line with statutory safeguarding guidance and the school safeguarding policy.

Not all low-level incidents, emotional presentations, minor first aid events, playground disagreements or ordinary behavioural matters automatically meet the threshold for safeguarding and / or welfare recording. Not all school communications are recorded in writing – i.e. the presentation of a child on a day-to-day basis unless it is deemed to represent a safeguarding concern. Instances of dysregulation may not always be recorded as they may be representative of a current situation which is known by school staff and at least one parent.

School leaders retain professional discretion regarding:

- whether information is recorded as safeguarding;
- whether information is required to be recorded as pastoral or welfare information (in the instances where parents dispute any known reason for a child's presentation);
- and whether information requires referral to external agencies.

Where patterns of concern emerge, previously low-level concerns may contribute to wider safeguarding or welfare assessments. This is typically over a sustained period of time and where parents dispute any concern about a child's presentation being linked to a known event or situation.

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## **Decision Making**

- The school will follow the principle of 'no order' unless a court order is in place that specifies otherwise.
- In situations where disagreement exists between parents who both hold PR, the school will seek to remain neutral and may require evidence that all individuals with PR have been informed before progressing significant decisions.
- Significant educational decisions may include:
  - school admissions;
  - school transfers or removal from roll;

- requests for elective home education;
  - flexible or reduced timetables;
  - requests relating to SEND pathways or external assessments;
  - referrals for external agency involvement;
  - significant pastoral or welfare interventions;
  - and term-time holiday requests.
  - The school may defer significant decisions until:
    - agreement is reached between individuals with PR;
    - appropriate legal clarification is provided;
    - or advice is obtained from the Local Authority or safeguarding professionals.
      - Pupils will not be put in a position of having to choose between parents or share sensitive information.
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### **Collection, Removal from School and Holidays**

The school will follow all court orders and safeguarding plans that have been formally shared with the school.

In the absence of a court order restricting contact or collection, both parents with PR may generally collect their child from school.

Where disputes arise, the school will prioritise:

- the immediate safety and wellbeing of the child;
- avoidance of conflict on school premises;
- and safeguarding risk assessment.

The school may temporarily delay collection while clarification is sought if staff believe there is an immediate safeguarding risk or significant conflict.

Parents are expected to inform one another regarding:

- holidays during term time;
  - changes to living arrangements;
  - school transfers;
  - and significant changes to collection arrangements.
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### **Emergency Contacts and Authorised Adults**

Parents are responsible for ensuring that emergency contact information remains accurate and up to date.

Each parent who holds PR may nominate appropriate adults to support with the collection or care of their child during the periods of time the child is in their care.

This may include family members, childminders, close family friends or new partners.

The school will not routinely require both parents who hold PR to agree on every named emergency contact or collection adult where those arrangements relate to the individual parent's own childcare arrangements and parenting time.

However, where the school is made aware of safeguarding concerns, legal restrictions, court orders or significant dispute relating to a nominated adult, the school may:

- request additional clarification or documentation;
- seek advice from safeguarding professionals or the Local Authority;
- temporarily refuse collection by a nominated adult where there is believed to be an immediate safeguarding risk;
- or require parents to seek legal clarification where disagreement cannot reasonably be resolved.

The school will not become involved in determining the suitability of adults purely on the basis of parental disagreement where no safeguarding or legal concerns are identified.

Where one parent objects to a nominated adult but no court order, safeguarding concern or professional advice restricts contact, the school may continue to permit collection arrangements authorised by the parent exercising care at that time.

The school reserves the right to require that all collection arrangements are communicated clearly in writing where parental conflict is ongoing or where repeated disputes arise.

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### **Emotional and Academic Support**

- The school will provide a supportive and non-judgemental environment for pupils dealing with family separation.
- Additional pastoral support, counselling, or academic interventions will be offered as needed.
- Staff will be trained to handle sensitive situations with empathy and discretion.

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### **Expectations Regarding Communication with Staff**

The school expects all communication from parents to remain respectful, proportionate and child-focused.

Staff should not be expected to:

- provide ongoing mediation between parents;
  - repeatedly reproduce written summaries of verbal conversations; should a parent require evidence of interactions with staff, they may choose to keep a personal log, though electronic recordings are not permitted and staff are not required to validate through written agreement as conversations and specific phrases may be open to interpretation when taken out of context.
  - engage in prolonged correspondence relating to parental disputes;
- \* Log written records to demonstrate communication from parent or another
- or provide personal opinions regarding either parent.

Where communication becomes excessive, repetitive or conflict-focused, school leaders may:

- limit communication to formal channels;
- direct communication through senior leaders;
- implement reasonable communication boundaries;
- or seek advice from the Local Authority or relevant professionals.

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### **Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body to ensure it remains fit for purpose. Any updates to relevant legislation or guidance will be incorporated as necessary.

The school reserves the right to seek legal, safeguarding or Local Authority advice where parental conflict impacts upon the safety, wellbeing or education of a child or the operational functioning of the school.