Separated Parents Policy
2025-2027

Approved by:	Nicky Murrell	**Date:**	November 2025
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INTRODUCTION

At Holywell Primary School, we aim to promote the best interests 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.

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

As a school that respects the rights of the children and adults in our school family, community and beyond, we aim for each school policy to adhere to articles from ***UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child***.

In this policy, we are working towards the following articles:

- **Article 3 -** The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect them
- **Article 5 -** We respect the rights and responsibilities of parents and carers to direct and guide their children as they grow up
- **Article 7 -** Every child has the right to be cared for by their parents
- **Article 9 -** Children should not be separated from their parents unless it is in their best interests
- **Article 10 -** Every child has the right to visit both their parents if they live apart
- **Article 18 -** Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child
- **Articles 19, 21, 36, 37 and 39 -** Every child has the right to be kept safe

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

In order to help us to look after children whilst they are in our care, Holywell staff are required at the admissions interview 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 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.

- 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 & school based questionnaires;
- Participation in any exclusion procedure;
- Attendance at parent 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 and/or Head Teacher 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 Head Teacher.

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 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.

SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

The school recognises, while the parents of some pupils may be divorced or separated, both have a right to be informed of, and involved in, their child's education. However, we expect parents, whatever the nature of their separation, to do all they can to

communicate with each other and share information from and for the school, for the benefit of their child.

We do however, recognise 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.

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

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.

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 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 was granted orally. If the parent opposes the other parent wanting to take the child then the school will advise without a court order we cannot prevent them from doing so.
- In the event the parent to whom the child would normally be released to cannot be reached, the Head Teacher or staff member dealing with the issue will make a decision based upon all 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 a possible abduction of the child may occur or if there is reason to believe the child is in immediate danger of harm or if the parent is disruptive, the police should be notified immediately.

The following document has been taken into account when writing this policy:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/489901/Parental_Responsibility_Advice_for_School_January_2016.pdf