ECCLESTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

incorporating

Beechbuds Pre-School

Separated Parents Policy

Inspiring independent learners to thrive in a changing world

Separated Parents Policy

Definition of Parent

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines '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 (having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law)

Parental Responsibility

Having parental responsibility means assuming all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent of a child has by law. People other than a child's natural parents can acquire parental responsibility through:

- Being granted a residence order
- Being appointed a guardian
- Being named in an emergency protection order (although parental responsibility in such a case is limited to taking reasonable steps to safeguard or promote the child's welfare)
- Adopting a child
- (In the case of step-parents) in agreement with the child's mother (and other parent if that person also has parental responsibility for the child) or as the result of a court order

Where a child's parents are not married to each other, the child's father can gain parental responsibility by:

- Registering the child's birth jointly with the mother
- Through a 'parental responsibility agreement' between him and the child's mother
- As the result of a court order

In addition, a local authority can acquire parental responsibility if it is named in the care order for a child.

Court Orders and Parental Responsibility

- Parents or guardians should give the names and addresses of both parents with parental responsibility when they register their child
- Ensure the information is entered on the school record system
- Ensure that names and addresses of parents with parental responsibility are forwarded to any school to which the pupil moves
- Ensure that details of court orders are noted in a pupil's record

Parental Responsibility

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 contact details, arrangements for collecting children and emergencies
- 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, access to the App information and general school updates **can** be sent to all parents upon request **but for day-to-day purposes, the school's main contact is likely to be a parent with whom the child lives on school days**. These updates will contain all the main events within school, including productions, sports days, parent's evenings, class trips, etc. Occasionally letters are sent to individual classes. We would expect parents to communicate these messages to one another as and when appropriate. **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.**
- In the event that the parent to whom the child would normally be released to cannot be reached, the Headteacher or staff member dealing with the issue may make a decision based upon all relevant information available to him/her of next steps.
- The Headteacher or staff member may have to refuse permission for collection if consent cannot be obtained
- 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

Review of Separated Parents Policy
Reviewed: November 2026
Next Review Date: November 2027