



Abberley Parochial V.C. Primary School

Rooted and Ground in love

Separated parents policy

Date reviewed: May 2021

Next review: December 2023

Our school vision is based on Paul's writings to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 3:17-19

That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Based on this vision, we will seek to act in accordance with the following principles:

1. People in our school will be encouraged to love and feel loved: Adults will seek to lead by example.
2. People will be taught to comprehend through a breadth of opportunity and with significant depth of understanding.
3. All people are entitled to live a fulfilled, enriched and joyful life and our curriculum will seek to enable this

Intent

- To support pupils who have separated parents and as far as possible mitigate any possible detrimental outcomes for them.
- To comply with any court orders which may be in place and to be beyond reproach when it comes to how we have handled situations relating to these
- To support an equitable position between parents ensuring all parties are treated justly, fairly and equitably.
- To enable the smooth coordination of information and limit the increased administrative demands that might be placed upon the school with additional parties involved.
- To approach circumstances with a reasonable and sensible stance, which always puts the children's well-being at the forefront of decisions relating to responses to scenarios which arise as a result of having separated parents.

Introduction

It is our expectation that all adults will seek for the best interests of children who attend our school, with a particularly focus on their well-being. This happens best when the school and parents are united in their endeavours to facilitate success. We recognise that separation of parents is a traumatic experience for children whatever the circumstances may be and we will seek to minimise the impact of this in conjunction with parents. We recognise that such circumstances

can create difficulties within a family and encourage parents to seek early help by discussing difficulties with us if it is felt that the children will be significantly impacted as a result of family circumstances.

<https://www.abberley.worcs.sch.uk/page/?title=Early+Help+offer&pid=66>

We will treat all parents equally, unless a court order limits an individual's exercise of parental responsibility. If a court order is in place, the school will need to have access to a copy to be able to enforce it. Those with parental responsibility will need to provide the school with evidence of this.

Those with parental responsibility are entitled to:

- Receive information about their child
- Request to see their child's educational record
- Participate in statutory activities
- Be informed about meetings involving their child
- Be asked to give consent

Following a separation, a parent cannot request that information relating to the children (the child's data) is not shared with another person with parental responsibility.

Communication

It is our expectation that parents communicate suitably with each other to ensure the well-being of their children. We will usually communicate with the resident parent through letters home. However, more formal communication such as newsletters, school reports and invitations to events will be sent to those with parental responsibility. If children have shared residence, we will ensure our formal communication is equitable (what is communicated to one, will be communicated with both). Where reasonable, less-formal communication, such as a bump in the playground, will be communicated with both parents if this has been requested in writing.

We will only ever prevent a parent exercising their parental right in the following circumstances:

- It is stipulated in a court order
- For the safeguarding of a child
- Parents are not able to adhere to the standards of behaviour when at school events together.

When a court order stipulates that residency is shared, we would not expect the non-resident parent to require regular communication with the school. The school cannot be a way to gain additional contact with children via school staff. For example, calling the school to ask if a child is in attendance. The school will not mediate between parents. Information about the children will not be disclosed over the telephone or in person. Requests for information will need to be submitted in writing or via e-mail to the head teacher and will be responded to in a reasonable timeframe. For example, a parent with whom the child is not resident cannot ring and ask if the child is in school.

Details of the court order will need to be communicated with the school, clearly outlining the routine for which parents the child will be in residence with at different periods. This information will be important even without a court order, but the school will not be in a position to stop a person with parental responsibility exercising their rights.

Resources and items sent home

At times children will bring resources for learning and items home. For example, the 'marvellous me' box in reception. Experiences like this are shared amongst the class throughout the year and are given on a per pupil basis. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to provide additional opportunities to do this with separated parents. However, where possible we will seek to provide equal opportunities throughout the year for these experiences to be shared for children in residence with two parents. We may also provide resources to aid pupils with their learning at home, such as arithmetic books or phonics cards. These are also provided on a per pupil basis.

Consent

In circumstances where we require consent from parents, the resident parent's consent only will be sought unless:

- The activity is likely to have long-term or significant impact on the child
- The non-resident or equally resident parent has asked for consent to be sought from both parties in all such cases

If both parties do not agree to consent, we will treat it as if consent has not been given and this will be communicated via e-mail or in writing to both parents.

Pupil information

All with parental responsibility are entitled to the pupil information kept by the school in their educational record. For example, attendance data even if this data is relating to periods where the child/children are not in residence. If it was felt that information might put any person at risk of harm, this may be withheld in line with data protection law.

Visiting the school premises

Our school is a central part of our community. Throughout the year we hold many events and enjoy welcoming parents in to see what their children have been doing, such as sports days, sports fixtures, performances, working parties etc. For such events, both parents will be invited to attend and it is hoped that all will be able to celebrate the success of their children. It is the expectation of the school that in such circumstances parents behaviour in a respectful manner towards each other in front of their children and towards school staff. It is also expected that parents will behave naturally towards their children in showing love and attention. The parent with whom the child is or will be in residence remains responsible for children at such events, which are out of school hours or where the responsibility of a child is passed to parents. If parents are not able to behave respectfully at these events, the situation will be dealt with as outlined in our parental behaviour policy.

We seek to be open to members of our community as far as is possible with a vigilant safeguarding approach. To this end parents are invited to volunteer in school on occasions and in certain capacity, such as the in our Friend's Association. It is our school policy that parents who volunteer at the school do not work with their own children or their peers in school to avoid any conflict of interest.

In the event of a separation and a court order being in place, the school cannot be seen as a way to gain additional access to a child whilst not in residence with that parent. The school must be beyond reproach. Therefore, voluntary activities, which include working with the children during the school day, will only be allowed during in resident times and following the appropriate safeguarding induction procedures. To this end we would not expect the following when a child is not in residence with a person with parental responsibility:

- An unreasonable volume of communication from the parent(s)
- Unnecessary visits to the school from the parent(s)
- Regular attendance checks from the parent(s)

Emergency

In the event of an emergency, we will contact the parent and the emergency contacts with whom the child is resident in the first instance (as long as residency information has been clearly communicated). If we are unable to make contact we will seek to make contact with other emergency contacts listed during initial school registration.

Impact

The policy should be judged against its intent and not be used to find fault with the actions of the school. The school has capacity with which it must work within.

The questions when measuring or determining compliance with the policy are:

- Has the school sought to limit any detrimental impact that may arise as a result of separation?
- Has the school acted in a way that is beyond reproach when it comes to any court orders which might be in place?
- Has the school acted reasonably and sought to be fair in its approach with all parties.
- Are parental requirements reasonable and achievable given the school's capacity?
- Is the well-being of the child at the heart of what is being focused upon?