



# SEPARATED PARENTS POLICY

## Statement of intent:

St David's Prep recognises that children from families whose parents are separated, or are undergoing separation, may go through traumatic changes during their time at school. With this in mind, we will make every effort to work with parents to promote the welfare of children. This policy has been created to minimise any impact and to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the school and its staff.

## 1 Definitions

1.1. 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. This includes same sex parents.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person. (e.g adoptive parents)
- 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 e.g grandparents/foster parents).

1.2. 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.

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

- Receive information (e.g. pupil reports, school events etc.).
- Participate in activities (e.g. elections of any description).
- Give consent (e.g. for school trips).
- Be involved in meetings concerning the child (e.g. parents evenings, annual SEND reviews, participate in an exclusion procedure, appeal against admission decisions).

## 2 Head responsibilities

2.1. The Head will ask parents or guardians for the names and addresses of all parents when they register a pupil.

2.2. It is the duty of the Head 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.

2.3. The Head will ensure that names and addresses of all parents are forwarded to any school to which the pupil moves.

2.4. The Head will ensure that details of court orders are noted in the pupil's record.

### **3 Parental responsibilities**

3.1. Parents are responsible for informing the school when there is a change in family circumstances. We recognise the sensitivity of such situations and we will maintain confidentiality requested by parents as far as possible. The school will also not make judgements about individual circumstances, and both parents will be treated equally.

3.2. Where there is a court mandated restraining order in place, a copy needs to be retained by the school, which will put measures in place to ensure the child is not released to named individuals.

3.3. Parents who have joint custody of the child are requested to keep the school informed, in writing, of any disputes they have with each other regarding the collection of children.

3.4. 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.

3.5. The school holds one parents evening appointment per child, where both parents are welcome. At such meetings parents are expected to behave accordingly and be respectful of each other. The school will always consider offering separate appointments to separated parents.

3.6. The school expects parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements.

3.7. Parents are expected to liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the ordering of school photographs, tickets for performances and other instances. The school will not deal individually with these requests in view of the significantly increased workload that they represent.

### **4 Progress reports and pupil records**

4.1. Any parent has the right to receive progress reports and review pupil records of their child.

4.2. If the parents are separated or divorced, progress reports will be sent to the parent and address noted in the school's records specifying where the child resides with the expectation that they will share the report with the other parent. The school is always happy to send two report.

4.3. If the child is subject to a joint residence order and the school's records formally capture that the child resides at two addresses, then progress reports will be sent to both addresses.

4.4. The school will send copies of the progress reports to a parent with whom the child does not reside if that parent submits a written request.

### **5 Disputes amongst parents**

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

5.2. The school will maintain an open door policy with both parents and the class teacher and the Head will be available to discuss any issues.

5.3. 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 will be notified immediately.

## **6 Collecting a child from school**

6.1. Where a separated parent has parental responsibility and requests to take the child during or at the end of the school day, the school will endeavour to ascertain that parents are in agreement, providing a non-contact order is not in place. The usual route for contact between parents and school on matters of collection is via pupil's Form Teacher or the school office. Any arrangements which differ from the normal collection routine then school will need the changes in writing, giving the names of the person(s) collecting the child and stating they are known to the pupil.

6.2. The Head will use his/her discretion on the decision to allow a child to leave the premises with a non-resident parent, but will only refuse in extreme circumstances (i.e. if safeguarding is considered to be an issue) or if there is a court order in place. Under no other circumstances can school refuse parental access.

## **7 Obtaining consent**

7.1. If parental consent is required for outings or activities, the school will seek consent from the resident parent, unless the decision is likely to have a long-term and significant impact on the child or the non-resident parent has requested to be asked for consent in all such cases.

7.2. In cases where the school considers it necessary to seek consent from both parents, it is possible that one gives consent and the other withholds it. In such cases, the school will assume that parental consent has **not** been given.

## **8 Name changes**

8.1. Parents are responsible for resolving potential conflicts about the change of a surname.

8.2. There must be consent from both parents after divorce or separation for registering a change of name of a pupil.

8.3. The school will ensure that the change in surname is supported by written evidence.

8.4. 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 cases, the parent wishing to change the child's name would need to apply to the courts for permission to do so.

8.5. In circumstances where a name change has previously been effected by the school, but is found to still be in dispute, the best interests of the child are to be the key consideration in any decision making process as to how the child should be addressed.

## **9 Monitoring and review**

9.1. This policy is reviewed every two years by the Head.

9.2. The scheduled review date for this policy is March 2020.