

Gillespie Primary School



**Separated Parent Policy
September 2018**

Purpose and Aims

Evidence shows that after separation¹ children do best when those around them cooperate, provide stability, and avoid conflict. Our priority is always the needs of the child, and our aim is to work with all parties to promote positive family involvement. At Gillespie we recognise that while some parents may be divorced or separated, both have a right to be informed of, and involved in, their child's educational progress.

This policy clarifies what is expected from separated parents and carers, the school and its staff. The guidance in this policy will apply unless Gillespie is made aware of any court orders in place and has a copy of the documentation as confirmation. Parents may need to check on who has official parental responsibility and provide evidence of this. We will ask for sight of a child's full birth certificate on joining the school to confirm parental responsibility.

Definitions

1. Gillespie has a legal duty to work in partnership with families and to involve all those with parental responsibilities in their child's education.
2. The definition of a parent for school purposes is much wider than for any other situation. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines a 'parent' as:
 - I. All natural parents, whether they are married or not
 - II. Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person
 - III. 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)
3. Parents as defined above are entitled to share in the decisions that are made about their child and to be treated equally by schools. These entitlements include:
 - Receiving information about their child's progress e.g., having access to school records, receiving copies of school reports, newsletters, invitations to school events, school photographs relating to their child and information about school trips
 - Attending parent meetings/school events
 - Being involved in meetings concerning the child (e.g. participate in an exclusion procedure, appeal against admission decisions)
 - Giving consent (e.g. for school trips and referrals for other services)
 - Appealing against admission decisions
 - Completing Ofsted and school based questionnaires
4. Parents, as defined above, will be treated equally, unless there is a court order limiting an individual's exercise of parental responsibility. If we are unaware that such an order exists neither parent will have more rights than other.

¹ Within this policy separated refers to parents who have previously lived together as well as those who have co-parented separately from a child's birth

School responsibilities

1. The school will ask parents or guardians for the names and addresses of all parents and those with parental responsibilities when they register a child.
2. It is the school's duty to ensure that the names and addresses of all parents, where known, are included in the admission register, in pupil records and are available to the school.
3. We will ensure that the names and addresses of all parents are forwards to any school to which the child moves.
4. The school will ensure that details of any court orders be added to the pupil's records.

Parental Responsibilities

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 not make judgements about individual circumstances; all parents will be treated equally.
2. When 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 those names in the court order.
3. Parents who have joint residency of the child are requested to keep the school informed of any disputes they have with each other regarding the collection of children.
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.
5. The school holds two parent consultation evenings a year to which both parents are welcome. We expect parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements and we will endeavour to accommodate these arrangements to reduce anxiety to both children and parents.
6. Parents are expected to liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as ordering of school photographs, tickets for performances and other instances.

Progress Reports and Pupil Records

1. Parents have the right to receive progress reports and review pupil records of their child. If the parents are separated and/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.
2. If the child is subject to a joint residence order and our records formally capture that the child resides at two addresses, then progress reports will be sent to both addresses.
3. We will send copies of the progress reports to a parent with whom the child does not reside only if that parent submits a written request.

4. Disagreements between parents cannot be resolved by the school.
5. 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.

Collecting a child from school

1. Where a separated parent has parental responsibility and requests to take the child during or at the end of the school day, we will endeavour to ascertain that parents are in agreement, providing a non-contact order is not in place. The usual route for daily contact between parents and school is by telephone.
2. The Head Teacher will use their discretion on whether to allow a child to leave the premises with a non-resident parent, where necessary.

Name Changes

1. Parents are responsible for resolving potential conflicts about the change of a child's surname. There must be consent from all those with parental responsibility for registering a change of name of a child. The school will need to ensure that the change of surname is supported by written evidence, e.g. deed poll.
2. A separated parent who has parental responsibility 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 permissions to do so.

Obtaining Consent

1. If parental consent is required for outings or activities, or for referrals to other agencies, 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.
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.

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed every two years by the Head Teacher/ Governing Body

Useful Contacts

1. Islington Family Information Service for information about a range of services to support children, young people and families:

<http://directory.islington.gov.uk/kb5/islington/directory/service.page?id=BsNZ36XvrPY>

2. For specific services which may offer advice and support around family:

http://directory.islington.gov.uk/kb5/islington/directory/results.page?familychannelnew=6_5