

HILLSIDE ACADEMY



Policy for Separated Parents

Updated August 2016

PRINCIPAL: Miss M Walton
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL: Mrs L Pritchard
Chair of Governors: Mr D Oxley

Policy for Separated Parents

Rationale

Research and experience have shown that separated parents can become particularly estranged, especially during the initial stages of the separation. This is very often traumatic for those children concerned. Inevitably, these personal family problems have an impact in the schools these children attend. This policy is an attempt to minimise this impact and clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from Hillside Academy and its staff.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governors

The Governing Body recognise that while the parents of some pupils may be divorced or estranged, both have a right to be informed of and involved in their child's educational process. The information provided to the school when their child was enrolled detailing whether both parents have parental responsibility for the child, will be presumed to be correct unless a court order or original birth certificate proving otherwise is provided to the school.

At Hillside Academy we wish to promote the best interests of the child, working in partnership with both parents, unless directed by a court order. In the event that the school is not informed of such action, neither parent will have rights superior to the other except as detailed below.

Parents

It is the responsibility of the parents to inform school when there is a change in the families' circumstances. We need to be kept up to date with contact details, arrangements for collecting children and emergencies.

If one parent seeks to remove the child from school, and the parent with whom the child ordinarily resides, has not consented the following steps will be followed:

- The Principal or designated deputy will meet with the parent seeking to remove the child and, in his/her presence, telephone the parent with whom the child ordinarily resides and explain the request. If the parent with whom the child ordinarily resides agrees, the child will be released and the records will reflect that the permission was granted orally.
- In the event that the parent, with whom the child ordinarily resides, cannot be reached, the Principal or staff member dealing with the issue may make a decision based upon all relevant information available to him/her.
- The Principal or staff member may refuse permission if consent cannot be obtained.

In extreme circumstances, if there is reason to believe that a possible abduction of the child may occur or if the parent is disruptive, the police will be notified immediately and information passed to social care.

The school

A hard copy of the half termly newsletter, containing information about school events, is sent to the parent with whom the child normally resides. In addition to this, newsletters can be viewed on the school website. All parents are recommended to regularly use the schools website which contains back dated newsletters and has a range of information and links regarding school business.

Occasionally letters are sent to individual classes. E.g. School Trips, After School Clubs etc. These are paper copies only and not available on the school website. We would expect parents to communicate these messages to each other as and when appropriate.

Where parental consent is required, this would only be requested from the parent with whom the child resides. If the parent with whom the child normally resides is away, a written note from this parent giving permission for the absent parent to consent must be provided to the school.

We will hold one parents evening appointment per child, where both parents are welcome. We would expect parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements. Wherever possible it is preferable for both parents to attend the same meeting at the same time, however, we do recognise that there may be circumstances where this may not be possible and alternative arrangements may need to be made.

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. If this is not possible then the absent parent may request that the school send this information directly to them. The request must be made to the school in person (where proof of identity will be required) or, if that is not possible, by phone (where a series of security questions will be asked) and followed up in writing, clearly stating the information required.

Progress reports and Pupil records

Both parents have the right to receive progress reports and review pupil records of their children. If the parents are separated or divorced, progress reports will be sent to the parent with whom the child normally resides, with the expectation that he/she will share the report with the absent parent.

As above the school will send copies of the progress reports to the non custodial parent only if that parent asks in person (with proof of identity) or submits a verbal (telephone) and written request.

When there is a dispute concerning issues other than those relating to the child's educational programme:

If both parents have parental responsibility but:

- There is a court order prescribing who should have residence (or regulating decisions about the child), and
- Only limited contact for the other parent

Then the school will normally respect the wishes of the parent with whom the child resides.

The law allocates more responsibility to the residential parent for the day to day running of a child's life and so unless the dispute is major that parent will have slightly more say. The resident parent consent will be accepted for schools trips usually unless they are for example abroad?

Parental Conflict.

For children whose parents are separating, school can often be the only normality. It is important that disputes and conflict between parents do not enter into school life. The school is here to educate children and to provide a safe environment for them in which to learn. The school cannot be drawn into parental disputes.

We are very willing, and wish to be as helpful as possible when families are facing difficult circumstances however; it is therefore the school policy to remain neutral in order to best protect the interests of the child.

In the event that the parents are unable to agree with one another on decisions regarding their child's educational programme, including but not limited to placement, participation in extracurricular activities, and consent to assessment and services, the school will arrange a meeting with both parents (either together or separately) to attempt to resolve the situation. If it cannot be resolved the school may consider referral relevant support services. In the event of such a dispute, the parents may be asked to take the matter back to court. The school's role is not to adjudicate between parental disagreements. Where necessary the school will make a decision in the best interests of the child. The school will not become involved in parental conflict issues.

The child's legal name on the register will remain the same unless there is a court order or a deed poll (signed by all with parental responsibility). Where there is a dispute over changing a child's name all those with parental responsibility must agree and complete a deed poll or the school can be provided with the court order.

It is vitally important that both parents remain involved in their children's learning and to this end, we will maintain our open door policy with both parents. The class teacher will be available to discuss any issues by phone or meeting.

Other relevant school policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Confidentiality Policy

Approved by Governing Body on: 26th May 2016

Principal: Miss M Walton
Chair of Governors: Mr D Oxley