Separated Parents Policy

Date agreed by Governors	May 2026
Signed on behalf of Governors	J Wilkinson J Wilkinson (Jun 12, 2026 07:10:22 GMT+1)
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1. Statement of Intent

1.1 John Ball Primary School 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.

1.2 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.

2. Definitions

2.1 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.
- 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 (a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child).

2.2 Both married parents and an unmarried mother have PR automatically and they continue to have it after separation or divorce.

2.3 If the parents of a child were not married to each other when the child was born, the mother automatically has PR; however, the father only has PR from 1st December 2003 and by jointly registering the birth of the child with the mother. He can, however, subsequently acquire PR by various legal means.

2.4 People other than a child's natural parents can acquire PR through:

- A step-parent under the terms of a parental responsibility agreement or court order;
- Being granted a Child Arrangements Order;
- Being appointed a Guardian; (usually by the court or by a will)
- Being named in an Emergency Protection Order (although parental responsibility in a such a case is limited to taking reasonable steps to safeguard or promote the child's welfare);
- Adopting a child.
- A parent by virtue of the human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008

2.5 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.

2.6 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 for parent governors).
- Give consent (e.g. for school trips).
- Be involved in meetings concerning the child (e.g. participate in an exclusion procedure, appeal against admission decisions).

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. The school expects parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements as well as matters such as the ordering of school photographs, tickets for performances and other instances.

3.6 Unless domestic abuse has been disclosed, the school will not deal individually with these requests in view of the significantly increased workload that they represent.

3.7 The information provided to the school when the child was enrolled detailing whether parents have PR for the child will be presumed to be correct unless a court order or original birth certificate proving otherwise is provided to the school. Similarly, the information provided on the address(es) where the child resides will be presumed to be correct unless a court order proving otherwise is provided to the school.

3.8 The school recognises that while the parents of some children may be separated they are entitled to the above and this entitlement cannot be restricted without a specific court order. In particular, the school does not have the power to act on the request of one parent to restrict another.

3.9 Any dispute between persons sharing these rights would need to be resolved between the individuals and not by the school.

4. School Responsibilities

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

4.2 It is the duty of the school 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.

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

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

4.5 If a child is living with someone other than a close family relative, or if it is unclear who has PR for the child, then this may be a private fostering arrangement and the school will need to notify the local authority.

5. Progress reports and pupil records

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

5.2 If the parents are separated or divorced, progress reports will be sent to both parents (provided they hold legal parental responsibility) via Arbor, our management information system.

5.3 All report cards are shared digitally. It is not school protocol to print and send reports via the postal service – unless in extenuating circumstances as agreed with the Headteacher.

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

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

5.6 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 resident parent will be contacted in order to ensure that parents are in agreement, providing a non-contact order is not in place.

6.2 The Headteacher will use their discretion on the decision to allow a child to leave the premises with a non-resident parent.

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 already been effected by the school and it is in the interest of the child, who might be known by a new name, to refer back to a different name, the school will make a decision holding the best interests of the child under paramount consideration.