



# Pinewood Infant School & Foundation Unit

## Separated Parents Policy

Spring 2025

## **Introduction and Background**

Research and experience have shown that separated parents can become particularly estranged, especially during the initial stages of the split. This is very often traumatic for any children concerned and unfortunately these personal family problems can have an impact on the schools that children attend.

At Pinewood Infant School and Foundation Unit 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.

## **Parental Information**

During the transition into school we ask for certain information to establish parental responsibility, such as name of parents, the child's main residence, contact details and the original birth certificate. We are also required to ask who has parental responsibility for the child. This is important because it allows the school to be sure who has the right to make decisions about a child's education and medical treatment. However, this is a very specific legal term and many parents may be unaware of how it is applied:

- All mothers automatically have parental responsibility for the child from birth.
- If a child's parents were married at the time of the birth, both parents automatically have parental responsibility.
- For children born from the 1st December 2003 where the father's name is on the birth certificate, the father and mother will both have parental responsibility.
- In all other cases, fathers are required to officially obtain parental responsibility.
- Parental responsibility cannot be lost, except by legal adoption, although it does not guarantee contact.

The information provided to school when the pupil was enrolled, detailing whether both parents have parental responsibility, will be presumed to be correct unless a court order or original birth certificate proving otherwise is provided to the school.

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

Parents as defined above are entitled to share in the decisions that are made about their child and to be treated equally by schools. In particular these entitlements include:

- Appeal against admission decisions.
- Ofsted & school based questionnaires.
- Participation in any exclusion procedure.
- Attendance at parent meetings/school events.
- Access to school records and copies of school reports, newsletters, invitations to school events, school photographs relating to their child and information about school trips.

This entitlement cannot be restricted without a specific court order. The school does not have the power to act simply on the request of one parent to restrict another.

The school will not seek to make judgements about individual circumstances but will treat both parents equally unless there is a specific ruling in existence. Staff will never pass judgement on either parent to the child.

Parents are asked to complete the following form as part of their child's enrolment to school, highlighting who has parent responsibility. This form is also offered on a yearly basis to parents, ensuring that the most up to date information is held within school:

### **Important: Parental Responsibility Contact Information Required**

*We understand, at times people with parental responsibility are not always visible at school. However, it is useful for us as a school to know who has parental responsibility for a child.*

- Parental responsibility means **the legal rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority a parent has for a child and the child's property**. A person who has parental responsibility for a child has the right to make decisions about their care and upbringing.

Parent Responsibility can be proven by:

- Your name being written within a child's birth certificate.
- A legal document produced by the Courts such as an adoption order.
- A legal document confirming a successful application for parental responsibility (usually stepparents after marriage).
- Confirmation documentation from the Local Authority should you be legally granted full responsibility of a child under specific protection.

*Please complete the following information including all adults appropriate under the above guidance. Parents must ensure that they comply with this request. School will only remove the 'Parental Responsibility' status should a legal court document be produced to the school.*

<b>Adult 1:</b>			Relationship:		
Mobile Phone:		Home Phone:		Other Phone:	
Email:			Adult 1 Address:		
<b>Adult 2:</b>			Relationship:		
Mobile Phone:		Home Phone:		Other Phone:	
Email:			Adult 2 Address:		

We will maintain our open door policy with all parents, and the class teacher and/or head teacher will be available by appointment to discuss any issues. The school is under no obligation to inform the resident parent of the absent parent contacting the school. Any such information will be given at the discretion of the head teacher.

### **Court Orders**

Upon receipt of any court order restricting access to a parent, the school retains the right to consult the Local Authority before taking immediate action. The school is only obliged to comply with an order if we are properly notified and have received a copy for our records and only to the extent that it relates to the school. 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. Only a Court Order stating the arrangements is deemed to be valid; a letter from a solicitor is not sufficient.

### **School communications**

The school recognises that, while the parents of some pupils may be divorced or separated, both have a right to be informed of, and involved in, their child's education. However, we expect that parents, whatever the nature of their separation, will do all they can to communicate with each other and share information from and for the school, for the benefit of their child. It is assumed that the parent with whom the child principally resides will keep the other parent informed.

We would not expect to send emergency text messages to absent parents, which give information on cancelled activities and reminders.

The school's main source of contact for parents is Class Dojo. Adults with parental responsibility can be set up on the app (unless prevented by a legal document such as a court order), ensuring that they keep up with all kinds of school related information. The app is specific to each individual and cannot be used to contact other family members.

- All diary dates, newsletters, and relevant letters are available on our website at [www.pinewood.notts.sch.uk](http://www.pinewood.notts.sch.uk) or via Class Dojo.
- We will send out electronic information, via email or Class Dojo, of events, dates and relevant letters which includes estranged parents if we have received additional email addresses. Paper copies are very rarely issued by school. We will issue a list of communications every Friday outlining what has been released for that particular week (via the weekly newsletter).
- We operate as a cashless school which requires a (one) parent to register the app in their name. Additional parents can be added to the application, with assistance from the school office. It is down to the parents to ensure that they agree and organise any outstanding payments and debts between themselves. The school will still expect payments to be made on time.
- We would not expect to send emergency text messages to estranged parents, which give information on cancelled activities and reminders, unless it is specifically requested.
- We hold three parent's evenings a year, where if possible both parents attend together. However if this is not feasible we can arrange separate appointments.
- In matters such as the ordering of school photographs, school performances and events and other instances that include parental involvement if we can facilitate these separately, we will. However, if this is not possible then school will appreciate parents working together in the interests of the child.
- If both parents are entitled to receive progress reports and review their child's pupil records, these will be sent independently to each parent, if requested.
- Should an un-named parent seek information or access to his/her child, the school will always inform the main carer of this to check parental responsibility and ensure no court order is in place. For the avoidance of doubt, we will seek written confirmation from the main carer. Proof of identity of the non-resident parent will always be required in these cases.

**Disagreements between parents must be resolved between the parents and cannot be resolved by the school or the local authority.**

### **Collecting a Child From School**

The school will release children to parents in accordance with arrangements notified to the school. If one parent seeks to remove the child from school in contravention of the usual arrangements and

the parent to whom the child would normally be released has not notified the school of any change the following steps will be followed:

- If there is a change to the normal collecting arrangements on any given day we would expect a notification from the main parent/carer.
- In the event that the parent to whom the child would normally be released cannot be reached, the head teacher or staff member dealing with the issue will make a decision based upon all relevant information available to him/her.
- If changes to collections are a common occurrence we will ask for a list of adults who will be given authority to take the child without having to seek permission from the main carer.
- During any discussion or communication with parents, the child will be supervised by an appropriate member of school staff in a separate room.
- In extreme cases, if the head teacher or senior leader at school feels that allowing the child to go home with an adult would be detrimental to the health and well-being of that child they will seek advice from outside agencies such as Social Services, the Police.

**Reviewed by: Dave Armstrong-Jones, Spring 2025**