

ST. DAMIAN'S RC SCIENCE COLLEGE



Separated Parents Policy

Approved by Governors:	January 2023
Date to be reviewed:	Every two years

1. Introduction

Everyone who is a parent has the right to participate in decisions about their child and receive information about the child.

St Damian's RC Science College, recognises that children from families whose parents are separated, or are undergoing separation, may go through traumatic changes during their time at school. The School will make every effort to work with parents to promote the welfare of their child.

This policy has been created to help minimise any impact and to provide guidance to separated parents (as defined below) and set out the steps that will be taken by the School.

Unless there is a court order in place limiting an individual's exercise of parental responsibility the School will ensure that parents are dealt with in an equal manner and in accordance with this guidance.

The School's paramount consideration in making decisions arising from this guidance will, of course, be the welfare of the child. The School will endeavour to help resolve problems that arise between parents regarding their child's education but will avoid becoming involved in conflict between parents.

This document is intended to set out general policy and guidance. In the event that a child's circumstances are not covered by the guidance the School will endeavour to provide specific guidance relating to those circumstances (but cannot of course provide legal advice to parents).

2. Definition of parent and rights

The School has a legal duty to work in partnership with parents regarding their child's education.

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 provides a wide definition of 'parent'. For the purpose of school education provision a "parent" is defined 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, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law).

Therefore, those persons with parental responsibility for a child or who 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.),
- to participate in activities (e.g. elections for parent governors),
- to give consent (e.g. school trips), and
- to be involved in meetings concerning the child (e.g. participate in an exclusion procedure, appeal against admission decisions).

The terms “resident” and “non-resident” parent are used to distinguish between parents who do and do not live with a child.

3. Providing and recording relevant information

To ensure that when parents separate/divorce the child’s best interests are met it is essential that relevant up to date information and documentation is provided and recorded in a timely manner.

With this in mind parents are requested to ensure that the School has the following information;

- The names and addresses of all parents.
- A copy of the child’s birth certificate.
- Written notification of any formal or informal residence/contact arrangements (with, where appropriate, relevant supporting documents e.g. copy court order)
- Notification (with a copy of any relevant documentation) of any court imposed restrictions relating to a parent’s (or any other person’s) contact with a child
- Written notification of any collection from school arrangements between a resident and non-resident parent.
- Written notification of any relevant change in family circumstances including any disputes regarding residence and contact or collection from school arrangements.

The School will ensure that:

- Confidentiality is maintained and that information is only shared to the extent that it is the child’s best interests to share information
- The names and addresses of all known parents are included in the admission register and in pupil records and are available to the pupil’s teachers.
- The names and addresses of all parents are forwarded to any school to which the pupil moves.
- The details of any court orders are promptly noted in a pupil’s record.
- All formal and informal arrangements notified to the School relating to residence, contact and collection from school are promptly and accurately recorded

4. Guidance on specific matters:

Parent's evening

- The school will normally hold one parents evening appointment per child, where both parents are welcome, however in exceptional cases will try to make arrangements for separate appointments.
- The School expects parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements.

Progress Reports and Pupil Records

- Any parent has the right to receive progress reports and review pupil records of their child
- Where parents live at different addresses 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 he/she will share the report with the other parent.
- 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.
- The School will send copies of the progress reports and other relevant information to a non-resident parent if that parent submits a written request (Appendix 1).
- 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 evaluation and services, the school will arrange a meeting with all parents (preferably together or separately if required) to attempt to assist the parents to resolve the situation. Ultimately, however, disagreements between parents must be resolved by the parents, or in the final resort, the Courts.
- Parents are entitled to equal access to all school information via the School's parent mail system, or alternatively, should request in writing additional copies of communications to be sent (Appendix 1)
- All parents are recommended to regularly use our website. It contains all our back dated newsletters and has a range of information and links.
- The School will maintain an open door policy with both parents and the class teacher will be available to discuss any issues by phone or scheduled meeting.
- Where the address of a non-resident parent is unknown, the School will inform the resident parent that the non-resident parent is entitled to be involved in their child's education and ask that information is passed on to them where possible/appropriate.

Collecting a child from school

- The School will ensure that a child is not released to a parent where this would be in breach of any court order
- It is the duty of both parents to co-operate in arrangements to collect their child from school.

Obtaining consent

- If parental consent is required for outings/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.
- 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.
- A leave of absence request form must, if only signed by one parent, be accompanied by a letter of consent from the other parent.

Name changes

- Parents are responsible for resolving issues relating to any change of surname.
- Both parents must provide written/signed consent to the School for a change of name of a child to be recorded in the school records.
- In the absence of joint consent the parent wishing to change the child's name would need to obtain permission from court do so before the School can record any requested change.

School photos, events etc

- Parents are required 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.

Reviewed every two years, next review: January 2025

Appendix 1

Working with parents

St Damian's RC Science College is committed to working with families and understands the importance of continuing the relationship between School and parents who do not live with their child.

Please complete the form below and return to the school office indicating how you would like to be kept informed about your child's education.

Name of parent:

Name of child/children:

Address:

Telephone number/s:

Email:

Please circle the best way to send information to you:

Via your child

By Parentmail (email)

By post

Please tick the information you would like to receive:

- Information about upcoming events
- Parents' evenings
- Additional copies of end of year reports
- Order form for photos
- Add your own