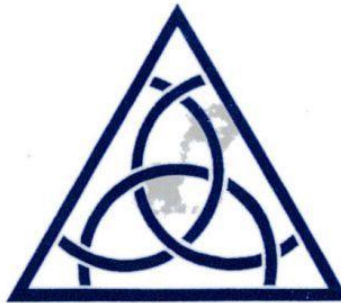


Trinity Christian School Nursery, Primary & Secondary



TRINITY
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Separated Parents Policy

Reviewed by SLT:	Spring 2024
Next Review due:	Spring 2025

SEPARATED PARENTS POLICY

Trinity Christian School 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 both 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).

1. 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).

See also FURTHER REFERENCE section at the end of this policy.

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 about the child e.g. pupil reports.
- To participate in activities e.g. parent meetings, events at school.
- To give consent e.g. school trips.
- 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 where the legal main residence of the child is; where the child lives with one parent. Where there is a shared arrangement we will need both addresses and full contact details.

The person(s) with parental responsibility who applied for the child's admission should have involved all others with parental responsibility in making the decision to apply. They should have provided the School with details of all those with parental responsibility for a child. Where this has not happened the School welcomes direct contact from those with parental responsibility providing their own details. However, the School cannot be held responsible for excluding a parent or person with parental responsibility if the information has not been provided to them.

2. 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 both parents including contact and email details.
- 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. a copy of any court order or legal document.
- 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.
- The names and addresses of all known parents are included in the admission register and in pupil records and are available to the teachers.
- The details of any court orders are promptly noted and that any restrictions are adhered to.
- All formal and informal arrangements notified to the School relating to residence, contact and collection from school are promptly and accurately recorded.

If parents separate whilst their child already attends the School, the parents must notify the School immediately so that the School can ensure continuing contact with both parents and, in the event that the parents have separated on an unpleasant basis the School will endeavour to accommodate each parent separately in terms of communications and any attendances at the School.

3. Guidance on specific matters

Parents' 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.

Reports and Pupil Records

- Any parent has the right to receive reports and review pupil records of their child.
- Where parents live at different addresses the child's report will be sent home to the resident parent and also emailed to the other parent, where we have an email address.
- If the child is subject to a joint residence order, the school's records must formally capture that the child resides at two addresses.
- The School will send other relevant information to a non-resident parent by email as stated on the Separated Parents form (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 the final resort, the Courts.
- Parents are entitled to equal access to all school information via email or the sharing of letters.
- All parents are recommended to regularly use our website to view a range of information and links.
- The School will maintain its open door policy with both parents, and the class teacher can be available to discuss any issues, by appointment only.
- Where the email of a non-resident parent is unknown, the School want to make clear that the non-resident parent is still 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 or restriction.
- It is the duty of both parents to cooperate in arrangements to collect their child from school.
- The Parent must inform the school of any collection arrangements so we know who is safe and approved to collect your child. Any issues in this matter will need to be discussed with the Headteacher.

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 arrange a meeting with both parents to discuss.
- A leave of absence request form must be signed by the resident parent, or where arrangements have been made with the other parent, to request dual consent, an accompanied letter of consent from the other parent is required to confirm this.

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 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.

FURTHER REFERENCE

Who has parental responsibility?

A mother automatically has parental responsibility for her child from birth.

A father usually has parental responsibility if he is:

- married to the child's mother
- listed on the birth certificate (after a certain date, depending on which part of the UK the child was born in)

Births registered in England and Wales

If the parents of a child are married when the child is born, or if they've jointly adopted a child, both have parental responsibility.

They both keep parental responsibility if they later divorce.

Unmarried parents

An unmarried father can only get legal responsibility for his child in 1 of 3 ways:

- jointly registering the birth of the child with the mother (from 1 December 2003)
- getting a parental responsibility agreement with the mother
- getting a parental responsibility order from a court

Births registered outside the UK

If a child is born overseas and comes to live in the UK, parental responsibility depends on the UK country they're now living in.

Same-sex parents

Civil partners:

Same-sex partners who were civil partners at the time of the treatment will both have parental responsibility.

Non-civil partners:

For same-sex partners who aren't civil partners, the 2nd parent can get parental responsibility by either:

- applying for parental responsibility if a parental agreement was made
- becoming a civil partner of the other parent and making a parental responsibility agreement or jointly registering the birth

Appendix 1

SEPARATED PARENTS INFORMATION

Trinity Christian School 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 note that we cannot legally restrict access to any parent where there is no court order in place.

If you have any concerns, please speak to the Head Teacher or DSL at school.
PLEASE REFER TO OUR SEPARATED PARENTS POLICY.

Please complete below with all applicable persons responsible for named child(ren). Please indicate by ticking the relevant box as to how you would both like to be kept informed about your child's education or if there is a court order or any issues to be aware of.

Name(s) of child(ren):	
Resident (Main) Parent Name:	
Home Address: (Main place of residence of child(ren))	
Email:	
Contact Number:	
Non-resident Parent Name:	
Address:	
Email:	
Contact Number:	

Please tick one of the following boxes to specify the nature of agreement or arrangements in place as follows:

☐ **Option 1: Where there is shared responsibility or agreement between NB: shared residency. Both parents will be added to email communications sent. If any letter or information is sent home, the non-resident parent will receive these by email. For contact purposes we will follow the Family Record order.**

If the non-resident person wishes to opt out of this, they must contact the school by email or phone to request removal.

☐ **Option 2: Where there is a court order or safeguarding issue in place. Please provide the school with the court order or where there is no official court order but potential safeguarding issue please specify details below.**

☐ **Option 3: Where the above does not fit the criteria please specify below:**

Where possible, both parents must check and agree to the above and sign below or an email can be sent by the non-resident parent to confirm agreement:

Resident parent:

Sign/Print name: Date:

Non-Resident parent:

Sign/Print name: Date: