Separated Parent Policy

NORTH YORKSHIRE
RURAL SCHOOLS FEDERATION

Love, Learn and Grow Together

At Foston and Terrington Church of England Schools our commitment to promoting sustainability, affirming diversity, embracing community, and inspiring creativity, is rooted in the words of St Paul who wrote, 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control' (Galatians 5 v 22-23). Our core Christian values, love, joy, patience, and self-control are fostered in the pupils and staff building an ethos where all can flourish.

At Stillington and Langton Primary Schools our commitment to promoting sustainability, affirming diversity, embracing community, and inspiring creativity is rooted in the core values of love, joy, patience, and self-control. These core values are fostered in the pupils and staff, building an ethos where all can flourish.

Agreed by the Governing Board: September 2026

Next Review: September 2029

Our commitment

At North Yorkshire Rural Schools Federation, we believe that children achieve their best outcomes when the important adults in their lives work together to support their wellbeing, education and development. We recognise that families come in many different forms and that family circumstances can change over time.
This policy is designed to provide clarity about the school's responsibilities, the rights of parents and carers, and how we will work together to support children where parents live separately or family arrangements change.

This policy reflects:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Education Act 1996
- Department for Education guidance on parental responsibility
- The statutory safeguarding guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children*
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education*

Our aim is to ensure that children feel safe, supported and secure, regardless of their family circumstances.

1. Supporting Children in Separated Families

We recognise that families come in many different forms and that children may live across more than one home. Separation, divorce or family breakdown can be a difficult experience for children and young people, and we are committed to supporting them sensitively during these times.
We encourage parents and carers to work together wherever possible in matters relating to their child's education, welfare and day-to-day school experience.

When a child joins the school, the parent or carer completing the admission process should ensure that details of all individuals with parental responsibility are provided. If this information is not supplied initially, those with parental responsibility are welcome to contact the school directly.
If family circumstances change during a child's time at school, we encourage parents and carers to let us know as soon as they feel able to. Sharing this information helps us understand any changes that may affect the child, ensure our records remain accurate and provide appropriate support during periods of transition.

2. Who is Considered a Parent?

For education purposes, the term "parent" has a broad legal definition and includes:

- Biological parents, whether married or not.
- Anyone who has parental responsibility for the child.
- Anyone who has day-to-day care of the child, even if they do not have parental responsibility.

This may include:

- Adoptive parents
- Step-parents
- Guardians
- Special guardians
- Relatives acting as carers
- Foster carers

- Other adults who have responsibility for the child's daily care

In most circumstances, parents are entitled to receive information about their child's education and school life.

3. Parental Responsibility

Parental responsibility refers to the legal rights, duties and responsibilities held for a child.
We work from the information provided by parents and carers regarding who holds parental responsibility. In some circumstances, we may request supporting documentation to help us understand family arrangements and ensure that we are meeting our legal responsibilities appropriately.
Unless there is a court order stating otherwise, all individuals with parental responsibility will be entitled to:

- Receive information about their child's education.
- Access reports and educational records (within legal requirements).
- Attend parents' evenings and meetings.
- Receive information about school events and activities.
- Be involved in decisions regarding their child's education and welfare.

While we are committed to ensuring that those with parental responsibility remain appropriately involved in their child's education, the safety, welfare and best interests of the child will always be our primary consideration.

4. Court Orders and Legal Arrangements

The school will always seek to comply with court orders and legal arrangements relating to a child. To do this effectively, parents and carers must provide the school with a copy of any relevant court order or legal documentation as soon as possible. The school will take reasonable steps to ensure that school practices comply with any requirements placed upon us.
Where no court order has been shared with the school, we will treat all individuals with parental responsibility equally.
Safeguarding concerns will always be considered in line with our safeguarding procedures and statutory guidance.

5. Working Together in the Child's Best Interests

We understand that family relationships can sometimes be challenging. However, the school's role is to educate, support and safeguard children rather than become involved in parental disputes.
We ask all parents and carers to:

- Communicate respectfully with school staff.
- Keep the child's needs and wellbeing at the forefront of discussions.
- Share relevant information that may affect the child.
- Resolve disagreements directly with one another wherever possible.

Where parents disagree about matters relating to parental responsibility, the school will remain neutral unless required to act differently by law or safeguarding concerns.
The school cannot mediate family disputes or act as an intermediary between parents.
Parents are encouraged to communicate directly with one another wherever possible and, where helpful, seek support from trusted family members, friends, mediation services or other sources of support within their wider network. Children benefit most when the adults around them can work together respectfully, even where relationships have changed.

6. Changes in Family Circumstances

We ask parents and carers to keep the school informed of any significant changes that may affect their child, including:

- Changes to home address.
- Changes to emergency contacts.
- Changes to collection arrangements.
- Changes to parental responsibility.
- New court orders or legal agreements.
- Significant family events which may affect the child's wellbeing.

Sharing this information helps us understand any factors that may be affecting a child's wellbeing, provide appropriate support, maintain safe arrangements and fulfil our safeguarding responsibilities.
Any information shared will be treated sensitively and confidentially and shared only with those members of staff who need the information to support the child effectively.
Where parents separate during their child's time at the school, they will be asked to complete the Separated Parents Acknowledgement and Agreement Form. This helps ensure that contact details, communication arrangements and parental involvement are clear, accurate and understood by all parties.

7. Collection of Children from School

Unless we have been informed otherwise and have appropriate supporting documentation, children may be collected by any person with parental responsibility and individuals authorised by those with parental responsibility.
If an unexpected change to collection arrangements occurs, the school will take reasonable steps to confirm these arrangements before releasing a child.
Where there are concerns about a child's safety, welfare or a possible breach of a court order, the school may:

- Seek clarification from parents or carers.
- Take reasonable steps to verify arrangements before a child leaves the school site.
- Contact the police or other relevant agencies if necessary.

All actions will be taken with the child's safety and wellbeing as the primary consideration

8. Communication with Parents

We are committed to ensuring that all parents and carers who are entitled to receive information about their child are able to do so.
School communications are generally shared through a weekly bulletin, written in school planners and/or on the school website.
Where we hold the appropriate contact details, we will seek to provide information to both parents, including:

- Newsletters and updates.
- Reports and assessment information.
- Parents' evening appointments.
- Information about trips, events and performances.
- Important communication relating to the child's education and wellbeing.

We recognise that communication arrangements can sometimes be more complex where parents live separately. We will make reasonable efforts to ensure that all parents who are entitled to receive information can remain appropriately involved in their child's education and school life.
We encourage parents to communicate directly with one another where possible regarding school events and arrangements.

The school cannot act as a communication channel between parents or transmit messages from one parent to another.
Where parents live separately, both parents are responsible for ensuring that their contact details remain accurate and up to date.

9. Parents' Evenings and Meetings

We recognise that some parents may prefer separate meetings.
This is not always possible, but we ask that parents speak to the school to see if any reasonable arrangements/adjustments can be made, to enable all parents and carers to remain appropriately involved in supporting their child's education, progress and wellbeing.

10. Written Reports and Educational Information

Parents with parental responsibility are entitled to receive information regarding their child's educational progress unless a court order states otherwise.
The school will provide reports and relevant educational information to parents for whom we hold current contact details.

11. Change of Name

Any formal change to a child's legal name must be supported by appropriate legal documentation or written consent from all individuals with parental responsibility.
The school recognises that names can be closely linked to a child's identity, sense of belonging and wellbeing. Requests relating to a child's name will therefore be considered carefully, sensitively and on an individual basis, while ensuring that legal requirements are met.
The school will always consider a child's welfare, identity and wellbeing when discussing how they wish to be addressed in school and will manage requests sensitively and on a case-by-case basis.

12. Children and Young People's Views

As children mature, it is important that their views, wishes and feelings are listened to and given appropriate consideration. The school is committed to involving children and young people in decisions that affect them, where it is appropriate to do so.
Under the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018, children can assume control over their personal information and restrict access to it from the age of 13, assuming the child is able to understand and deal with the implications of exercising their rights.
This control extends to information held within a child's educational record. However, until they reach the age of 18, a parent remains entitled to request access to or a copy of their child's educational record even if the child does not wish them to access it.
Nonetheless, a parent is not entitled to information the school could not lawfully disclose to the child under UK GDPR or to which the child would have no right of access under the Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005.
When considering whether to respond to a parental request for information about a child, the school will consider:

- The child's level of maturity and ability to make decisions about their own information.
- The nature of the personal data being requested.
- Any court orders relating to parental access or responsibility.
- Any duty of confidence owed to the child.
- Any consequences of allowing the parent access to the information.

- Any detriment to the child if the parent cannot access the information.

However, legal and safeguarding duties may override these preferences where necessary.

13.Informing non-resident parents

If we do not hold contact details for a parent who does not live with the child, we will encourage the resident parent to share information about how the non-resident parent can be involved in their child's education, where appropriate.
If the resident parent chooses not to pass on information or provide contact details, there may be limited action we can take until the non-resident parent contacts the school directly.
Should a non-resident parent contact us and request information about their child's education, we will respond once reasonable steps have been taken to confirm their identity and parental status.
The school does not require the resident parent's permission to record contact details provided by a non-resident parent or to share educational information they are legally entitled to receive.
We do not normally require a solicitor's letter or court order before providing information to a parent who has parental responsibility or is otherwise entitled to receive it.
Our aim is to support all adults who have a legitimate role in a child's life to remain appropriately involved in their education, development and school community wherever this is in the child's best interests.

14.Access to Information

Key information about school life can be found on our schools websites.

15.Safeguarding

All schools must have regard to the statutory guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)*, which explains what schools and their staff must and should do to safeguard pupils.
Safeguarding is defined in KCSIE as:

- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge,
- Protecting children from maltreatment,
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development,
- Ensuring children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

KCSIE emphasises that everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding.
In the case of separated parents, all those with parental responsibility must be consulted before important decisions are made, such as removing a child from their school, determining when they should leave the school or deciding which new school they should attend.

SEPARATED PARENTS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT FORM

School Name_____

Working Together for Your Child

We are committed to building strong, positive relationships with all parents and carers, recognising that working together is in the best interests of every child. To help us maintain clear communication and provide the best possible support and safeguarding for your child, please complete and sign this form when your child starts at the school, or if there is a change in family circumstances, including parental separation, during their time with us.

Child Details

Child Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Class/Year Group: _____

Parental Responsibility

Please list all adults with parental responsibility.

Name	Relationship to Child	PR? (Y/N)

Communication Details

Please provide contact information for all parents/carers who should receive school communications.

Name	Address	Telephone	Email

Normal weekly care / collection arrangements:

Day	Parent/Carer Collection Arrangements
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	

Court Orders

Do any court orders currently apply?

☐ No

☐ Yes

If yes, please provide copies to the school.

Agreement

We understand and acknowledge that:

- **The school will act in the best interests of our child.**
- **The school will remain neutral in parental disputes.**
- **Both parents with parental responsibility may receive information about the child's education unless a lawful restriction exists.**
- **We will keep the school informed of any changes in circumstances.**
- **We will provide any relevant court orders.**
- **We will communicate respectfully with school staff.**

Parent/Carer Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Carer Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____