



SUPPORT • INSPIRE
NURTURE • ACHIEVE

Separated Parents Policy

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Lead reviewer: Rob Plumbly

Approval by: Governing Body

1. Rationale

Swallowfield Primary recognises that children from separated families may experience emotional, social or practical challenges during their time at school. We aim to ensure that all children feel secure, supported, and valued regardless of family circumstances.

This policy sets out how the school will work with separated parents, what separated parents can expect from the school, and how roles, responsibilities, communication and decision-making will be managed in a fair, lawful, and child-centred way.

Our intention is to minimise any negative impact on pupils and ensure that the school maintains positive, productive relationships with all those who hold parental responsibility.

2. Aims of this Policy

- To ensure the school complies with relevant legislation regarding parental responsibility.
- To clarify what separated parents can expect from the school.
- To outline how communication, consent and parent involvement will be managed.
- To support children's welfare by promoting stability, consistency and fairness.
- To avoid placing staff in the middle of parental disputes and redirect such matters appropriately.
- To maintain a strong safeguarding culture, ensuring children's wellbeing remains paramount.

3. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Education Act 1996
- Children Act 1989
- Data Protection Act 2018 & UK GDPR
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2025)
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

Schools have a legal obligation to treat every person with **parental responsibility** equally, unless a court order specifically states otherwise.

4. Definitions

4.1 PARENT (EDUCATION ACT 1996, SECTION 576)

A “parent” includes:

- All natural parents (married or unmarried)
- Any person with parental responsibility
- Any person who cares for the child and with whom the child lives

4.2 PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY (CHILDREN ACT 1989)

Those with parental responsibility have the right to:

- Receive school information
- Attend school events and meetings
- Give consent for activities
- Access pupil records
- Be involved in decisions/appeals

Separated parents must be treated equally unless a court order limits involvement.

4.3 COURT ORDERS

These may include:

- Child Arrangements Orders
- Prohibited Steps Orders
- Specific Issue Orders
- Care Orders
- Emergency Protection Orders

The school must be provided with a copy of any relevant order.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 THE HEADTEACHER WILL:

- Request names/addresses of *all* parents when a child joins the school.
- Record parental responsibility and court orders on the pupil file.
- Ensure both parents receive statutory information where required.
- Seek clarification from parents where conflict or uncertainty arises.
- Maintain safeguarding oversight, ensuring decisions prioritise the child.

5.2 PARENTS WILL:

- Provide accurate information and notify the school of changes in circumstances.
- Supply copies of any court orders relating to the child’s safety or contact.
- Communicate directly with each other regarding matters such as photos, tickets, and

non-statutory information.

- Attend parents' evenings (the school asks parents to coordinate attendance themselves).
- Provide joint written consent where required (e.g., leave of absence requests).

5.3 THE DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD (DSL) WILL:

- Prioritise pupil safety and wellbeing.
- Decide what information can be shared with parents in safeguarding cases.
- Make referrals to appropriate agencies where a child may be at risk.

6. Communication, Progress Reports and Records

- Both parents with parental responsibility have the right to access educational records.
- The school will send progress reports to the address of the resident parent **with the expectation that information is shared with the other parent.**
- If a non-resident parent requests duplicate reports and their identity is verified, the school will provide them.
- Where a child formally resides at two addresses (as recorded on the pupil file), reports will be sent to both homes.
- Unless a legal order is in place, or the school is made aware of significant and exceptional circumstances, we will offer one parent consultation appointment per child per consultation cycle. This does **not** include the provision of separate report cards or consultation target sheets, which can be shared with both parents.
- The school will not act as an intermediary between parents who disagree about arrangements. Disputes must be resolved independently of the school.
- The school will maintain an open-door communication approach with both parents, where appropriate and in the best interests of the child.

7. Collecting a Child from School

- If a separated parent with parental responsibility wishes to collect their child, the school will first confirm arrangements with the resident parent unless a court order instructs otherwise.
- The Headteacher retains discretion in any situation where safety or clarity is uncertain.
- The school cannot release a child to anyone prohibited by a court order (a copy must be provided).

8. Obtaining Consent

- For routine activities/outings, consent will normally be sought from the resident parent.
- For decisions with significant or long-term impact, the school may require consent from both parents.
- If parents disagree, consent will be considered *not granted*.
- In emergencies requiring urgent medical treatment, the school may act *in loco parentis*.

9. Change of Name

- Both parents with parental responsibility must give written consent for a change of surname.
- Evidence of consent or a court order must be provided.
- The school will act in the child's best interests at all times.

10. Safeguarding

- Safeguarding takes precedence over all other considerations.
- Concerns of abduction, harm, or breach of court orders will be acted upon immediately.
- Social workers may collect children only under agreed circumstances.
- If a parent behaves disruptively or unsafely, the school may contact the police.

11. Information Sharing (GDPR)

- Children may control personal information from age 13.
- Parents may still request access to educational records up to age 18.
- The school will take reasonable steps to verify identity before releasing information.
- The school will not seek permission from one parent before contacting the other.
- Neither parent's private contact details will be shared with the other.

12. Governance

- Parent governor eligibility is not restricted based on who the child lives with.
- The school will avoid inadvertent disclosure of personal information between parents.

13. Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be reviewed bi-annually or in line with statutory updates.
- Changes will be communicated to staff and parents.

14. Agreement

This policy is available for all parents/carers and staff.

By enrolling a child at Swallowfield Primary, parents agree to comply with the processes and expectations outlined in this policy.