



# Leverstock Green CE (VC) Primary School

Striving for excellence, caring for the individual.

## SEPARATED PARENTS POLICY

Leverstock Green CofE (VC) Primary School

### Policy Review

This policy was agreed by the governing body on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

It is due for review in December 2024

Signature .....

Head Teacher

Date .....

25/1/23

Signature .....

Chair of Governors

Date .....

25-1-23



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## 1. Purpose

Leverstock Green CE Primary School recognises that children from families whose parents are separated, or are undergoing separation, may experience difficult or traumatic changes during their time at school. With this in mind, we will make every effort to work in partnership with parents to promote the welfare of their children, in keeping with our vision 'For you are all the children of God.'

This policy clarifies what is expected from separated parents and carers, the school and its staff and will apply unless the school is made aware of any Court Orders in place and has copy of the documentation as confirmation. The school will remain neutral in difficult family circumstances and will not 'police' one parent on behalf of the other, nor act as a messaging, advisory or negotiating service.

## 2. Rationale

At Leverstock Green CE Primary School we have a legal duty to work in partnership with families and to involve all those with parental responsibility in their child's educational progress. Evidence shows that after separation, children do best when those around them co-operate, provide stability, and avoid conflict. We understand that this can be difficult and parents can become estranged. Our aim is to work with all parties to promote positive family involvement. The child is our main priority and we hope parents will make every effort to recognise this and support us and their child.

## 3. Definitions

Schools have a legal duty to work in partnership with families and to involve all those with parental responsibility in their child's education. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines a parent 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.)

Parents as defined above must be treated equally, unless there is a court order limiting an individual's exercise of parental responsibility. 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.

Individuals who have parental responsibility, or 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.)
- Participate in activities (e.g. elections for parent governors)



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- Give consent (e.g. for school trips)
- Be involved in meetings concerning the child (e.g. participate in an exclusion procedure, appeal against admission decisions)

### **4. Responsibilities of parents**

- Parents and partners may need to check on who has official parental responsibility and provide evidence of this. We will ask for sight of a child's original birth certificate on joining the school to confirm parental responsibility.
- It is the responsibility of parents to inform the school when there is a change in the family's circumstances. The school needs to be kept up to date with contact details, arrangements for collecting children and emergencies.
- 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. This supersedes any existing information given previously about an older sibling.
- We expect parents to liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the ordering of school photographs, tickets for performances and other instances.
- We will accept only one request for an appointment at parents' evenings. We expect parents to liaise with each other regarding these arrangements. It is not acceptable to add to teachers' workload and expect separate appointments. We expect parents to make amicable arrangements to accommodate this. In exceptional circumstances, these appointments may be held online.
- Both parents are equally responsible for any payments required, e.g. dinners, educational visits, residential visits, etc. The school should not be financially disadvantaged. If necessary, the school will bill each parent for 50% of all costs.
- Both parents are equally responsible for their child's attendance. Where one parent requests leave of absence during term time, the school will assume the other parent has been informed and will copy the response to both parents.

### **5. Responsibilities of the school**

- The school will send routine school information, general letters and newsletters to both parents electronically unless a court has ordered otherwise.
- All diary dates, newsletters, and general letters are also available on our website and will be emailed to both parents. Parents are responsible for providing a correct email address.
- Both parents are entitled to receive progress reports and review their child's pupil records. A copy of the child's annual report will be provided for both parents.
- Both parents are legally entitled to collect their child from school unless a court order is provided that states otherwise. In all cases, the school will be mindful of its safeguarding responsibilities and may use its discretion not to send a child home with a particular parent if one of the Designated Safeguarding Leads deems it unsafe for the child.



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- The school will always reserve the right to refuse entry or enter into communication with parents who are abusive and use inappropriate language or aggressive behaviour towards any member of staff.
- The school will seek consent from both parents for anything other than educational activities; for example, support from external professionals. If one parent declines consent, we will consider the request declined.

### **6. Disputes and Disagreements**

Disagreements between parents must be resolved between them. The school will not be drawn into any dispute resolution or mediation.

Parents are expected to discuss and reach consensus on all decisions regarding their child's education. Written consent from all parties may be requested where, in the reasonable opinion of the school, the issue is likely to have long term and significant impact on the child. For example, the decision to withdraw a child from Sex Education, Religious Education or Collective Worship or changing the name of a pupil.

The school will maintain an open door policy with both parents and will be available to discuss any issues. In extreme circumstances, if there is a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of immediate harm, the police will be notified and advice will be sought.

In any event whereby the parents' estrangement appears to have a negative effect upon the health, well-being or safety of a child, the matter will be referred to Hertfordshire Children's Services.

