**SEPARATED PARENTS POLICY**

Adopted: Autumn 26
Review: Autumn 29

## Policy Review and Monitoring

This policy is due to be reviewed at the time stated, unless circumstances determine that this policy needs to be reviewed at an earlier time.

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| **Signed:** | **Chair of Governors** | **Headteacher** |
| | Mr J. Orchard | Mr K. Stroud |

# SEPARATED PARENTS POLICY

### 1. Our Commitment

At Maes yr Haul Primary School, we understand that children live in different types of families and that many of our children live in separated or divorced families. We are committed to supporting every child equally and sensitively. Our main priority is always the wellbeing, safety, and learning of your child. This policy explains how we work with separated parents and what the school can and cannot do to support families in this situation.

### 2. Supporting Your Child

We understand that children can be upset when parents separate or family circumstances and living arrangements change. Many children and families need help to ensure that their child's wellbeing and needs are supported at these times.

School staff can support your child through various social and emotional programs such as Lego therapy and ELSA. Where we cannot support, we can refer to other agencies such as Early Help.

### 3. All Parents Matter

By law, any person with **legal parental responsibility** has an equal right to be involved in their child's education and receive information from school, even if they do not live with the child.

In most cases, all parents with legal parental responsibility can:

- Receive school updates and information
- Attend parent-teacher meetings
- Access school reports and records
- Be informed about school events, trips, and medical needs
- Volunteer for school trips and attend school events.

**All parents with legal parental responsibility also have responsibility to ensure their child attends school.**

In general, the school will not restrict a parent's right to information, or to be part of the school community, unless (a) there is a court order, bail condition or other legally enforceable restriction in place or (b) the school considers that restrictions are necessary and proportionate for safeguarding or school operational reasons, that would prevent a parent's involvement with their child or former partner. In the absence of any of the above, the school will treat all parents equally and will not take sides. If a parent does not have legal Parental Responsibility, the school is not required to share information with them.

If someone with Parental Responsibility has not been included on our admission / enrolment documents, they may subsequently provide the school with information to confirm their Parental Responsibility and we will update our records accordingly.

**4. Communication with Each Parent**

We are happy to send school information (like newsletters or reports) to all parents, if we have contact details.

Parents can request:

- Copies of school reports and attendance information (which the school will share in line with data protection legislation (e.g. GDPR).
- Access their child's online learning platform such as Hwb / Google Classroom,
- Receive information from school via our communication platforms.

It is not the school's role to act as a go-between for parents or pass messages from one parent to another.

**5. Collecting Children from School**

To keep your child safe:

- Except for specific circumstances, e.g. safeguarding concerns apply, we will generally release children to people over 16 as authorised by either parent / carer.
- If someone new is collecting your child, you must let us know in advance,
- If there are any legal restrictions (such as one parent not being allowed to collect the child), the school must have a copy of the official court order or bail conditions in order that we can comply with them.

**6. Parent Meetings and School Events**

We work hard to ensure we are fair to all parents and the needs of all parents are met. Where possible the involvement of all parents in a child's education is to be encouraged. However, we also want all parents and the teacher to feel comfortable in any parent - teacher meetings and for all parents to be able to ask any questions they have. We will always aim to make all parents feel welcome in their child's school life.

We ask that meetings focus on your child's progress and wellbeing - not on personal or legal matters. Our teachers are here to support your child's education - not to mediate between parents.

Please note there is no legal requirement on the school to provide a separate parents' meeting for parents. Ordinarily we would expect separated parents to attend together

cooperatively to discuss their child's education. The headteacher must consider teacher workload when allocating parent evening time slots and, as such, one parent-teacher meeting is allocated per child, usually lasting for approximately 10 minutes. If that allocation was extended in one instance of separated parents, then it would need to be extended to all parents in a similar situation and it is not sustainable to create additional meetings for multiple families.

If parents cannot or will not attend together the school will seek to offer a suitable alternative, such as dividing the 10 minute allocation between both parents, providing for example 5 minutes each, or parents may agree that one parent attends for 10 minutes and provides feedback to the other parent.

School staff will comply with a court order, bail condition or other legally enforceable restriction relevant to attendance at school or contact with individuals. In these circumstances school may offer separate parents' evenings *if* this is manageable.

**7. Parental Consent**

Each parent with legal parental responsibility has equal rights to participate in decisions about their child's learning. If parental consent is required, e.g. for example for educational visits, we will normally accept consent from any parent with Parental Responsibility, unless another parent has expressly stated an objection.

If there is a disagreement whereby one parent consents but one parent objects, we will generally proceed on the basis that parental consent has **not** been given and would expect parents to resolve these differences in the interests of the child.

**8. Allegations of Domestic Abuse**

We will always treat allegations of domestic abuse seriously and sensitively. Any concerns that a child is at risk of harm will be dealt with under our Safeguarding Policy.

All visitors to the school, including parents, are expected to adhere to our Families & Visitors Code of Conduct. The school may contact the relevant authorities should any instances of unacceptable behaviour occur.

The school is not resourced, nor are our staff appropriately trained, to investigate or determine the truth of allegations. Nor would it be appropriate for the school to stand in the position of a Court and restrict parent's rights in ways that fall outside the school's existing policies.

For that reason, the school cannot take any action to restrict a parent's right to information, or to be part of the school community, on the basis of domestic abuse allegations alone. Where there are safeguarding concerns in relation to the child, the school may conduct a risk assessment, seek advice from relevant agencies, and implement proportionate interim arrangements pending further information.

As stated above, we will not restrict a parent's right to information, unless (a) there is a court order, bail condition or other legally enforceable restriction in place and / or (b) the school

considers that restrictions are necessary and proportionate for safeguarding or school operational reasons, that would prevent a parent's involvement with their child or former partner.

**9. Keeping Us Informed**

To help us support your child:

- Please keep your contact details up to date,
- Let us know if there are any changes to living arrangements or family circumstances,
- Provide copies of any legal documents (e.g. child arrangements orders, prohibited steps orders etc.) that affect your child's school life.

**10. What the School Cannot Do**

While we want to help as much as we can, there are limits to what the school can do.

We **cannot**:

- Take sides in family disagreements,
- Investigate and/or verify allegations of domestic abuse,
- Prevent a parent from seeing school information or being part of the school community unless there is a legal reason,
- Withhold a child from a parent unless there are safeguarding concerns, or as directed by a court,
- Act as a messenger between parents.

**11. Talk to Us**

If you are separated or divorced and have questions about how we can support your family, please speak to the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, or contact the school office. We will always handle these conversations with sensitivity and confidentiality.

**Thank you for working with us to make sure your child feels safe, happy, and supported at school.**

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