



SEPARATED PARENTS POLICY

Approved by the Learning and Standards Committee

19.04.23

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CHANGES

March 23: Reviewed and statement of intent and parental imprisonment updated

I. STATEMENT OF INTENT

Discovery Multi Academy Trust recognises that children from families whose parents are separated, or are undergoing separation, may go through traumatic changes during their time at school. With this in mind, we will make every effort to work with parents to promote the welfare of children.

This policy has been created to minimise any impact and to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the Trust's schools and its staff.

It is estimated that for the financial year ending 2021, there were approximately 2.3 million separated families in Great Britain, including 3.6 million children in those separated families. (www.gov.uk/government/statistics/separated-families-statistics-april-2014-to-march-2021-experimental)

2. DEFINITIONS

The Trust has a legal responsibility to work in partnership with families and to involve all those with parental responsibility with 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 a Trust 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 LAB members)
- 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)
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3. HEAD OF SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Head of School will ask parents or guardians for the names and addresses of all parents when they register a pupil at a Trust school.

It is the duty of the Head of School to ensure that the names and addresses of all parents, where known, are included in the admission register and also in pupil records, and are available to the pupil's teachers.

The Head of School will ensure that the names and addresses of all parents are forwarded to any school to which the pupil moves.

The Head of School will ensure that details of the court orders are noted in the pupil's record.

4. PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents are responsible for informing the school when there is a change in family circumstances. We recognise the sensitivity of such situations and we will maintain confidentiality requested by parents as far as possible. The school will also not make judgements about individual circumstances, and both parents will be treated equally.

Where there is a court mandated restraining order in place, a copy needs to be retained by the school, which will put measures in place to ensure the child is not released to named individuals.

Parents who have joint custody of the child are requested to keep the school informed, in writing, of any disputes they have with each other regarding the collection of children.

Children's welfare and safety are paramount. Where there are issues over access to children, the parent with whom the child resides should contact the school immediately.

The Trust's schools hold one parents evening appointment per child, where both parents are welcome. The Trust expects parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements and it will endeavour to accommodate these arrangements to reduce anxiety to both children and parents.

Parents are expected to liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as ordering of school photographs, tickets for performances and other instances. The school will not deal individually with these requests in view of the significantly increased workload that they represent.

5. PROGRESS REPORTS AND PUPIL RECORDS

Any parent has the right to receive progress reports and review pupil records of their child. If the parents are separated and divorced, progress reports will be sent to the parent and address noted in the school's records specifying where the child resides.

If the child is subject to a joint residence order and the school's records formally capture that the child resides at two addresses, then progress reports will be sent to both addresses.

The Trust's schools will send copies of the progress reports to a parent with whom the child does not reside only if that parent submits a written request, or does so via a noted telephone call.

Disagreements between parents must be resolved between the parents and cannot be resolved by the Trust's schools.

The Trust maintains an open door policy with both parents and the class teacher will be available to discuss any issues.

In extreme circumstances, if there is a belief that a possible abduction of the child may occur or if the parent is disruptive, the police will be notified immediately.

6. COLLECTING A CHILD FROM SCHOOL

Where a separated parent has parental responsibility and requests to take the child during or at the end of the school day, the school in question will endeavour to ascertain that parents are in agreement, providing a non-contact order is not in place.

The Head of School will use their discretion on the decision to allow a child to leave the premises with a non-resident parent and may refer this to the CEO, where necessary.

7. NAME CHANGES

Parents are responsible for resolving potential conflicts about the change of a child's surname. There must be consent from both parents after divorce or separation for registering a change of name of a child. The Trust's schools will ensure that the change in surname is supported by written evidence.

A separated parent who has parental responsibility, but no longer lives with the child, may refuse to consent to changing the child's surname. In such cases, the parent wishing to change the child's name would need to apply to the courts for permission to do so.

8. PARENTAL IMPRISONMENT

Any parent has the right to receive progress reports and review pupil records of their child. If one of the parents is in prison the school should endeavour to include this parent in any information shared or meetings held if appropriate.