



Chailey School: Statement of Principles for separated parents

INTRODUCTION

What is parental responsibility?

The Department for Education (DfE) guidance stated that:

“In family law, parental responsibility means all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent has in relation to the child”.

DfE guidance: parents’ rights

The DfE’s non-statutory guidance on parental responsibility says:

Schools are required by law to have a wide range of dealings with the pupils’ parents and can find themselves caught up in disputes between a number of adults, each claiming to have parental responsibility for a particular child....

Everyone who is a parent, as defined under education law (whether they are the residing parent or not, with or without parental responsibility) **has a right to participate in decisions** about a child’s education **and receive information** about the child (even though, for day-to-day purposes, the school’s main contact is likely to be a parent with whom the child lives on school days).

DEFINITION OF A PARENT

The DfE has published non-statutory advice on parental responsibility in which it explains that, for the purposes of education law, a parents is defined as:

- All natural (biological) parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person (this could be a step-parent, guardian or other relative)
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person

A person has care of a child if they are the person the child lives with and who looks after the child, regardless of what their relationship is with the child.

Biological parents automatically have parental responsibility (unless there is a court order in place limiting this). Other adults can acquire parental responsibility in a number of ways, including through:

- A court order , including child arrangements orders and emergency protection orders
- Being appointed guardian
- Adoption
- An agreement with the child’s mother (and other parent if that person also has parental responsibility for the child)

More than one person may have parental responsibility for a child.



PRINCIPLE ONE

Promoting the best interest of the pupil

- Chailey School recognises that it is beneficial for the pupil to have both parents involved in their education, where possible. Therefore, where the school knows of the existence of both parents, we intend to keep both parents informed about their child's education. Exceptions to this are explained below:

Exceptions to treating parents equally

- Chailey School treats parents equally unless there is an authorised restriction on parental responsibility. This generally involves a court order. Where a court order is in place the school would need to see evidence of it and will request updates to ensure all information is current
- Where there are other prohibitive orders specific to a family situation, specific details will be requested by the school

PRINCIPLE TWO

Dealing with separated parents

- Chailey School is committed to treating separated parents fairly and consistently with the other parent
- Separated parents both receive all communications from the school and are invited to school events
- In the event of a behavioural issue with the child both parents are informed and invited to any meeting
- For school trips, Chailey School asks for consent from one parent
- Consent for medical treatment forms are sent to the resident parent
- Any request for a change of school place, received from one parent, is shared with the other parent
- Any request to change a child's surname must be accompanied with legal proof
- Information about Parent Governor elections is shared with all parents
- For day-to-day purposes, the school's main point of contact will be the child's resident parent