

Separated Parents/Carers Policy



Whiteheath Junior School

Written by	Written on	Updated on	To be reviewed
M Kenny/L Ventin	January 2026 (new policy)		January 2028

Policy Consultation & Review

This policy is available on our school website and is available on request from the school office.

This policy will be reviewed in full on at least an biannual basis. This policy was written on **7th January 2026**. It is due for review in Spring 2028.

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1. Aims

Whiteheath Junior School recognises that parental separation can be challenging for parents and children. We aim to support families whilst ensuring that the welfare of the child remains paramount.

This policy is designed to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from Whiteheath Junior School staff

There may be instances when school needs to deviate from this policy, for example if there is a court order in place that specifies legal arrangements for a child.

2. Parental Responsibility (PR)

If the parents of a child were not married to each other when the child was born, the mother automatically has PR, but the father only does (from 1 December 2003) by jointly registering the birth of the child with the mother. He can, however, subsequently acquire PR by various legal means.

It is fair for schools to presume the information provided to them when the child is enrolled detailing adults with PR is correct, unless a court order or original birth certificate proving otherwise is provided to school.

3. Separated Parents - No court orders

Where there is no court order, neither parent with PR will have rights superior to the other. This includes if a parent requests restriction on the other. Parents are entitled to share in the decisions made about their child and to be treated equally by schools. Schools who actively try and engage both parents (unless there is a valid reason not to) find this is often beneficial to the child.

Parents' entitlements include:

- Attending parent meetings/school events
- Having access to school records and receiving copies of school reports, newsletters, invitations to school events,
- Appealing against admissions decisions
- Ofsted and school-based questionnaires
- Participation in any exclusion procedure

4. Disputes/disagreements (no court order)

Separation is difficult for all children and feeling caught in the middle can be a particularly stressful experience.

If parents cannot reach agreements on decisions regarding their child's educational programme such as RSE, extra-curricular activities etc where the school feel there is potential for this to be resolved with their support it would be helpful to hold a meeting with all parents, preferably together (unless any concerns of domestic abuse) to try and assist them in resolving this situation. A member of the SLT will run this meeting maintaining a focus on the child rather than parents. At this stage if parents cannot agree they will be advised to seek legal advice.

5. The release of a child from school - (no court order):

Where there is no court order in place any parent with PR can collect their child from school and legally the school does not have grounds to stop this.

School will release a child to parents in accordance with arrangements notified to the school. If one parent (with PR) seeks to remove their child in contravention of the notified arrangements, the following steps will be considered:

- The Headteacher/DSL will discuss by phone or, where they have turned up at school, meet with the parent seeking to remove the child to find out the reasons for the request.
- In the parent's presence, telephone the parent to whom the child would normally be released and explain the request.
- If this parent agrees, this verbal permission can be recorded and the child released.
- If the parent does not agree they would be informed that the school cannot legally withhold the child from the other parent and therefore, the school will release the child to the parent.
- During any discussion the child will be supervised by an appropriate member of staff in a separate room (if outside of normal school day activities at this time).

If the school has reason to fear for the safety of the child if they were to allow them to go with the parent - for example an allegation made by the child or the parent or due to the parents presenting behaviour - it is appropriate for the school to keep the child on the

school premises and refuse the parent to take the child for the period whilst they contact the police on 999 and the police can advise if they will be taking any action. If a parent seeks to remove the child in the middle of the school day the school should follow their usual procedures alongside the guidance above.

6. Managing parents' allegations

If a parent makes allegations regarding the other parent, school will always refer to their child protection policy in these cases. Staff should record ALL allegations clearly and report them to the DSL for appropriate follow up. The DSL will weigh up the information and consider whether threshold is met for a referral to stronger families or any other support is required. School will also encourage parents who make allegations of abuse or neglect, particularly sexual or physical, to report these themselves to the police and to Social Care.

7. Court Orders

Where a court order is in place a copy should be provided to school as soon as possible. School will then keep a copy on file and relevant staff members will be informed. School will comply with any relevant part of the order unless there are any safeguarding concerns in which the above advice should be followed. If a parent tries to contravene an order the school should explain to the parent their duty to comply with a written order, encouraging the parent to seek legal advice if necessary.

8. Domestic Abuse

If parents have separated due to Domestic abuse school will endeavour to to balance the safety of the child and protective parent with the legalities around parental rights. Copies of any Domestic Abuse protective orders in place, will be requested and kept on file. It is important for schools to have copies of protective order to ensure the safety of the family and to minimise the risk of schools facilitating a breach of any kind. All protective orders will be read through thoroughly as each order is drawn up on a case-by-case basis and some may outline arrangements related to child contact where others won't.

9. Parental rights and protective orders

No Court orders:

If school have received a disclosure of domestic abuse from a parent but there are no protective orders in place, school will work closely with any agencies involved with either parent. School will have regard to guidance set out in respect of managing allegations and will follow their Child Protection Policy.

If you have concerns about who is a genuine perpetrator or victim, you can discuss these with any of the core services mentioned or contact the DA Lead for Education to discuss.

(IDVA or any other Domestic Abuse services should remain strictly confidential and only be discussed with the protective/non abusive parent. This includes information about the role of DA Lead for Education)

When *there is* a protective order in place:

In circumstances where a perpetrator/alleged perpetrator who is party to a protective order attends the school without the school having been given prior notice, the school

will immediately inform the protective/ non abusive parent so that they can make arrangements to ensure their safety.

At any point if the school is, for whatever reason, concerned about the safety of a parent or a child it will not delay in contacting the police for assistance.

10. Parent Apps/ Platforms:

Whiteheath Junior School recognises that a shared platform may be triggering and harmful for victims of domestic abuse, especially if there is potential for visible notifications from the abusive parent. A shared platform may also facilitate the breach of a domestic violence related protection order.

Whilst both parents (those with PR) have a right to information on their child, legislation does not stipulate the specific methods of this information sharing, therefore, school will share the same information but via different methods if necessary. Whiteheath Junior school will share information specific to the child with each parent with PR however, we do not need to share every notification for example reminders to bring PE kits if not applicable to that parent at that time (i.e. if child resides with one parent in the week).

11. Parents Evening/Meetings:

Unless a court order stipulates otherwise, both parents with PR have the right to attend parents evening. In cases of domestic abuse, school will facilitate separate meetings considering the protective parent's safety. This can also take the form of a telephone conversation. Encouraging engagement with both parents (where safe to do so) is often beneficial in helping help schools to have a clearer picture of a child's homelife and therefore, being able to support and safeguard them effectively.

12. Access to Safeguarding Information

In the UK, parents with parental responsibility have the right to request access to their child's safeguarding records. However, this right may be restricted if there is a specific court order in place that prohibits the sharing of such information.

Whiteheath Junior School will always prioritise the welfare and safety of the child when responding to such requests and will seek legal or safeguarding advice if the situation is unclear.

In cases where there are concerns related to domestic abuse, personal details such as home addresses, contact numbers, and email addresses may be redacted to protect the safety and privacy of the individuals involved.

Whiteheath Junior School will:

- Review the request: Ensure it's from a parent with legal parental responsibility.
- Consult safeguarding and data protection policies: Check what can be shared and how.
- Anonymise sensitive data before sharing.
- Document everything: Record the request, the decision, and any communications.