



CROWTHORNE CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Co-Parenting Policy

Status of Policy	Date
Reviewed	Every 3 years
Ratified by governors	July 2023
Review date:	July 2026

Our school policies reflect our vision of

*Inspiring and enabling our school community to live life to the full,
promoting excellence and nurturing
compassion, honesty, trust, hope, respect, thankfulness and courage.*

*John 10 v 10:
Jesus said: "I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full"*

At Crowthorne Church of England Primary School we make every decision based on the best interests of the child, working in partnership with all parents as far as possible. This policy is an attempt to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the school and its staff.

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
- Any person who has care of a child i.e. a person with whom the child resides and who looks after the child, irrespective of the relationship

Parents as defined above are entitled to share in the decisions that are made about their child and to be treated equally by schools. In particular, these entitlements include:

- Appeal against admission decisions
- Ofsted & school based questionnaires
- Participation in any exclusion procedure
- Attendance at parent meetings/school events
- Access to educational records and copies of school reports, newsletters, invitations to school events, school photographs relating to their child and information about school trips. The school may however deny a request from a parent in certain circumstances where information might cause serious harm to the physical or mental health of the pupil or another individual. Where necessary the school may seek legal advice.

Parental Responsibility

In order to help us to look after children whilst they are in our care, Crowthorne C of E School expects parents to provide certain information, such as name of both parents, address, contact details as appropriate. We are also required to ask who has Parental Responsibility for the child. This is important because it allows the school to be sure who has the right to make decisions about a child's education and medical treatment.

- All mothers automatically have Parental Responsibility
- If a child's parents were married at the time of the birth or in a civil partnership at the time of treatment of insemination, both parents automatically have Parental Responsibility
- For children born from the 1st December 2003 where the father's or civil partner's name is on the birth certificate, both parents will have Parental Responsibility. In all other cases, fathers or the second parent in a non-civil relationship are required to officially obtain Parental Responsibility
- Parental Responsibility cannot be lost, except by legal adoption, although it does not guarantee contact

Having parental responsibility means assuming all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent of a child has by law. People other than a child's natural parents can acquire Parental Responsibility through:

- Being granted a Residence Order prior to 22/04/2014
- Being named as the resident parent under a Child Arrangements Order
- Being granted a Step-Parental Responsibility Order
- Being appointed as a child's Guardian or Special Guardian
- Adopting a child

This entitlement cannot be restricted without a specific court order. The school does not have the power to act simply on the request of one parent to restrict another.

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The school will not seek to make judgements about individual circumstances but will treat both parents equally unless there is a specific ruling in existence that the school is made aware of.

We will maintain our open door policy with all parents, and the class teacher and/or Head Teacher will be available by appointment to discuss any issues. The school is under no obligation to inform the resident parent of the absent parent contacting the school; any such information will be given at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Court Orders

Upon receipt of any court order restricting a parent's access, the school retains the right to consult the Local Authority before taking immediate action. The school is only obliged to comply with an order if it is properly notified and has received a copy for its files, and only to the extent that it relates to the school.

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. Only a Court Order stating the arrangements is deemed to be valid; a letter from a solicitor is not sufficient.

School communications

The school recognises that, while the parents of some pupils may be divorced or separated, both have a right to be informed of, and involved in, their child's education. However, we expect that parents, whatever the nature of their separation, will do all they can to share information from the school, for the benefit of their child. It is assumed that the parent with whom the child principally resides will keep the other parent informed.

We do, however, recognise that communication between parents is not always possible. If an estranged parent wishes to receive information from the school about their child, they should contact the school in writing with a specific request for separate communication.

Newsletters and general school updates can be sent to all parents via ParentMail and can also be found on the school's website. We would expect parents to communicate these messages to each other, as appropriate.

A parent, as defined in this policy, has the right to receive progress reports for the children. If parents are separated, progress reports will be sent to the parent at the address where the child resides, in accordance with the school's records. In the instance where a child is subject to a joint residence order, reports will be sent to both addresses.

We hold twice-yearly parent consultation evenings; we expect, wherever possible, parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements. A 10 minute appointment is available for each child. Separated parents should not expect separate appointments as this may not be possible.

If a court order is in place to restrict communication between parents the Headteacher should be made aware.

Should an un-named parent seek information or access to his/her child, the school will inform the main carer of this to check Parental Responsibility and ensure no court order is in place. For the avoidance of doubt, we will seek written confirmation from the main carer. Proof of identity of the non-resident parent will be required.

Disagreements between parents must be resolved between the parents and cannot be resolved by the school or Local Authority.

Collecting a child from school

Staff will release children to parents in accordance with arrangements notified to the school. If one parent seeks to remove the child from school in contravention of the usual arrangements, and the parent to whom the child would normally be released has not notified the school of any change, the following steps will be followed:

- Where a separated parent, who has parental responsibility and no court order in place, wishes to take the child during or at the end of the school day, the resident parent will be contacted in order to ensure that they are in agreement with the arrangement. If the parent to whom the child would normally be released agrees, the child may be released and the records will reflect that the permission was granted orally
- If a child is not collected at the end of the school day, the school will contact the parent who appears as the first point of contact on the school system. Should staff be unable to make contact with the parent identified as first on the list (usually those with whom they reside), they will then attempt to make contact with the next adult on the child's school records. It is the responsibility of parents to inform the school of any changes to the emergency contact details
- In the event that the parent to whom the child would normally be released to cannot be reached, the Head Teacher or staff member dealing with the issue will make a decision based upon all relevant information available to them

This policy will be made available to parents upon request.