

## **GOSFORTH GROUP SEPARATED PARENTS POLICY**

We recognise that some of our children's parents are separated or divorced. We understand that this can be a difficult situation and our main aim is not to put any additional stress on the children concerned. The child is our main priority and we hope parents will make every effort to recognise this and support us and their child. This guidance will apply unless the school is made aware of any Court Orders in place and has a copy of the documentation as confirmation. Parents and partners may need to check on who has official parental responsibility and provide evidence of this. It is the responsibility of the parents to inform the School when there is a change in the family circumstances. The School needs to be kept up to date with contact details, arrangements for collecting children and emergencies.

### **Definition of a Parent**

Parents may be recognised differently under education law and family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines a "parent" as:

- All birth parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although not a birth parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a biological parent and has no parental responsibility, 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 will be treated equally, unless there is a court order limiting an individual's exercise of parental responsibility. 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.

Family law defines "parental responsibility" as the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent has in relation to a child.

Any disputes regarding whether a person is a pupil's parent, within the meaning of section 576 of the Education Act 1996, will be decided by the courts.

Non-biological parents can acquire parental responsibility through:

- Adopting a child.
- Being appointed a guardian.
- Being named in an emergency protection order.

- Being granted a child arrangements order stating the child should live with them.
- The agreement of a child's mother (and other parent if that person also has parental responsibility).
- A court order.

### **School responsibility**

Gosforth Group schools will:

- Give access to formal documentation, such as reports, to both parents.
- Send routine school information, such as school trips, to the parent with whom the child lives. In the case of shared access, this will be sent to the parent with whom the child lives for the majority of the time.
- Need to be informed through the contacts sheet as to the people we may call on in the event of an accident or emergency; these will be called in the sequence recorded on the sheet.
- Need to be informed as to who is able to give messages to the school regarding the child's welfare such as a change in travel arrangements or collection for medical appointments; this may include new partners.
- Only accept one request for an appointment at Parents/Carers' Evenings/Review Days and other Parent Information Evenings unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is only realistic for teachers to discuss the child once per event. We hope parents can make amicable arrangements to accommodate this.
- Encourage children to be organised, in terms of having PE kits, reading books, homework etc in the right location to bring into school.
- Inform parents of their child's progress and any issues which may arise.

However, the school will always have the right to refuse entry or enter into any communication with parents who are abusive and use inappropriate language or aggressive behaviour towards any member of staff.

This policy is linked with our Safeguarding Policy where we have a duty of care to all our children.

**APPROVED by the Board of Trustees on 19 October 2023**