

Barham Church of England

Primary School



Separated Parents Policy

	May 2026
Next review date	May 2029

Our Vision Statement

Barham is a vibrant, inclusive and high-achieving primary school with a family feel at the heart of the local and church community. We are committed to supporting each child to be confident, kind and curious. Our curriculum is broad, engaging and supports everyone to flourish as God intends.

1. Introduction

At **Barham Church of England Primary School**, we aim to maintain contact with both parents in the best interests of their child(ren). Our approach reflects our school values of being **kind, confident and curious**, with the child's wellbeing at the centre of all decision-making.

This policy aims to minimise any potential impact of parental separation and to clarify expectations for parents and for the school.

The person(s) with parental responsibility who applied for the child's admission should have involved all others with parental responsibility. Where this has not happened, the school welcomes contact from additional parents so that accurate records can be maintained. The school cannot be held responsible where information has not been shared.

If parents separate whilst their child attends the school, they must inform the school as soon as possible. This enables us to ensure appropriate communication and to support the child sensitively.

2. Definition of "parent"

The definition of a "parent" is broad and includes:

- Biological parents
- Anyone with parental responsibility
- Anyone who has care of the child (i.e. the person the child lives with)

This may include step-parents, grandparents, guardians or foster carers.

Parents are entitled to be treated equally and to:

- Receive school reports and communications
- Access school records
- Attend meetings and events
- Receive information about trips and activities
- Be involved in decisions about their child's education

This entitlement cannot be restricted unless a court order is in place.

3. Parental Responsibility

Parental responsibility is defined in the Children Act 1989 and includes the rights and responsibilities a parent has in relation to a child.

The school will rely on the information provided at admission unless legal documentation (e.g. a court order or birth certificate) states otherwise.

All parents with parental responsibility have an equal right to be involved in decisions about their child's education unless a court order limits this.

4. Court Orders

The school will always act to ensure that any court order is followed, where it has been provided with an official copy.

- A court order must be shared with the school
 - The school is not responsible for enforcing court orders
 - Where no court order is provided, all parents will be treated equally
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5. Disputes and Disagreements

The school's role is to educate and safeguard children. It is not appropriate for the school to become involved in parental disputes.

- The school will not mediate between parents
- The school will not take sides
- Parents are expected to resolve disputes themselves or through legal advice

Where disagreement affects decisions about the child, the school may require written agreement from all those with parental responsibility before proceeding.

6. Changes in Family Circumstances

Parents must inform the school promptly of:

- Separation or changes in living arrangements
- Updates to contact details
- Changes to collection arrangements
- Any court orders

The school will treat information sensitively and share it with staff on a need-to-know basis to support the child appropriately.

7. The Release of Children

Unless otherwise notified, the school will release a child to any parent or authorised adult.

If a parent seeks to collect a child contrary to known arrangements:

- A member of staff will speak to the parent
- The usual collecting parent will be contacted where possible
- The school may refuse release if agreement cannot be reached
- The child will be supervised while arrangements are clarified
- The police may be contacted if there are safeguarding concerns

The school will always act in the best interests of the child.

8. Communication Between School and Parents

Communication is normally shared via:

- Email
- School communication systems (e.g. Arbor)
- Website updates

All parents with parental responsibility will receive communication where contact details are available.

The school will:

- Consider requests for separate communication arrangements where needed
 - Offer appointments with staff on request
 - Encourage parents to communicate with each other where possible
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9. Parents' Evening Appointments

Where requested, the school will offer separate parents' evening appointments for parents with parental responsibility.

10. Written Pupil Reports

All parents with parental responsibility are entitled to receive written reports for their child.

These will be provided where the school holds up-to-date contact details.

11. Change of Name

A child's legal name can only be changed where:

- All those with parental responsibility provide written consent, or
- A court order is provided

The school may agree to an informal name change where it is in the child's best interests, but official records will reflect the legal name unless formally changed.

12. Access to School Information

Key information is available via:

- The school website
- Direct communication (email/system messages)
- Paper copies on request

Parents may contact the school directly to request information relevant to their child.

13. Safeguarding

Where the school believes:

- A child may be at risk
- Conflict is impacting wellbeing
- There is a risk of unlawful removal

We will act in line with safeguarding procedures, which may include contacting external agencies.

14. Attendance and Term-Time Leave

At Barham Church of England Primary School, we are committed to promoting excellent attendance and follow national guidance regarding leave during term time.

Requests for Leave During Term Time

- Any request for leave during term time must be made in writing to the school using the school's leave request form.

- The Headteacher will consider each request on an individual basis and will only authorise leave in **exceptional circumstances**.
- Holidays taken during term time will **not normally be authorised**.

Separated Parents and Leave Requests

Where parents are separated:

- The school will normally accept a leave request from any parent with **parental responsibility**.
- However, where the school is aware of disagreement between parents, the school may:
 - Seek clarification from both parents
 - Request written agreement from all those with parental responsibility before making a decision
- The school may decide **not to authorise leave** where there is clear parental dispute, as it is not appropriate for the school to take sides.
- The school will not routinely inform the other parent of a leave request unless:
 - There is a known dispute
 - There are safeguarding considerations
 - It is necessary to ensure a fair and informed decision

We expect parents to notify each other before a leave request is made. Leave request forms signed by the Headteacher are returned, by e-mail, to both parents.

Penalty Notices (Fines)

- Where unauthorised leave is taken, the school may refer the case to the Local Authority for consideration of a **Penalty Notice** (fine), in line with local authority guidance.
- Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority, not the school.
- In most cases:
 - A Penalty Notice may be issued **to each parent who has parental responsibility** and has allowed the absence
 - This means that **both parents can be fined**, regardless of which parent requested or arranged the leave
- The decision to issue a fine, and to whom, rests with the **Local Authority**, not the school.

Safeguarding Considerations

- If a request raises concerns about a child potentially being taken out of school without appropriate agreement, or against known arrangements, the school will follow safeguarding procedures.
- This may include seeking advice from the Local Authority or other agencies.