



**Inspiring Futures
through Learning**

Separated Parents Policy

September 2026 – September 2027



Policy name:	Child Protection and Safeguarding Requirements and Procedures in IFtL
Version:	V1
Date relevant from:	September 2026
Date to be reviewed:	September 2027 <i>This policy will be reviewed every year unless legislation dictates otherwise. Recent changes in Legislation will need to be read and used to review this Policy.</i>
Role of reviewer:	IFtL Head of Safeguarding, Health, Children & Families, IFtL Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.
Statutory (Y/N):	N
Published on website*:	2B

Policy level**:	2
Relevant to:	All employees through all IFtL schools and departments
Bodies consulted:	Employees Trade unions School / department governance bodies
Approved by:	IFtL Board of Trustees
Approval date:	

Key:

* Publication on website:

IFtL website

1	Statutory publication
2	Good practice
3	Not required

School website

A	Statutory publication
B	Good practice
C	Not required

** Policy level:

- Trust wide:
 - This one policy is relevant to everyone and be consistently applied across all schools and Trust departments with no variations.
 - Approved by the IFtL Board of Trustees.*
- Trust core values:
 - This policy defines the values to be incorporated fully in all other policies on this subject across all schools and Trust departments. This policy should therefore form the basis of a localised school / department policy that in addition contains relevant information, procedures and / or processes contextualised to that school / department.
 - Approved by the IFtL Board of Trustees as a Trust Core Values policy.*
 - Approved by school / department governance bodies as a relevantly contextualised school / department policy.*
- School / department policies
 - These are defined independently by schools / departments as appropriate
 - Approved by school / department governance bodies.*



1. Aims

This policy reflects the government's guidance on [Parental rights and responsibilities](#), and the Department for Education's publication [Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility](#). It sets out how the school will manage communication with separated, divorced, or estranged parents to ensure neutrality and equal access to information.

2. Introduction

At Ashbrook school, we aim to maintain contact with parents/carers in the best interests of the child. This policy applies to pupils who have been admitted to the school and sets out how the school will manage communication and arrangements where parents or carers are separated, divorced or estranged.

The person(s) with parental responsibility who applied for the child's admission should have involved all other persons with parental responsibility in the decision. The school will rely on the information provided at admission being accurate and complete. Where this has not happened, the school welcomes direct contact from other persons with parental responsibility who wish to provide their details. However, the school cannot be held responsible for failing to communicate with a parent or person with parental responsibility where accurate details have not been provided. If parents separate while their child attends the school, they must notify the school so that the school can maintain contact with both parents. The school will endeavour to accommodate communications separately in cases of acrimonious separation.

3. Definition of "Parent"

For school purposes, a "parent" is defined under Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 as:

- All biological parents, married or not
- Any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person – this could include an adoptive parent, stepparent, guardian or other relative
- Any person who, although not a biological parent and without parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child. For example, this may be a foster carer or family and friend's carer who do not have parental responsibility but have been delegated the responsibility for taking day-to-day decisions about the child.

Parents, as defined above, may have rights and entitlements regarding their child's education. Those with parental responsibility are entitled to be involved in decisions about the child's education and should be treated equally unless there is a legal or safeguarding reason not to do so. In particular, these entitlements include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Receiving copies of school reports
- Having access to school records
- Attending parent meetings
- Receiving newsletters
- Invitations to school events
- Information about school trips



- School photographs relating to their child
- Participation in any exclusion procedure
- Dealing with any medical issues that arise and/or vaccinations that may be offered and
- Being informed about significant matters affecting their child's education and welfare.

The school recognises that whilst the parents of some pupils may be separated, divorced or estranged, they are still entitled to the above. These entitlements will only be restricted where there is a legal requirement to do so or where safeguarding considerations require information sharing arrangements to be reviewed. If the parents are involved in proceedings before the Court directly relating to the child(ren), the parents should seek the Court's permission to disclose the Court order(s) made to the school. In addition, and should the Courts so require, the school will be willing to provide a letter setting out any information that is specified in a Court order.

4. Parental Responsibility

Parental responsibility is defined in the Children Act 1989 and means the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent has for their child. In addition to a child's natural parents, it can be acquired by Court order, being appointed a guardian, adopting a child or a formal agreement.

The information provided to the school regarding persons with parental responsibility will be presumed to be correct unless the school is provided with documentary evidence demonstrating otherwise, such as a Court order or other relevant legal documentation. The school will rely on the information provided being accurate and complete. The information provided regarding the address(es) where the child lives will be presumed to be correct unless the school is provided with a copy of a Court order setting out arrangements for where the child should live.

Every parent with parental responsibility for a child has an equal right to be engaged with decisions regarding their education. Unless there is a Court order limiting an individual's exercise of parental responsibility the school must treat all parents equally and must provide them with the same information.

Where contact has been limited by a Court order, the parent still has the right to receive information about the child and be involved in decisions regarding their education and welfare, unless a Court order restricts what information they can receive or removes their parental responsibility. The school will not remove a person with parental responsibility's contact details solely because another parent or person with parental responsibility requests this. Any request to amend contact details or communication arrangements will be considered based on the information available to the school, any relevant legal documentation, and the best interests of the child.

A person being the child's biological parent does not automatically mean they have parental responsibility or an entitlement to make decisions about the child's education or receive routine school communications. Where a person requests information about a child but the school does not hold evidence that they have parental responsibility, the school will explain the basis of its decision and may request appropriate documentation before sharing information. This may include evidence of parental responsibility or a Court order.

5. Court Orders

At Ashbrook school, our sole wish is to promote the best interests of the child, working in partnership with all parents and/or those with parental responsibility. If there is a Court order in place, the school will always act in ways to ensure, as best it can, that no Court order is breached.



The school can only be expected to comply with an order if it is properly notified and has received a copy of the Court order for its files, and only to the extent that it relates to the school.

The school has no responsibility for enforcing any Court order but will endeavour to ensure that if there are restrictions in place with regards to the collection of a child, such restrictions are adhered to.

If a Court order is in place but the school has not been informed, the school cannot be responsible for any breach arising from its lack of knowledge of the order.

6. Disputes and Disagreements

Ashbrook school hopes that parents and all those with parental responsibility will support the school in working together for the benefit of their children.

It is very important to note that any dispute between parents sharing these rights will need to be resolved between them. In all cases where parents and/or those with parental responsibility cannot agree on various issues, parents should seek independent legal advice as to the options available to resolve those issues, either by agreement or by obtaining a Court order.

Parents should seek to resolve contact issues without involving the school. The school will not mediate, “take sides” or act as an intermediary between parents who do not communicate with each other.

The school will, however, act on any safeguarding concerns arising from parental conflict or disputes and will consider whether additional support or intervention is required for the child.

7. Changes in Family Circumstances

We ask parents to inform the school whenever something outside school – such as a change in family circumstances – occurs so that we can sensitively support the child in school. We expect parents to update the school whenever emergency contact details change for one or both parents and/or there is a new arrangement for collecting children at the end of the school day, in particular if there is any Court order that has been made.

This may include changes to living arrangements, parental relationships, contact arrangements or any circumstances which may affect the child’s wellbeing. We recognise the sensitivity of some situations, and all staff are aware of the need for discretion and confidentiality. School staff will be informed on a strict need-to-know basis so that suitable support can be offered.

8. Release of Children

On being admitted to the school, and unless notified to the contrary, the school will release children to either or both parents and/or those with parental responsibility and/or those with care of the child. The school will not become involved in disputes about parental rights at the point of collection but will take reasonable steps to ensure the child’s immediate safety and welfare.

If one parent seeks to remove the child from school in contravention of the notified arrangements, and the parent to whom the child would normally be released has not consented, the following steps will be followed:

- The headteacher or designated deputy will meet with the parent seeking to remove the child and then telephone the parent to whom the child would normally be released and explain the request.



- If the parent to whom the child would normally be released agrees, this agreement should be recorded in writing wherever practicable and retained on the school's files.
- If a parent to whom the child would normally be released cannot be contacted, the headteacher or designated deputy will consider the circumstances, including any known safeguarding information, and make a decision in the best interests of the child.
- The headteacher or designated deputy may have to refuse permission if consent cannot be obtained.
- During any discussion or communication with parents and/or those with parental responsibility, the child may be supervised by an appropriate member of school staff in a separate room.
- Police may be notified where there is an immediate concern that a child may be removed without consent, there is a risk of abduction, or there is a risk to the safety of the child or others.

9. Communication with Separated Parents

Bulletins, newsletters and general updates are sent via **My child at School** to all parents and/or those who have parental responsibility for whom we have up-to-date contact details. These updates contain all the main class/school events, including parents' evenings, productions, sports days and class outings and events.

The school is able to deal with separate requests for invitations to school events and performances made by separated, divorced or estranged parents who have parental responsibility. Where appropriate and safe to do so, parents are encouraged to communicate directly regarding arrangements for their child. However, the school recognises this may not always be possible. The school will try to comply with requests; however, in certain circumstances, and as stated above, it will not always be possible, for example, where a Court order prevents contact between individuals or restricts the sharing of information.

In all circumstances, we aim to maintain our open-door policy with all parents. Class/subject teachers and/or the headteacher will be available by appointment to discuss any issues.

10. Parents Evening Appointments

Whenever requested, we will offer separate parents' evening appointments for separated, divorced or estranged parents who have parental responsibility.

11. Written Pupil Reports

Any person who is known to the school to have parental responsibility for a child has the right to receive written progress reports for their child. These will be provided to separated, divorced or estranged parents who have parental responsibility and for whom the school has up-to-date contact details.

12. Change of Name

The school's official records will reflect a child's legal name. A change to the child's legal name will only be made where appropriate evidence is provided, such as a birth certificate, legal documentation confirming the change or Court order.

The school may, at its discretion, use a preferred name informally where this is consistent with the child's wellbeing, safeguarding considerations and the school's policies.



13. Access to School Information

Key information is available on the school website. Parents may also receive information via **My child at School** or email.

For parents who do not have access to the internet paper copies of communications may be requested from the school.

Where parents have requested separate communication arrangements, the school will make reasonable efforts to accommodate these where practicable.

14. Safeguarding Considerations

The school recognises that parental separation can sometimes be associated with increased stress or conflict. Where staff become aware of concerns relating to domestic abuse (including where a child may be experiencing or witnessing domestic abuse), coercive control, parental conflict affecting a child's wellbeing, or any other safeguarding concern, these will be managed in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures. The school may need to share information or take action without parental agreement where this is necessary to safeguard a child.

