



Thorpe Acre Junior School



Thorpe Acre Infant School

Separated Parents Policy

Approved by : Headteacher
Date : March 2026
Next review due by : March 2029

Learning, Working and Succeeding Together
Reaching High, Learning and Growing Together

Safeguarding Statement

At Thorpe Acre Junior School and Thorpe Acre Infant School, we respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn, in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We believe every pupil should be able to participate in all school activities in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. This is the responsibility of every adult employed by, or invited to, deliver services at Thorpe Acre Junior School and Thorpe Acre Infant School. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard all who access school and promote the welfare of all our pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and bullying.

GDPR Statement

Data will be processed to be in line with our requirements and protections set out in the UK General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act as amended by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.

Equality Impact Statement

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

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1. Introduction

Thorpe Acre Junior School and Thorpe Acre Infant School recognise that children from families whose parents are separated, or are undergoing separation, may experience difficult or traumatic changes during their time at school. The school will make every effort to work in partnership with parents to provide the pastoral support pupils' might need to continue to feel safe and supported at school during this time.

2. Definitions and Rights

Under section 576 of the Education Act (1996), a "parent" in relation to a child is defined as:

- The biological parents of a child, whether they are married or not
- Anyone, who although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child
- Any person, who although not a biological parent and who does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child.

A person typically has care of a child if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time, and who looks after the child, irrespective of their biological or legal relationship with the child (e.g. foster carer or family and friends' carer who has been delegated responsibility for taking day-to-day decisions about the child but does not have parental responsibility).

A person who is not the biological parent of a child, who does not have parental responsibility for the child, and with whom the child no longer lives is unlikely to be recognised as a "parent".

Resident Parents

When parents separate the resident parent is the parent the child lives with most of the time. If a child lives with each parent for an equal amount of time, both parents count as resident parents.

Rights of Separated Parents

Each person with parental responsibility for a child is entitled to:

- Receive information about their child
- Request to see their child's educational record
- Participate in statutory activities (e.g. governor elections)
- Be informed about meetings involving their child (e.g. parents' evenings; exclusion hearings)
- Be asked to give consent (e.g. school trips; sharing photos on the school website).

3. School's Responsibilities

It must be recognised that it is **not** the school's responsibility to get involved in disputes between the parents of pupils following breakdowns in relationships or to act as mediator between parents.

It is **not** up to the school to decide, where the parents have separated or divorced, whether an absent parent should have contact with the child at school. Where a child's arrangements order is in force, unless there is also a court order dealing with the issue, it is for the child's carer to determine contact.

If an absent parent requests contact at school, the school may:

- Seek consent from the parent who cares for the child
- Permit contact only if it is clear under the terms of an order, or the parent who cares for the child consents and it is considered safe and reasonable to do so.

School will ask for copies of court orders from the parents, or their solicitors, so that school records may be kept up to date. Such orders will not be relied upon as they may be changed without the school being notified. If a parental dispute does arise, the school may obtain a copy of any relevant order, together with an assurance that the relevant order remains valid.

The information provided to school when the child is admitted to school will be presumed to be correct unless official documentation proving otherwise is provided to the school.

For day-to-day matters, e.g. absence or lateness, our point of contact will be the child's resident parent. The non-resident parent will not be informed, unless they specifically request the information.

School will **not** provide parents with updates regarding collection unless there are safeguarding concerns, in which case the school will follow school protocols.

Under Education Law, the school will not be able to limit the amount of information another parent gets nor prevent another parent attending school events.

The school will, however, prevent a parent exercising their rights if:

- There is a court order relating to the child
- There is a change of circumstance which means someone no longer has parental responsibility.

The school reserves the right to refuse entry to, or enter into communication with, parents who are abusive; aggressive or use inappropriate language towards any member of staff.

4. Parents' responsibilities

It is the parents' responsibility to come to arrangements between themselves regarding contact and drop-off/collection from school and to inform the school of the arrangements in place. If parents are unable to do this they should seek their own legal advice and apply to the court for an order.

Where there is a parental dispute, parents are encouraged to keep school fully informed of what is happening and provide the school with any court orders that may affect school life, e.g. child arrangement orders, that may prohibit one parent from collecting the child or having direct or indirect contact with them in school.

Parents will:

- Provide the school with contact details for everyone who has parental responsibility for a child including name and address, and a telephone number for each resident parent

- Provide the school with evidence of who has parental responsibility e.g. birth certificate
- Keep the school up to date with contact details; arrangements in place for collecting children and arrangements in place for emergencies.

5. Consent

It is **not** the school's job to get parents to agree, and it is not the school's responsibility to get involved in disputes between parents about consent, rather parents may wish to consider seeking independent legal advice or use a mediator. If parents cannot agree on whether to give consent, the school will treat it as if consent has **not** been given.

6. Changing a surname

A change of a child's name is private law and should be resolved between parents. A child's surname cannot be changed on school records without written evidence that consent has been given by both parents and/or anyone who has parental responsibility.

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if there are any changes to the Education Law which impact on this policy.