

# QUEEN ELIZABETH HIGH SCHOOL

## Working with Separated Parents Guidance

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In families where a student's parents are separated, we recognise that this can be a difficult situation and our main aim is not to put any additional stress on the student or family concerned. The student is our main priority and we hope parents will make every effort to recognise this and support us and their child.

We therefore request that parents respect the following guidance. This guidance will apply unless there are court orders in place stating otherwise, (and we will need to see copies of such orders), or the whereabouts of one parent is unknown. Parents and partners may need to check on who has legal parental responsibility. For guidance on "What is parental responsibility?" see Appendix A and the DFE document "Understanding and Dealing with issues relating to Parental Responsibility", January 2016, which contains advice for schools. The link to this document is:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/489901/Parental\\_Responsibility\\_Advice\\_for\\_School\\_January\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/489901/Parental_Responsibility_Advice_for_School_January_2016.pdf)

The school will always encourage parents to engage fully with their child's education.

### **The school will:**

- send formal documentation, information about reports/data on e-portal, to both parents if requested;
- send routine school information, to the parent with whom the child lives and in the case of shared access, the parent with whom the child lives for the majority of the time. If there is a foreign visit both parents need to agree the child can go on the trip. We will ask for this consent and ask parents to resolve any issues they may have outside of school with a focus on the best interests of the child.
- send texts regarding absence to the parent who the child lives with and to both parents only if requested
- make available, to both parents, online access to the student's profile page, covering academic progress, SEN status and attendance. This can be linked to multiple email addresses;
- encourage students to be organised, in terms of having homework etc. in the right location to bring into school;
- not facilitate contact arrangements for a separated parent. If a parent wishes for such arrangements to be made they must do so with the other parent or obtain a 'contact order' through a solicitor;
- not allow a student to be collected during the school day by any parent or guardian without prior arrangement;
- not be able to prevent a child from being collected from school by a guardian with parental responsibility if the child is happy to go;
- open any letters that come to the school address that are addressed to a named student. Pastoral leaders will open the letter to check contents;
- not accept and pass on messages, gifts or cards for a student on behalf of a parent;
- need to be informed, through the contact data sheet, as to the people we may call in the event of an accident or emergency, these will be called in the sequence given to us;

- not act as a line of communication between parents who are in conflict regarding their child's education;
- 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 other family members or partners of a parent;
- only accept one request for an appointment at Parents' Evenings, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The expectation of teachers is to discuss the child only once per parents' evening. We hope parents can make amicable arrangements to accommodate this. If this is not possible we will offer a meeting with their Pastoral Leader, where appropriate, to summarise the student's progress. All parents with parental responsibility will be able to see updates on student progress online;
- request parental permission from one parent to consent to an anaesthetic or other urgent medical treatment
- expect children's welfare and safety to be seen as paramount and, where there are issues over access to children, the parent with whom the child resides should contact the school immediately.
- expect leave of absence request forms signed by one parent to be accompanied by a letter of consent from the other parent if it is a foreign holiday.
- continue to provide access to educational records for those with parental responsibility until the young person leaves 6<sup>th</sup> form. This will continue when the young person becomes 18, whilst he/she remains in the 6<sup>th</sup> form.
- respect the wishes of parents as detailed on the data collection sheet regarding who is contacted and how they are kept informed e.g. text messages. All appropriate boxes on the form will need to be ticked.

We hope this makes the situation clear for parents. Should you wish to discuss this please contact your child's Pastoral Leader. If you still have queries contact Diane Harris Senior Deputy Headteacher.

This Guidance will be reviewed in January 2017.

### Working with separated parents - Guidance on Parental Responsibility

In order to help us to look after your children whilst they are in our care, we are required to ask you to provide certain information, such as name of parents, address, contact details etc. We are also required to ask who has Parental Responsibility for your child. This is important because it allows us to be sure who has the right to make decisions about your child's education and medical treatment. However, we are aware that this is a very specific legal term and many of you may be unaware of how it is applied. This leaflet aims to provide you with an explanation of who has parental responsibility so that you are able to provide us with accurate information:

- All mothers automatically have Parental Responsibility.
- If a child's parents were married at the time of the birth, both parents automatically have Parental Responsibility.
- For children born from the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2003 where the father's name is on the birth certificate, the father and mother will both have Parental Responsibility.
- In all other cases, fathers are required to officially obtain Parental Responsibility.
- Parental Responsibility cannot be lost, except by legal adoption, although it does not guarantee contact.

If you would like further guidance, there is clear information on the government website in the document "Understanding and Dealing with issues relating to Parental Responsibility", January 2016. This document is available at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/489901/Parental\\_Responsibility\\_Advice\\_for\\_School\\_January\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/489901/Parental_Responsibility_Advice_for_School_January_2016.pdf)