



**Cabot**  
Learning  
Federation



# Separated Parent Policy

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This policy takes into account the government's explanation of [Parental rights and responsibilities](#) and the Department for Education's (DfE) guidance [Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility](#)

Government guidance outlines [what is parental responsibility](#) and who can obtain it.

## 1. Introduction

At Bristol Metropolitan Academy, we aim to maintain contact with any parents in the best interests of their child(ren). This policy aims to minimise any impact and to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the Academy.

The basis of the advice within this policy is with regards to a child or children who have already been admitted to the Academy.

The person(s) with parental responsibility who applied for the child's admission should have involved all others with parental responsibility in making the decision to apply. They should have provided the Academy with details of all those with parental responsibility for a child. Where this has not happened, the Academy welcomes direct contact from those with parental responsibility providing their own details. However, the Academy cannot be held responsible for excluding a parent or person with parental responsibility if the information has not been provided to them.

If parents separate whilst their child already attends the Academy, the parents must notify us immediately so that we can ensure continuing contact with both parents and, in the event that the parents have separated on an acrimonious basis the Academy will endeavour to accommodate each parent separately in terms of communications and any attendances at the Academy site.

## 2. Definition of "parent"

The definition of a "parent" for School purposes is much wider than for any other situation. Section 576 of The Education Act 1996 defines a parent as:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- includes any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have 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 friends 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, are entitled to share in the decisions about the child's education and to be treated equally by Schools. 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 suspension or exclusion procedure and
- dealing with any medical issues that arise and/or vaccinations that may be offered.

The Academy recognises that whilst the parents of some pupils may be separated, divorced or estranged, they are still entitled to the above and this entitlement cannot be restricted without a Court order. 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 Academy. In addition, and should the Courts so require, the Academy will be willing to provide a letter setting out any information that is specified in a Court order.

### **3. 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 Academy when the child was enrolled detailing who has parental responsibility for the child will be presumed to be correct unless a Court order or original birth certificate proving otherwise is provided to us. The Academy will be reliant on such information being provided as accurate and true. The information provided regarding the address(es) where the child lives will be presumed to be correct unless the Academy 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 Academy 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. We will not remove a parent's contact details without such a Court order being in place or a parent asks for their **own** contact details to be removed.

### **4. Court orders**

At Bristol Metropolitan Academy, 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 Academy will always act in ways to ensure, as best it can, that no Court order is breached.

The Academy can only be expected to comply with an order if it is properly notified and has received a sealed digital or paper copy for its files, and only to the extent that it relates to us.

The Academy 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 during the Academy day. We cannot be accountable for arrangements to collect students after the school day finishes.

In the event that the Academy is not informed of the existence of such an order, the parents will be treated equally by the Academy. If there is an order in place and neither the parents and/or those with parental responsibility inform the Academy then if there is any breach of such order, the Academy cannot be held responsible and/or liable.

### **5. Disputes and disagreements**

Bristol Metropolitan Academy hopes that parents and all those with parental responsibility will support the Academy 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 Academy. The Academy will not mediate, “take sides” or act as an intermediary between parents who do not communicate with each other.

### **6. Changes in family circumstances**

We ask parents to inform the Academy whenever something outside— such as a change in family circumstances – occurs so that we can sensitively support the child in the Academy. We expect parents to update the Academy 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 Academy day, in particular if there is any Court order that has been made.

We recognise the sensitivity of some situations and all staff are aware of the need for discretion and confidentiality. Academy staff will be informed on a strict need-to-know basis so that suitable support can be offered.

### **7. Communication between the Academy and separated parents**

Bulletins, newsletters and general updates are sent via text or email to all parents and/or those who have parental responsibility for whom we have up-to-date contact details. These updates contain information to Academy events, including parents’ evenings, productions, sports days and class outings and events.

The Academy can deal with separate requests for invitations to Academy events and performances made by separated, divorced or estranged parents who have parental responsibility. However, the Academy would be grateful if parents could communicate directly on such matters if they can although in some instances the Academy recognises that this may not be possible should there be a Court order in place preventing the parties from contacting each other. The Academy will try to comply with requests; however, in certain circumstances, and as stated above, it will not always be possible, for example when a Court order preventing contact with the child or each other is in place.

In all circumstances, we aim to maintain our open-door policy with all parents.

### **8. Parents’ evening appointments**

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

### **9. Written pupil reports**

Any person who is known to the Academy 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 Academy has up-to-date contact details.

### **10. Change of name**

A parent can only change their child's name (forename and/or surname) either by both parents providing a letter confirming such consent and bearing wet signatures or by an order of the Court. Unless either of the above are provided, the child will be known and addressed by their birth name as recorded on their birth certificate.

The Academy is under no obligation to do so but they may, effect an informal change of name if that is requested by the parent(s) for example (a) verbally addressing a child (b) name on books etc. It is important to note that the Academy database, unless changed by an order of the Court, will reflect the child's name at birth. In addition, and as stated, any informal change of name addressing the child is at the Academy's complete discretion after the Academy has considered all of the circumstances.

### **11. Access to Academy information**

Key information is available on the Bristol Metropolitan Academy website - [www.bristolmet.net](http://www.bristolmet.net). Parents may also receive information via text or email.

For parents who do not have access to the internet, paper copies of communications can be requested from the Academy.