



King Alfred's Academy

Separated Parents Policy

Written by: Max Gayler
Date of Policy: January 2020
Review Date: January 2021
Governing Committee: Pastoral

SEPARATED PARENTS POLICY

Introduction and Background to Policy

Research and experience have shown that separated parents can become particularly estranged, especially during the initial stages of a split. This is very often traumatic for any children concerned and unfortunately these personal family circumstances can have an impact on a wide cohort of people – the immediate family, friends and the academy community. This policy is an attempt to minimise any impact and to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the academy. It is imperative one ensures that the students' welfare and achievement is a priority for all concerned.

In writing this Policy, the DfE 'Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility (2018)' has been referenced.

The definition of a parent for education purposes encompasses a broad definition.

The Education Act 1996 defines a parent as:

(Parents as defined below are entitled to share in the decisions that are made about their child and to be treated equally by the academy)

- All biological parents, including those that are not married to each other
- Any person who has parental responsibility but is not a natural parent e.g. a legally appointed guardian or the Local Authority named in a Care Order
- Any person who has care of a child i.e. a person with whom the child resides and who looks after the child irrespective of the relationship

In particular, these entitlements include;

- Appeal against admission decisions
- Ofsted & academy-based questionnaires
- Participate in any exclusion procedure
- Attend parent meetings/academy events
- Have access to academy records and receive copies of academy reports, newsletters, invitations to academy events, academy photographs relating to their child and information about academy trips

The Governing Body recognise that while the parents of some students may be divorced or estranged, they are entitled to the above and this entitlement cannot be restricted without a specific court order. In particular, the academy does not have the power to act on the request of one parent to restrict the other. The information provided to the academy when the child was enrolled detailing whether parents have parental responsibility for the child will be presumed to be correct unless a court order, or original birth certificate proving otherwise, is provided to the academy. Parents may request a copy of the Admission Form (with information about any other adults redacted appropriately in order to assess the information supplied). Similarly, the information

provided with regards to where the child resides will be presumed to be correct unless a court order proving otherwise is provided to the academy. At King Alfred's Academy, our sole wish is to promote the best interests of the child, working in partnership with all parents unless otherwise directed by a court order.

Upon receipt of any court order restricting access to a parent, the academy retains the right to consult their solicitors before taking action. The academy is only obliged to comply with an order if it is properly notified and has received a copy for its files, and only to the extent that it relates to the academy. The academy also has no responsibility for enforcing any court order.

In the event that the academy is not informed of the existence of such an order, neither parent will have rights superior to the other.

Parents are encouraged to resolve contact issues without involving the academy directly. The interests of the child will always be paramount when deciding whether to accommodate a request from an estranged parent.

Change in parent responsibility:

- It is the responsibility of the parents to inform the academy when there is a change in family circumstances. The academy needs to be kept up to date with contact details, arrangements for collecting children and any medical information
- We encourage parents to tell us at an early stage if there is a change in family circumstances. Whenever possible, staff will be informed of such changes so that suitable support can be offered as necessary. We will however recognise the sensitivity of some situations and maintain the level of confidentiality requested by parents as far as possible.
- Newsletters and general academy updates can be sent to all parents via email. These updates will contain all the main events within academy, including productions, sports days, parents' evenings, class trips, etc. Occasionally letters may be sent to individuals and these maybe paper copies only. We would expect parents to communicate these messages to each other as and when appropriate, however we will endeavour to send a paper copy via the post to any separated parent, whenever the request has been made
- We expect that parents should liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the ordering of academy photographs; tickets for performances etc. The academy will not deal individually with these requests in view of the significantly increased workload that they represent, unless specifically requested in advance when it would be considered

Disagreements Between Parents

Disagreements between parents must be resolved between the parents and cannot be resolved by the academy. It is the parents' responsibility to agree with one another on decisions regarding their child's educational programme, including but not limited to placement, participation in extracurricular activities, and consent to evaluation and services.

The academy will release children to parents in accordance with arrangements notified to the academy. If one parent seeks to remove the child from the academy 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:-

- A senior member of staff will inform the parent seeking to remove the child that they must consult with 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, the academy must be informed by them and the child may be released. Records will reflect that the permission was granted
- The senior staff member may have to refuse permission if consent cannot be obtained
- During any discussion or communication with parents, the child will be supervised by an appropriate member of academy staff in a separate room
- In extreme circumstances if there is a belief that a possible abduction of the child may occur, or if the parent is disruptive, the police will be notified immediately
- All parents can have equal access to all academy information via our email system. Alternatively, they may request in writing additional copies of communications which are not available on the academy website or via MCAS/VLE (all parents are recommended to regularly use the academy's website as it contains back dated newsletters and has a range of information and links). We will maintain our open-door policy with all parents, and staff will be available by appointment to discuss any issues
- Email 'Enquiries' (enquiries@kaacademy.org) to access MCAS/VLE
- To access MCAS parents need to apply for a username and password via the form on the website

Electronic Access

All biological parents can have access to MCAS (My Child at School). They will be allocated a username and password via the MCAS account where parents can access attendance, classes, timetables and assessments.