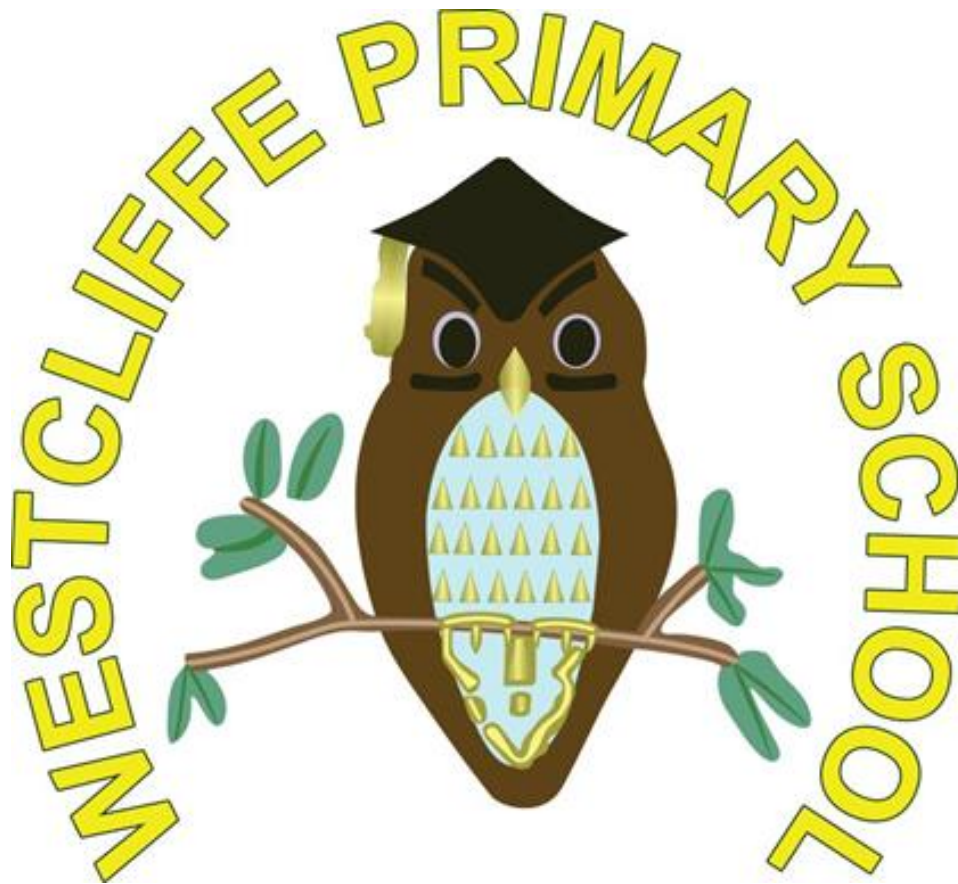




Separated Parents Policy

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Rationale

Experience has shown that separated parents may become particularly estranged, especially during the initial stages of the split. This is very often traumatic for any children concerned and unfortunately these personal family problems can have an impact on the schools the children attend.

This policy is primarily an attempt to minimise any impact on the welfare and learning of a pupil. It also aims to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the school and its staff.

Definition

The definition of a parent for school purposes is much wider than for any other situation.

The Education Act 1996 defines a parent as:

- All natural parents, including those that are not married;
- 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

Parents as defined above are entitled to share in the decisions that are made about their child and to be treated equally by schools. In particular, these entitlements include:

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

Court Orders

The Governing Body recognise that while the parents of some pupils 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 school does not have the power to act on the request of one parent to restrict another.

The information provided to the school 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 school. Similarly, the information provided on the address(es) where the child resides will be presumed to be correct unless a court order proving otherwise is provided to the school.

At Westcliffe Primary School, 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 school retains the right to consult the Local Authority before taking immediate action.

The school 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 school. The school also has no responsibility for enforcing any court order. In the event that the school 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 school directly. The interests of the child will always be paramount when deciding whether to accommodate a request from an estranged parent. The school will not pass on messages, presents etc. from an estranged parent or grandparent.

Unfortunately in extreme circumstances outside agencies may be involved in a family breakdown. In these circumstances the school will work fully with other professionals to support the welfare of the children.

Change in Parental Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the parents to inform school when there is a change in family circumstances. The school needs to be kept up to date with contact details, arrangements for collecting children and emergencies.

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. We will, however, recognise the sensitivity of some situations and maintain the level of confidentiality requested by parents as far as possible.

Annual reports, pupil records, parents' evenings and school events

Any parent has the right to receive annual reports or to review pupil records of their children. If the parents are separated or divorced, annual reports will be sent home with the child. If a separated parent would like a copy of the annual report, they can request this by contacting the school's admin.

Parents' Evenings are open for each parent we know requires a separate appointment booking and this can be done via our ParentMail app, or by contacting admin staff directly.

We expect that parents would liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the ordering of school photographs; tickets for performances and other instances. The school will not deal individually with these requests in view of the significantly increased workload that they represent.

Disagreements between parents must be resolved between the parents and cannot be resolved by the school or local authority.

Procedure for releasing a child

The school will release children to parents in accordance with arrangements notified to the school. 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, in their presence, 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, the child may be released and the records will reflect that the permission was granted orally.
- In the event that the parent to whom the child would normally be released to cannot be reached, the Headteacher, or staff member dealing with the issue, may make a decision based upon all relevant information available.
- The Headteacher or 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 school 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 should be notified immediately.

Access to Information

All parents can have equal access to all school information via our website, alternatively request in writing additional copies of communications which are not available on the school website.

We will maintain our open door policy with all parents, and the class teacher and/or Headteacher will be available by appointment to discuss any issues. We hope that by working together with parents we can achieve the best possible outcomes for our pupils.

The Headteacher will review the effectiveness of the procedures within this policy in relation to individual cases. Information will be shared with Governors where there are Safeguarding concerns.