

# BRACKLA PRIMARY SCHOOL



## SEPARATED PARENTS POLICY

<b>Date Adopted:</b> 04.03.26	<b>Chairperson:</b> Mrs E Lewis (Chair of Governors)
<b>Date of Renewal:</b> March 2028	<b>Headteacher:</b> Mrs K John

## **Brackla Primary School Separated Parents Policy**

### **Our Commitment**

At Brackla Primary School, we recognise that children grow up within a wide range of family arrangements, and that many of our pupils live in separated or divorced families. Our priority is always the wellbeing, safety and learning of each child, and we approach this sensitively and fairly, taking into account the emotional impact separation can have on families. The school follows Welsh Government guidance and statutory duties relating to parental involvement, safeguarding and access to education. Relevant frameworks include the Education Act 1996, Children Act 1989, and Keeping Learners Safe (Welsh Government). The Pupil Information (Wales) Regulations 2011 further guide our responsibilities for record-keeping and parental access.

### **Legal Framework (Wales)**

The school follows Welsh Government guidance and statutory duties relating to parental involvement, safeguarding and access to education. Relevant frameworks include the Education Act 1996, Children Act 1989, and Keeping Learners Safe (Welsh Government). The Pupil Information (Wales) Regulations 2011 further guide our responsibilities for record-keeping and parental access.

### **Parental Responsibility and Definitions**

In education law, the term parent has a broad meaning. Under section 576 of the Education Act 1996, it includes biological parents (whether married or not), individuals who hold parental responsibility (PR) under the Children Act 1989, and any person who has care of the child—meaning those with whom the child lives and who look after them. Multiple individuals can therefore legitimately be engaged in a child's education. Brackla Primary School treats all parents with PR equally unless a court order states otherwise. Parents without PR are not automatically entitled to receive information from the school.

### **Communication with Parents**

We aim to communicate effectively and fairly with all parents who hold PR. At Brackla Primary, our communication platforms are Seesaw, which we use for classroom learning and day-to-day updates, and School Gateway, which is used for messages, attendance information and general school announcements. Both parents can have separate accounts if requested. In line with data protection requirements, the school will not share one parent's contact details with another and will not act as a mediator by relaying messages between parents. This approach aligns with UK GDPR duties and Welsh Government guidance on educational records and information handling.

Parents without PR may receive general school information at the Headteacher's discretion, provided this does not conflict with safeguarding, GDPR or any court order.

### **Collection of Children – Local Procedures**

To keep pupils safe, Brackla Primary School will only release a child to adults listed on our authorised collection contacts. If someone different is collecting your child, the school must be notified in advance, and the person collecting must be over 16 years old. If a non-resident parent arrives unexpectedly, staff will contact the resident parent to confirm arrangements, check for any relevant court orders held by the school, and seek advice from a member of the Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) team if unsure. Our DSP team consists of Mrs Baldrige (Lead DSP), Mrs John and Mr Still. When police or local authority safeguarding guidance advises caution, temporary adjusted collection arrangements may be put in place. This is consistent with Welsh safeguarding expectations that schools must take appropriate action to reduce risks.

### **Parent Meetings and School Events**

We encourage both parents to attend parents' evenings and school events together where possible, as this supports consistency for the child. When parents prefer not to attend together, the usual appointment time may be split between them, or alternative options such as a remote meeting may be considered if practicable and sustainable for staff. Regardless of family circumstances, both parents with PR have the right to receive information about their child's progress and to participate in discussions about their education unless a court order restricts this.

### **Parental Consent and Decision-Making**

Where parental consent is required, for example, for educational visits, the school will normally seek consent from the parent with whom the child resides. If parents with PR disagree, the school will proceed on the basis that consent has not been given until the matter is resolved externally. Requests to change a child's legal name on school records must be supported by formal documentation such as a deed poll or court order, reflecting national guidance on PR and decision-making. In medical emergencies, the school may act in the best interests of the child while attempting to contact parents with PR.

### **Court Orders**

Brackla Primary School will comply with all court orders provided to us, including Child Arrangements Orders, Specific Issue Orders and Prohibited Steps Orders. These may determine contact, collection arrangements or decision-making rights. We require a copy of any such order before implementing it. We may also take temporary safeguarding actions if advised by the local authority or police, even when no formal order exists, but these will always be proportionate and reviewed regularly. This reflects legal expectations that schools must consider the child's welfare as the paramount concern.

### **Access to Information and Educational Records**

Parents with PR have the right to request access to their child's educational record under the Pupil Information (Wales) Regulations 2011. Children also have rights to their personal data under UK GDPR where they are judged competent. Subject Access Requests (SARs) will be handled within statutory timescales and in line with ICO guidance. Information about third parties will be protected as required by law. For further information on how the school handles personal data, please see our Privacy Notice on our website.

### **Domestic Abuse and Safeguarding**

The school treats all allegations of domestic abuse seriously and follows its safeguarding procedures. Staff cannot investigate allegations themselves, but will refer concerns to the DSP team, who will consult statutory agencies where needed. Brackla Primary cannot restrict a parent's involvement solely on the basis of allegations unless a court order or safeguarding instruction directs us to do so, consistent with national guidance.

### **Keeping Us Informed**

Parents are responsible for notifying the school of any changes to living arrangements, contact details or legal circumstances. Up-to-date information ensures that communication, collection procedures and access decisions can be handled safely and efficiently.

### **Complaints**

Concerns about how this policy has been applied should be addressed through the Brackla Primary School Complaints Policy, which is available on the school website or from the school office. This ensures that issues are handled fairly, transparently and in line with school procedures.

## **Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body every two years or earlier if deemed necessary.

## Appendix 1 (information for parents)

### *How we work with separated parents to support your child*

At Brackla Primary School, our priority is always your child's wellbeing, happiness and learning. We understand that family separation can be difficult, and we want to support your child in the best way we can.

This summary explains how we work with separated parents and what you can expect from us.

### We treat both parents fairly

By law, both parents who have parental responsibility (PR) have an equal right to be involved in their child's education, receive information from the school and attend events.

We will only limit a parent's involvement if there is a court order or a formal safeguarding instruction that tells us to do so.

### How we communicate

We send information through two main systems:

- **Seesaw** - for class learning and updates
- **School Gateway** - for messages, attendance and school-wide information

Both parents can have their own accounts. We will *not* share one parent's contact details with the other.

### Collecting your child from school

Anyone collecting a child must be over 16 and must be listed on the approved collection list. If a parent arrives unexpectedly, we will:

- Check the collection list
- Contact the other parent
- Check any court orders
- Seek advice from our Safeguarding Team: Mrs Baldrige (Lead Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP); Mrs John and Mr Still)

We may temporarily adjust collection arrangements if the local authority or police advise us to for safeguarding reasons.

### Meetings, events and parents' evenings

We encourage both parents to come together, but understand that this isn't always possible.

Where needed, we can:

- Split the usual appointment time
- Offer separate meetings (where practical)

Both parents with PR can receive updates about their child's progress.

### **Giving consent**

For things like school trips, we usually ask the parent the child lives with most of the time.

If parents with PR disagree, we must treat this as not giving consent until the matter is resolved outside school. If a child's legal name needs changing, we need official legal documentation such as a deed poll or a court order. The school cannot change a child's legal name without official documentation (e.g., deed poll or court order).

### **Court orders**

If you have a court order that affects school arrangements, please provide us with a copy.

We follow:

- Child Arrangements Orders
  - Prohibited Steps Orders
  - Specific Issue Orders
- ... and any other legal instructions.

We can only act on court orders we have *seen*.

### **Access to school records**

Parents with PR may request access to their child's educational record under Welsh regulations, and children also have rights to their own data under UK GDPR.

### **Safeguarding, domestic abuse and difficult situations**

If there are concerns about safety or domestic abuse, we follow our safeguarding policy and may seek advice from the local authority or police. We cannot restrict a parent's involvement unless there is a court order or safeguarding directive telling us to do so.

### **Keeping us updated**

Please let us know if:

- Contact details change
- Living arrangements change
- A new court order is issued

This helps us keep your child safe and ensures both parents receive the right information.

### **If you have a concern**

If you are unhappy about how something has been handled, please follow the Brackla Primary School Complaints Policy, which can be found on our school website or is available from the school office.

### **We are here to support your child**

If you have questions about how we work with separated parents or need help accessing information, please speak to the school office or a member of our DSP team. We will always treat your family's situation with sensitivity and respect.

## Key Terms for Parents (Quick Guide)

**Parental Responsibility (PR):** The legal right to make decisions about your child's education, health and welfare. PR can be held by biological parents, adoptive parents, and others given PR by the court.

**Court Order:** A legal document that tells the school what must happen.

Common types include:

- **Child Arrangements Order** - who the child lives with and when they see each parent.
- **Prohibited Steps Order** - stops a parent doing certain things (e.g. changing a child's school or collecting them).
- **Specific Issue Order** - settles a particular dispute about the child.

The school can only act on a *court-stamped copy*.

**Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP):** Staff responsible for child protection and safety.

At Brackla Primary these are: Mrs Baldrige (Lead DSP), Mrs John and Mr Still.

**Educational Record:** Information the school holds about your child's learning, progress and behaviour. Parents with PR can request this under Welsh regulations.

**GDPR - General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR):** The law on how schools store and use personal information.

### **School Communications Systems**

- **Seesaw** - learning updates and class messages
- **School Gateway** - whole-school messages, attendance and notifications

The school can set up separate accounts for each parent.

**Subject Access Request (SAR):** A request to see personal information the school holds (e.g. emails, reports). Parents can make a SAR on behalf of a child if the child is not old enough to understand.

**Safeguarding:** The actions school takes to keep children safe from harm. This includes following *Keeping Learners Safe* guidance and working with the local authority or police if concerns arise.