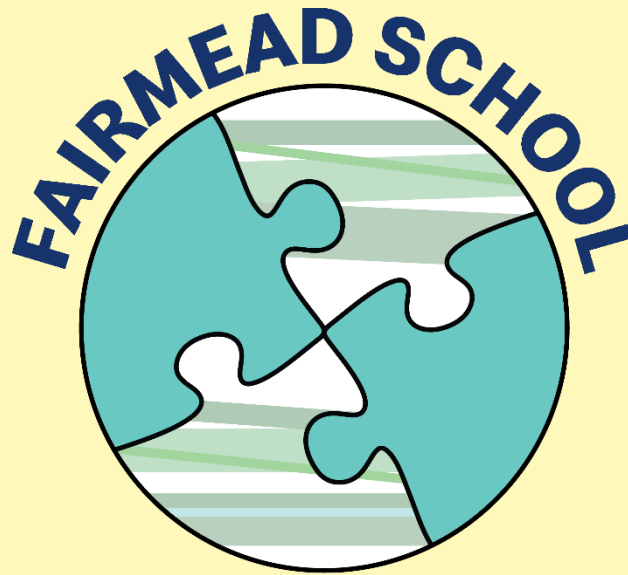


Separated Parents Policy

Fairmead School



Signed by: Mrs. Tracy Felstead

Date: September 2026

Next Review: September 2028

1. Purpose

Fairmead School recognises that family circumstances can be complex and that separation can present challenges for young people and their families.

Our priority is always the welfare and best interests of the young person, in line with [Department for Education guidance](#).

We are committed to:

- Supporting young people to thrive regardless of family circumstances,
- Maintaining positive, respectful communication with all parents and carers,
- Ensuring that those with parental responsibility are appropriately involved in a young person's education.

This policy aims to:

- Clarify roles and expectations for parents and carers,
- Provide clear guidance for staff,
- Ensure consistency and fairness in our approach.

2. Legal Framework and Guidance

This policy is informed by:

- Department for Education:
 - [*Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility*](#),
- [Children Act 1989](#),
- [Education Act 1996](#),
- [*Keeping Children Safe in Education \(KCSIE\)*](#),
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) 2026.

This policy should be read alongside Fairmead School's Safeguarding, Data Protection, and Relationship policies. These can be found [Statutory Documents and Policies | Fairmead School](#).

3. Definition of Parent

In education law, the definition of a "parent" is broader than in general use.

Under Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, a parent includes:

- All biological parents (whether married or not),
- Any person with parental responsibility,

- Any person who has care of the young person.

All individuals recognised as parents under this definition are entitled to be involved in the young person's education unless restricted by a court order.

4. Parental Responsibility

Parental responsibility is defined as all the rights, duties, powers and responsibilities a parent has in relation to a young person.

Those with parental responsibility may include:

- A mother (automatically),
- A father (if married to the mother at birth or named on the birth certificate after December 2003),
- Adoptive parents,
- Guardians or individuals granted parental responsibility through a court order.

Where more than one person holds parental responsibility, each individual has the right to participate in decisions about the young person's education.

5. General Principles

Fairmead School will:

- Treat all parents with parental responsibility equally,
- Ensure communication is clear, neutral and focused on the young person's needs,
- Avoid becoming involved in disputes between parents,
- Ensure the school remains impartial at all times,
- Both parents must agree to name changes and a Court required if disagreement. The School requires written evidence of this.

The school will not:

- Take sides in parental disagreements,
- Act as a mediator between parents,
- Restrict information unless legally required to do so,
- Provide, or supervise, contact for parents with their young people,
- Provide references or letters of support to a parent involved in a dispute.

6. Recording Parental Responsibility

- Collecting all parent details at admission,
- Ensuring they are recorded and transferred when a young person moves school.

7. Communication with Separated Parents

Fairmead School recognises that both resident and non-resident parents with parental responsibility are entitled to information about their young person's education.

The school will:

- Provide:
 - Progress reports,
 - School newsletters,
 - Key communications (e.g. exclusions, school based safeguarding concerns, EHCP reviews).
- Offer access to:
 - Parents' evenings,
 - Annual reviews and meetings.

Where requested, the school will make reasonable efforts to, where possible:

- Send communications to both parents separately,
- Arrange separate meeting appointments if required.

Schools should ensure that both parents receive the same information, unless restricted by a court order.

If the school does not have contact details for a non-resident parent, the resident parent should be informed that the other parent is entitled to involvement.

It is the responsibility of any non-resident parents to inform the school in writing of changes to their addresses or telephone numbers.

8. Court Orders and Legal Restrictions

The school will only act upon official documentation, such as:

- Child Arrangement Orders,
- Prohibited Steps Orders,
- Restraining Orders.

These may:

- Limit a parent's access to information,
- Restrict contact with the young person.

The school:

- Must receive a certified copy of the court order to act on it,
- Will store this securely in line with data protection requirements,

In the event that the school is not informed of the existence of a court order in writing, neither parent will have rights superior to the other.

9. Information Sharing and Records

Parents with parental responsibility are entitled to access their young person's educational information, including:

- Reports,
- Attendance data,
- Safeguarding-relevant information (where appropriate and lawful).

However, the school may refuse to share information if doing so could place the young person or another individual at risk of harm. In such cases, the school will follow safeguarding procedures and seek appropriate advice.

10. Decision-Making

Parents with parental responsibility should:

- Communicate with each other regarding major decisions,
- Inform the school of any disputes or court proceedings in writing.

The school:

- Will not make decisions that override parental disputes,
- May require consent from all parties where appropriate,
- May seek legal advice if disagreements affect a young person's education.

11. Collection of Young People

Unless restricted by a court order the school will release a young person to any individual with parental responsibility.

Where there is uncertainty or concern:

- The school will prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the young person.
- Safeguarding procedures will be followed in our 'Collection of Young People Policy'.

Child Abduction Risk

Fairmead School recognises that child abduction can involve a parent or individual known to the young person, not only strangers.

This may include situations where:

- A parent removes a young person without the consent of another parent with parental responsibility,
- A young person is taken in breach of a court order,
- A young person is not returned following agreed arrangements.

Such actions may constitute a criminal offence.

School Approach

The school will normally release a young person to a parent with parental responsibility. However, the safety and wellbeing of the young person is paramount.

Responding to Concerns

Where there are concerns that a young person may be at risk of harm, including potential abduction, the school will:

- Take concerns seriously and act immediately,
- Seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL),
- Follow safeguarding procedures,
- Consider delaying release of the young person while advice is sought,
- Contact children's social care or the police where there is an immediate risk.

The school will not manage suspected abduction situations independently and will work with external agencies as required.

Preventative Measures

The school will:

- Maintain accurate parental responsibility records,
- Ensure staff are aware of relevant restrictions,
- Follow agreed collection procedures,
- Remain vigilant to unusual or sudden changes in arrangements.

12. Safeguarding

The welfare of the young person is paramount.

If parental conflict:

- Poses a safeguarding risk,
- Impacts the emotional wellbeing of the young person, young people with SEND may be more vulnerable to sudden changes and transitions can cause distress or dysregulation. Our young people may also not be able to communicate risk clearly.

The school will:

- Follow safeguarding procedures,
- Involve the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)/ Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)/ Safeguarding Team,
- Work with external agencies where required.

13. Responsibilities of Parents

Parents are expected to:

- Provide the school with accurate and up-to-date contact information,
- Inform the school of:
 - Changes in living arrangements,
 - Changes to parental responsibility,
 - Any court orders in place,
- Communicate respectfully with school staff,
- Parents are expected to liaise with each other for items such as uniform, lunches, photographs, tickets, trips etc. The school will not manage individual arrangements where this would create significant workload.

14. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be:

- Reviewed every two years,
- Reviewed sooner if there are changes in legislation or guidance.

15. Useful resources

[Somerset children & young people : Health & Wellbeing : Support For Separated Parents](#)

[Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility - GOV.UK](#)

[Separated parents – How schools should handle family break-ups | Pupils and Parents | The Headteacher](#)

[What do & don't schools have to share with separated parents? - Splitting Up](#)