



HPP

Separated Parents

Policy

| Version | Date | Comments | Review |
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| 1 | 2014 | New Policy | As required |
| 2 | October 2022 | Updated to reflect legal guidance received | Autumn 24 |
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HPP - Separated Parents Policy

Research and experience have shown that separated parents can work well together in the best interests of their children and together can play a role in their children's education. However, some parents become estranged, and do not work together or in the best interests of their children, especially during the initial stages of their separation. This is very often traumatic for any child concerned where personal family problems can have an impact on both the children and the schools the children attend.

This policy is an attempt to minimise any impact, clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the school / staff

The Education Act 1996 defines a parent as:

- a) all natural parents, including those that are not married;
- b) 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; or
- c) any person who has care of a child i.e. a person with whom the child resides and who looks after the children irrespective of the relationship

Within Hampton Primary Partnership schools we ensure that:

- all situations are dealt with sympathetically;
- all situations are dealt with in support of the child / children first;
- if named in the court order, the school will adhere to any court orders about which we have been notified;
- upon admission to HPP, birth certificates or passports will be seen as standard procedure and names on admission forms checked to match birth certificate/passport;
- schools will make all information accessible to both parents if we are made aware of the situation. e.g. school reports, parent consultation appointments;
- both parents will be able to have access to the school communication system (Parent Hub);
- schools will inform both parents that the school websites are the first port of call for any information regarding the schools, e.g. dates;
- no parent is excluded from involvement in their child's education at the request of the other parent;
- we seek advice wherever necessary from outside agencies e.g. Local Authority Legal Services and services relating to child protection and safeguarding;
- we will not seek to resolve disagreements between parents or act as intermediaries;
- we will seek to clarify any issues regarding collection from school to the best of our ability. Both parents will be contacted in the first instance to reach a resolution. If this is not possible the Head of School / member of staff acting on

behalf of the Head of School retains the right to keep the child in school until an action can be agreed through outside agencies e.g. through the Local Authority or Police; and

- contact the police immediately if a parent is disruptive or abusive or if there is a belief that a possible abduction of the child might occur.

Within HPP, separated parents should ensure that:

- the schools are provided with up to date information e.g. changes of telephone numbers or contact details;
- they have reached agreement regarding all decisions affecting the child;
- the schools are aware of any changes to court orders in place;
- they abide by agreed collection arrangements from school with clear arrangements if one parent is unable to collect; and
- they deal politely and reasonably with all school staff either verbally or over email at all times.

Court Orders

- Parents are not required to share court orders with the school but may choose to. In the event that the school is not informed of the existence of a court order, parents are assumed to have equal parental responsibility.
- Parents are required to follow the court order and it is their responsibility to do so. It is not the schools' responsibility to enforce the court order.
- The school is only obliged to comply with the order if it has been properly notified and has a copy of the order on file and is named within the order.
- Only a court order stating the arrangements is deemed to be valid; a letter / email from a solicitor is not legally binding.
- Upon receipt of any court order restricting access to a parent, the school will abide by this.

Shared Parental Responsibility.

If there is shared parental responsibility and one parent seeks to remove the child from school, the school cannot prevent the parent from taking the child. If this will be a contravention of an agreed arrangement or court order, the school will discuss this with the parent who will be taking the child and inform the other parent that the child has been collected. It will then be the parental decision what action to take. It is not the school's responsibility to call the police unless the child is in immediate danger.

HPP schools would prevent a parent taking a child if staff felt that the child might be at risk of harm and the police would be called. The child would be supervised by an appropriate member of staff in a separate room during this time.

HPP schools would urge both parents to seek agreement on all matters affecting the child e.g. school meal choice, attending school visits, seeking counselling. The school will take instruction from a parent with parental responsibility and it is the parents'

responsibility to reach agreement on matters affecting the child, prior to instructing the school. If instruction is given to the school, we assume that agreement has been sought and reached. The school will not be put in a position where frequent contradictory instructions are received. If this occurs we will not make any changes to the current status quo.