



# **Healing Multi Academy Trust**

## **Communication with Parents Policy**

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## **Statement of intent**

All schools in Healing Multi-Academy Trust have a duty of care to our pupils. All decisions will be made with the safety and welfare of the pupils paramount to this process.

However, Healing Multi Academy Trust recognises that children from families whose parents are separated, or are undergoing separation, may go through traumatic changes during their time at school. With this in mind, we will make every effort to work with parents to promote the welfare of children.

This policy has been created to minimise any impact and to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the school and its staff.

### **1. Definitions**

1.1 Schools have a legal duty to work in partnership with families and to involve all those with parental responsibility in their child's education. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines a 'parent' as: All natural parents, whether they are married or not.

- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child).

1.2 Parents as defined above must be treated equally, unless there is a court order limiting an individual's exercise of parental responsibility. 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.

1.3 Individuals who have parental responsibility, or care for a child, have the same rights as natural parents. This includes the right to:

- Receive information (e.g. pupil reports, school events etc)
- Participate in activities (e.g. elections for parent governors)
- Give consent (e.g. for school trips)
- Be involved in meetings concerning the child (e.g. participate in an exclusion procedure, appeal against admission decisions).

### **2. Schools' responsibilities**

2.1 The school will ask parents or carers for the names and addresses of all parents when they register a pupil.

2.2 The school will ensure that names and addresses of all parents, where known, are included in the admission register and also in pupil records.

2.3 The school will ensure that details of court orders are noted in the pupil's record.

### **3. Parental responsibilities**

- 3.1 Parents are responsible for informing the school when there is a change in family circumstances. We recognise the sensitivity of such situations and we will maintain confidentiality requested by parents as far as possible. The school will also not make judgements about individual circumstances, and both parents will be treated equally.
- 3.2 Where there is a court mandated restraining order in place, a copy needs to be retained by the school, which will put measures in place to ensure the child is not released to named individuals.
- 3.3 Parents who have joint custody of the child are requested to keep the school informed, in writing, of any disputes they have with each other regarding the collection of children.
- 3.4 Children's welfare and safety are paramount, where there are issues over access to children, the parent with whom the child resides should contact the school immediately.
- 3.5 The school holds one parents evening appointment per child, where both parents are welcome.
- 3.6 Parents are expected to liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the ordering of school photographs, payments for lunches and trips etc. The school will not deal individually with these requests in view of the significantly increased workload that they represent.

### **4. Progress reports and pupil records**

- 4.1 Any parent has the right to receive progress reports and review pupil records of their child.
- 4.2 If the parents are separated or divorced, progress reports will be sent via pupil post to the parent where the child resides and an additional report will be posted to the separated parent if they have specifically requested to receive them by being added to the schools 'Duplicate Parent' database.
- 4.3 If the child is subject to a joint residence order and the school's records formally capture that the child resides at two addresses, then progress reports will be sent to both addresses.
- 4.4 Disagreements between parents must be resolved between the parents and cannot be resolved by the school.
- 4.5 In extreme circumstances, if there is a belief that a possible abduction of the child may occur or if any parent is disruptive, the police will be notified immediately.

## **5. Collecting a child from school**

- 5.1 Where a separated parent has parental responsibility and requests to take the child during or at the end of the school day, the school will honour this request, providing a non-contact order is not in place.
- 5.2 The school will allow a child to leave the premises with a non-resident parent, providing there is a note from a parent/carer with Parental Responsibility giving permission.

## **6. Obtaining consent**

- 6.1 If parental consent is required for outings or activities, the school will seek consent from the resident parent.
- 6.2 In cases where the school considers it necessary to seek consent from both parents, it is possible that one gives consent and the other withholds it. In such cases, the school will assume that parental consent has not been given.

## **7. Name changes**

- 7.1 Parents are responsible for resolving potential conflicts about the change of a surname.
- 7.2 There must be consent from both parents after divorce or separation for registering a change of name of a pupil. In the instance of a legal name change, this must be supported by legal written evidence, such as a Deed Poll, Adoption Certificate or new Birth Certificate.
- 7.3 A separated parent who has parental responsibility, but no longer lives with the child, may refuse to consent to changing the child's surname. In such cases, the parent wishing to change the child's name would need to apply to the courts for permission to do so.
- 7.4 In circumstances where a name change has already been effected by the school and it is in the interest of the child, who might be known by a new name, to refer back to a different name, the school will make a decision holding the best interests of the child under paramount consideration.