

LEAS PARK JUNIOR SCHOOL

GUIDANCE FOR SEPARATED PARENTS

October 2024

This policy provides guidance for staff and parents in situations where the parents of a child at school are separated. At Leas Park we aim to work closely with all of our parents, but we understand that in some families this is not straightforward. In all circumstances the welfare of the child is our overriding concern, and we will take every possible step to try and avoid a child being put in a potentially stressful and upsetting situation. Whilst we are generally familiar with individual family circumstances, we do understand that these can change rapidly and we expect our families to update us

Legal Framework:

Our policy and guidelines are based on Nottinghamshire County Council's guidance to schools, Education Reform Act 1988, Education (School Records) Regulations 1989 and the Children Act 1991.

Request for access to information:

We generally communicate and share information with the parent who has actual custody of a child, particularly in day to day matters. However, we would also share information with a parent who does not have day to day care of a child, but who has parental rights.

For these parents, we would ask that they provide stamped addressed envelopes to our school office so that we can post relevant pieces of information at certain times during the school year (e.g. parents evening appointments, photographs, end of year reports etc.). We also publish weekly newsletters, school brochure, appropriate policies and other information on our school website and would advise that this is a good source to keep up to date with what's happening at school.

The only cases this would not apply would be:

- If there is a Court Order which specifically prevents that person from having access
- If we have reason to believe that disclosing information is likely to cause serious harm to the physical or mental health or emotional condition of the child concerned or any other child

Request to pass a message on to a child:

If we are asked to pass on a message to a child by a non-custodial parent, the request will be denied and the message will be returned unopened. The parent making the request will be advised to contact the parent who has actual custody.

Request to speak to a child during school hours:

A child should not normally be brought to a parent who, as far as the school knows, does not have actual custody. These requests will be denied unless and until we are completely happy that the request is being made with the knowledge and agreement of the person who has custody of the child. In general and whatever the family circumstances, we would want to discourage parents from seeking access to children during the school day.

Request by a non-custodial parent to remove a child during the school day, or is likely to do so after school has finished:

In such circumstances we will always deny the request. We will make it clear to the noncustodial parent that the question of access to the child must be raised with the custodial parent. If we feel that there is any danger that a child will be intercepted after school, we will keep the child safe in the school building and contact the custodial parent to arrange the child's collection.

In all circumstances if we are unsure and/or need further advice we will contact the County Solicitor's office.

Attendance at school events:

We hold numerous events during the school year to which parents are invited. We will do our very best to support separated parents (e.g. offering parents evening appointments on different days) but there will be occasions when we are not able to accommodate the logistics of split families/separated parents (e.g. Christmas performances where we have to limit tickets to two per child due to the size of our school hall and associated health & safety/fire regulations). For these events we would hope and encourage separated parents to organise attendance amicably between themselves.