Co-Parenting Communication Guidelines

Purpose and principles

These guidelines set out how schools Pound Park Nursery School will communicate with and support families where parents are separated, divorced, or otherwise co-parenting from different households. Our approach aims to be fair, legally compliant, child-focused, and inclusive of both parents wherever it is appropriate and safe to do so.

We recognise:

- That children benefit from positive and cooperative relationships between school and both parents/carers.
- That all parents with parental responsibility have a legal right to access educational information unless a court order restricts this.
- That safeguarding and the best interests of the child are always the school's paramount concern.

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that the School is made aware when parents are separated, divorced, or otherwise co-parenting from different households. In the first instance, parents have a responsibility to communicate with one another regarding their children. However, when this is not possible, for whatever reason, these guidelines will be enacted.

Definitions and legal framework

- Parental responsibility (PR) is defined in the Children's Act (1989) and refers to the rights and duties of a parent in relation to a child. It is possible for someone to have parental responsibility for a child without being their legal parent, and for a legal parent to not have parental responsibility. A child's birth mother automatically acquires parental responsibility from birth. This is also the case for fathers and second female partners if they are married or in a civil partnership with the child's mother. Unmarried partners do not automatically have parental responsibility but they can acquire it in several ways, including by being registered on the child's birth certificate. It is also possible for non-parents to acquire parental responsibility. Further information relating to parental responsibility can be found here.
- Non-resident parents: Those who do not live with the child but may still have PR.
- Resident parents: Those with whom the child lives for the majority of the time.

Unless a court order states otherwise, all parents with PR have equal rights to information about their child's education.

School staff must treat all parents equally, unless a court order limits a parent's ability to make educational decisions, participate in school life or receive information about their child. In most circumstances, the question a school must ask itself when making decisions is not just whether a parent holds parental responsibility but whether they are a parent under education law.

If the school has been instructed by a court order not to divulge information to a parent a flag will be put on the schools Management Information System stating this.

Communication with parents

In accordance with DfE (2023) guidelines, those who have parental responsibility for or care of a child have the same rights as biological parents to:

- receive information, such as school reports

- participate in statutory activities, such as voting in an election for parent governors
- be asked to give consent, such as to the child taking part in a school trip
- be informed about meetings involving the child.

General approach:
- The school will communicate with all parents who have PR, unless legally prohibited.
- Where both parents are known and have PR, the school will seek to ensure that both are kept informed and involved.
- Communication will be impartial and focused on the child's progress, wellbeing, and development.

Routine communications:
- Those with parental responsibility have a right to receive newsletters, school reports, and general updates.
- Each parent is responsible for ensuring the school has up-to-date contact details.
- Emails will be sent separately to avoid disclosing personal contact details.

Parent-Teacher meetings:
- Both parents are welcome to attend meetings. If separate appointments are needed, these may be offered.
- Parents are expected to treat staff and each other with courtesy and respect.

Court orders and safeguarding
- Parents must provide the school with any relevant court orders.
- The school will comply with the terms of court orders and prioritise safeguarding at all times.
- Concerns about safety will be addressed by the DSL and appropriate authorities.

Emergencies and authorisations
- In an emergency, the school will usually contact the parent with whom the child is registered as ordinarily residing, unless a court order or safeguarding concern requires a different approach.
- Consent for activities will typically be sought from the parent with whom the child resides. Further guidance on obtaining consent can be found here.
- Moving schools - Parents should agree on moving a child to a different school together. If an agreement cannot be reached, then the school will not act until the dispute has been settled by the court. Further information of pupils moving schools can be found here.

Access to school systems
- Parents with PR can request access to school portals and systems.
- The school will not mediate between parents over access but will support with signposting where necessary. For example to National Family Mediation (NFM) or Citizens Advice.

Behaviour and respect
- All parents must communicate respectfully with school staff.
- Abusive or inappropriate behaviour may lead to restricted communication or access.
- School staff will not become involved in disagreements between parents, interpret court orders, or pass messages between parents.

Updating records
- Parents must inform the school of changes in family circumstances, including address, PR status, or court orders.

Additional support

- The school will offer pastoral support to children experiencing family separation.
- Signposting to external services may also be provided.

Sources used in the development of these guidelines

- Department for Education (2018) – Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility
- Children Act 1989 (as amended)
- Department for Education – Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)
- Family Rights Group – Parental Responsibility Resources
- Southampton City Council: Parental responsibility and data sharing

This guidance is not intended to be exhaustive. Often matters relating to co-parenting can be nuanced.

Date this policy was last reviewed:	April 2026
Date next review due:	April 2029