



Bradon Forest School – Separated Parents Procedure

1. Introduction

Bradon Forest School recognises that children of separated or separating parents may face additional emotional, practical, and communication challenges. Our priority is always the safeguarding, wellbeing, and educational progress of every child.

This procedure explains how we manage communication, parental responsibility, information sharing, and day-to-day practicalities when parents live separately.

2. Definition of “Parent”

In line with the Education Act 1996, a “parent” includes:

- Biological parents, whether married or not
- Individuals with parental responsibility (PR), granted through birth, agreement, or court order
- Adults who care for the child daily, even without formal PR
- All parents with lawful parental responsibility will be treated equally unless a court order instructs otherwise.

3. Our Approach

Bradon Forest School aims to:

- Work with all parents to promote the child’s wellbeing and educational progress
- Maintain an impartial, professional stance during parental disagreements
- Base all decisions on the best interests of the child
- Follow statutory safeguarding duties and legal obligations

Staff cannot offer legal advice or act as intermediaries in parental disputes.

4. Parental Responsibility and Legal Orders

Parents must inform the school of:

- Who holds parental responsibility
- Any court orders, such as:
 - a. Child Arrangements Orders
 - b. Prohibited Steps Orders
 - c. Non-molestation or restraining orders
 - d. Supervised contact orders

Copies of orders must be provided to the school so that staff can comply safely and accurately. Without an order stating otherwise, the school assumes that both parents with PR have equal rights to information and involvement.



5. Communication With Separated Parents

5.1 General Principles

The school communicates with parents in the interests of the child.

Parents are expected to communicate with each other regarding routine matters.

The school cannot take sides or mediate disputes.

5.2 Routine Communication

Unless restricted by a court order:

Both parents with PR may receive access to school communications.

Only one primary contact can be set on the MIS (Management Information System), but the non-resident parent can be added as an additional contact for receiving:

- School reports
- Letters/emails
- Attendance information
- Behaviour and achievement updates
- Event details (Parents' Evenings, performances, trips)

The school will not duplicate daily informal communications (e.g., timetable queries, minor updates) unless essential for the child's safety or wellbeing.

5.3 Parents' Evenings and Meetings

Both parents with PR may attend:

- Parents' evenings
- Progress review meetings
- SEND or pastoral meetings
- Where relationships are strained, the school may:
 - Arrange separate appointment times, or
 - Hold joint meetings with agreed ground rules, if safe and appropriate.

6. Consent, Permissions, and Decision-Making

6.1 Educational Decisions

Both parents with PR have the right to be communicated with regarding:

- SEND discussions
- Pastoral or safeguarding matters

Where parents disagree, the school will:

- Focus on the child's best interests
- Ask parents to resolve the matter independently or through legal channels
- Proceed based on safety, welfare, and educational benefit

In the event of educational decisions being made by one parent only where the decision does not rest with the school (eg. the decision to move schools) it is best practice to communicate with both parents.



6.2 Trips, Visits, and Activities

If one PR-holding parent provides consent for an activity, the school will generally treat this as sufficient unless a court order states otherwise.

If one parent objects on safeguarding grounds, the school may pause participation until clarification is received.

6.3 Photographs and Media Consent

Both parents with PR may give or withdraw consent.

If conflicting permissions are received, the school will adopt the more restrictive option until parents resolve the issue.

7. Collection of Students

7.1 Normal Arrangements

Parents must inform the school of collection arrangements.

Where parents are separated, each parent is expected to communicate changes directly to one another.

7.2 Restricting Collection

A parent cannot be prevented from collecting their child unless:

- A court order restricts this, and
- The school has received an official copy of the order
- The police or social services order the school to prevent collection for a valid reason

If staff have concerns but no court order exists, the school may:

- Delay release until clarification is obtained
- Contact the other parent
- Take safeguarding advice if necessary
- Safeguarding overrides all other considerations.

8. Behaviour Between Parents on School Grounds

Bradon Forest School is committed to providing a safe, respectful environment.

Parents must:

- Treat staff with courtesy
- Avoid conflict in front of students or staff
- Refrain from using the school as a venue for personal disputes

If behaviour becomes threatening, abusive, or disruptive, the school may limit access to the site, call the police if deemed necessary and follow Wiltshire Council safeguarding guidelines.



9. School's Right to Decline Involvement

The school will not:

- Pass messages between parents
- Take sides in disputes
- Enforce private agreements (e.g., contact schedules)
- Provide statements to support either parent's legal case unless legally required.

Where conflict prevents effective communication, the school may request that all messages be routed through:

- The Headteacher
- A designated senior leader
- Formal written email channels

10. Safeguarding and Welfare

If separation leads to concerns about the child's emotional or physical safety, the school will:

- Refer to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Follow the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures
- Seek advice from social care when appropriate
- The child's welfare will always take priority over parental preference.

11. Updating Information

Parents must promptly notify the school of any changes to:

- Address
- Phone numbers
- Living arrangements
- Emergency contacts
- Legal orders
- Name changes

Accurate information ensures the school can safeguard the child effectively.

12. Review

This procedure will be reviewed every two years or earlier if legislation or best practice changes.