



SEPARATED PARENTS POLICY

Member of Staff Responsible	Headmaster
Date of Policy	September 2025
Date for Review	September 2027
Distribution	All staff and parents

Rokeby School Policy for separated parents

Rokeby School recognises that, while the parents of some pupils may be divorced or separated, both have a right to be informed of, and involved in, their child's education.

Rationale and legal position

Research and experience have shown that separated parents can become particularly estranged, especially during the initial stages of the split. This is very often traumatic for those children concerned. Inevitably, these personal family problems have an impact on the schools the children attend. This policy is an attempt to minimise this impact and clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from Rokeby School and its staff.

Parental Responsibility

To help us to look after children whilst they are in our care, Rokeby School staff are required at the admissions stage to ask parents to provide certain information, such as the name of both parents, address, contact details, etc. They are also required to confirm that nobody else has Parental Responsibility for the child, and it is a requirement that all individuals who have Parental Responsibility sign the parent contract acceptance form. This is important because it allows the school to be sure who has the right to make decisions about a child's education and medical treatment.

'Parental Responsibility' is a very specific legal term encompassing the legal rights, duties, powers and responsibilities that parents have with regards to their child. It is not only parents who can have parental responsibility and the same principles will be applied to all persons who have parental responsibility. We are aware that many parents may be unaware of how it is applied and have therefore set out some examples below:

- Natural mothers automatically have Parental Responsibility for their child from birth.
- If a child's parents were married at the time of the birth, both parents will automatically have Parental Responsibility and they will both retain Parental Responsibility if they subsequently divorce.
- For children born after 1 December 2003 to parents who are not married at the time of the birth, a natural father may gain Parental Responsibility by registering the child's birth jointly with the child's natural mother.
- Natural fathers may otherwise gain Parental Responsibility by subsequently marrying the child's mother or by getting a Parental Responsibility agreement with the mother or by obtaining a Court Order conferring Parental Responsibility on them.
- In the case of an adopted child, the adoption will confer Parental Responsibility on the adoptive parent(s). If, following adoption, the child will not reside with a natural parent, that parent will cease to hold Parental Responsibility.
- Where a surrogate is used, a child's parents can gain Parental Responsibility either through a parental order or through formal adoption after the child has been born.
- In the case of a same-sex parenting couple where the child is not adopted, both parents will have Parental Responsibility if they were civil partners at the time of the relevant treatment (e.g. insemination). If they are not civil partners, parents may gain Parental Responsibility by getting a Parental Responsibility agreement or by jointly registering the birth.
- Parental Responsibility can be lost where a child no longer resides with a natural parent following adoption.
- Parental responsibility can be terminated by Court Order if the child is at serious risk of emotional or physical harm.

The information provided to the school when the boy was enrolled detailing whether both parents have parental responsibility for the boy will be presumed to be correct unless a Court Order or original birth certificate proving otherwise is provided to the school. It is the responsibility of parents to inform the school when there is a change in the family's circumstances and/or when any such Court Order is issued (as outlined in the Parent Contract). We need to be kept up to date with contact details, arrangements for collecting children and emergencies.

Parents with Parental Responsibility are entitled to share in the decisions that are made about their child and to receive information about their child, including in relation to their child's education. These entitlements include the right:

- to receive information about their child, such as their school reports.
- give consent, for example, in relation to their child taking part in a particular educational visit; and be informed about meetings concerning the child such as those involving an exclusion or appeal.

This entitlement cannot be restricted without a specific Court Order. The school does not have the power to act simply on the request of one parent to restrict the other parent's rights. The school will treat both parents equally unless there is a specific ruling limiting a parent's ability to make decisions or participate in school life or receive information in existence. Staff will never pass judgement on either child's parent. We will maintain our open-door policy with all parents, Form Tutor, Year Head, Deputy Head (Pastoral), Head of Middle School or Head of Lower School will be available by appointment to discuss any issues. The school is under no obligation to inform the parent with whom a child normally resides ("the resident parent") if a non-resident parent ("the non-resident parent") contacts the school. Any such information will be given at the discretion of the Headmaster.

Court Orders

Upon receipt of any Court Order restricting access to a child, the school retains the right to consult local safeguarding partnerships before taking action. The school is only obliged to comply with an Order if it is properly notified and has received a copy for its files, and only to the extent that it relates directly to the school. 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. Only a Court Order stating the specific arrangements will be deemed to be valid. A letter from a solicitor is not sufficient. Failure to provide the school with a copy of any relevant Court Order is a breach of the terms of the parent contract.

School Communications

At Rokeby, we wish to promote the best interests of the children, working in partnership with both parents, unless directed by a Court Order. In the event that the school is not informed of such action, neither parent will have rights superior to the other.

We hope and expect that parents, whatever the nature of their separation, will do all they can to communicate with each other and share information from and for the school, for the benefit of their son. This also considerably reduces the administrative burden on the school and the related possibility of errors being made and upset caused. Under the terms of the parent contract, we are entitled to assume that any communications between either parent and the school have been given to/from both parents.

It is the responsibility of the parents to inform the school when there is a change in the family's circumstances. We need to be kept up to date with contact details, arrangements for collecting their children and emergencies. This also includes changes in financial arrangements.

We use SchoolPost to send messages to both parents.

However, in the event that this may cause difficulty and have a negative effect on the child and their learning, letters and emails will be sent to both parents via SchoolPost. *This is* unless one or other has notified the school that they wish to opt out of School communications. Parents are responsible for providing a correct email address. This includes information on all the main events within school, including productions, sports days, parents' evenings, form trips, etc. Occasionally items are given directly to boys such as notes in their homework diaries or revision lists for exams, textbooks and other educational resources. We would expect parents to share these with each other as and when appropriate.

We will hold one parents' evening appointment per child, where both parents are welcome. We would expect parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements and behave cordially and respectfully.

We expect parents to liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the ordering of School photographs, the pupil's participation in residential/School visits; and any requests for tickets for performances or other events.

Progress reports and Pupil records

Both parents have the right to receive reports and review pupil records of their children. Both parents will have access to the report via SchoolPost and Firefly.

Both parents can have equal access to all school information via our management information system. All parents are recommended to regularly use our website, Firefly and School Post. It contains all of our back-dated communications and has a range of information and links.

Should an unnamed parent contact the School to seek information or access to his/her child, the School will always inform the resident parent of this to check whether the unnamed parent has Parental Responsibility and to ensure no Court Order is in place. For the avoidance of doubt, we will seek written confirmation from the resident parent as to the un-named parent's status, and proof of identity of the un-named parent will always be required in these cases.

Ongoing disagreements between parents

In the event that the parents are unable to agree with one another on decisions regarding their child's educational programme, including, but not limited to, set placement, participation in extracurricular activities, future schooling and consent to evaluation and services, the School will arrange a meeting with both parents (either together or separately) to attempt to resolve the situation and if it cannot be resolved the Headmaster reserves the right to ask the parents to find an alternative school for their child.

Absences from school

If one parent seeks to remove the child from school, and the parent with whom the child ordinarily resides has not consented, the following steps should be followed:

1. The Headmaster or designated deputy will meet with the parent seeking to remove the child and, in his presence, telephone the parent with whom the child ordinarily resides and explain the request.
2. If the parent with whom the child ordinarily resides agrees, the child will be released, and the records will reflect that the permission was granted orally.
3. In the event that the parent, with whom the child ordinarily resides cannot be reached, the Headmaster or staff member dealing with the issue may make a decision based upon all relevant information available to him/her.
4. The Headmaster or staff member may have to refuse permission if consent cannot be obtained.

In extreme circumstances if there is a belief that a possible abduction of the child may occur or if the parent is disruptive, the police will be notified immediately.

Please note: if a child does not wish to leave school with a parent, even if they have parental responsibility, the school will not force them to do so. They will contact the other parent and ask them to collect the child. In extreme cases, the school may contact social services.

In the event of the breakdown of a relationship

The school acknowledges that relationships can break down suddenly or traumatically, even for a temporary period, and that we may not be aware of this. Our position is not to attribute blame but to support the child and to ensure his safety which is paramount. We would ask, therefore, that one parent at least contacts the school if a relationship has broken down and informs us of any changes to plans or arrangements, for example, for school pick-up.

We may well need to meet with you to discuss these arrangements. Parents can be assured we will treat the matter with care and sensitivity. In the first instance, please contact your child's Form

Tutor. However, if there is an emergency and you have safety concerns for your son, please contact the Headmaster immediately or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

**If a Court Order has been obtained by one parent, we would request that this is shared with the school. Please note that it would be viewed by only members of the school's senior leadership team who have pastoral oversight of the child, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Headmaster.*

Our availability

Whatever the circumstances, we will maintain our open-door policy with both parents. The Form Tutor, Year Head, Deputy Head (Pastoral), Head of Middle School or Head of Lower School will be available to discuss any issues by phone or meeting.