



Small Beginnings; Endless Possibilities

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."
Matthew 13 31-32

Co-Parenting Policy

Policy agreed (date):	February 2026
Policy published (including on website) (date):	February 2026
Next review (date):	February 2028

Policy Statement and School Vision

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this Co-Parenting Policy is to ensure that Kennet Valley CofE VA Primary School meets its statutory duties in supporting all families, including those where parents are separated, divorced, or in blended family arrangements. The policy aims to provide clear, fair, and consistent procedures for recognising and engaging with all individuals who have parental responsibility, in accordance with current legislation and best practice. By doing so, the school seeks to promote the welfare and educational success of every child, ensuring that all families are treated with respect, empathy, and understanding.

School Vision and Values

At Kennet Valley CofE VA Primary School, our vision is: *"small beginnings; endless possibilities. Growing together in compassion, curiosity and courage."* This policy is rooted in our commitment to these values. We recognise that every family is unique and that children thrive when their home and school lives are supported by strong, respectful partnerships. Compassion guides our interactions with all families, ensuring that every parent and carer feels valued and understood. Curiosity drives us to seek out the best ways to support diverse family structures and to learn from the experiences of our community. Courage empowers us to address challenges openly and fairly, always prioritising the best interests of the child. Through this policy, we aim to foster a school culture where all families, regardless of their circumstances, are welcomed and supported as partners in their child's learning journey.

Scope and Applicability

Who the Policy Applies To

This policy applies to all pupils and families at Kennet Valley CofE VA Primary School, including but not limited to those where parents are separated, divorced, remarried, or in blended family arrangements. It covers all individuals who have parental responsibility for a child, as well as those who act as carers or significant adults in a child's life. The policy is relevant to all staff, governors, and volunteers who may interact with families or handle information relating to parental responsibility.

Legal Definitions

- **Parental Responsibility:** As defined by the Children Act 1989, parental responsibility refers to all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities, and authority which by law a parent has in relation to the child and their property. More than one person can have parental responsibility for the same child.
- **Court Order:** A legal document issued by a court that sets out arrangements for a child, including who has parental responsibility, where the child lives, and contact arrangements. Court orders may restrict or define the involvement of specific individuals in a child's life.

- **Parent:** For the purposes of education law, a 'parent' includes any person who has parental responsibility for a child or who has care of a child, as set out in the Education Act 1996.
- **Carer:** An adult who has care of a child, whether or not they have parental responsibility, and who may be involved in the child's day-to-day life and education.

These definitions underpin all procedures and communications described in this policy.

Legislative and Statutory Framework

Relevant Legislation

This policy is informed by and fully compliant with the following key legislation and statutory guidance:

- **Children Act 1989 & 2004:** Establishes the concept of parental responsibility and the rights of parents in relation to their child's welfare and education.
- **Education Act 1996:** Sets out the legal framework for parental involvement in education, including the definition of 'parent' for educational purposes.
- **The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005:** Governs the sharing of pupil information with parents and those with parental responsibility.
- **Data Protection Act 2018 & UK GDPR:** Regulates the handling, processing, and sharing of personal data, including information about pupils and parents.
- **Equality Act 2010:** Requires schools to treat all parents and carers equitably and without discrimination, regardless of family structure or relationship status.
- **Statutory Guidance: Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE):** Emphasises safeguarding, information sharing, and the importance of recognising all those with parental responsibility.

Statutory Duties of Schools

Kennet Valley CofE VA Primary School is legally required to:

- Recognise and engage with all individuals who have parental responsibility for a pupil, unless a court order restricts this.
- Provide all parents with parental responsibility access to information about their child's education, progress, and welfare, unless legally directed otherwise.
- Request and securely store copies of any court orders relating to the child.
- Maintain accurate, up-to-date records of parental responsibility and any legal restrictions.
- Act in accordance with all relevant legislation and statutory guidance, prioritising the best interests of the child at all times.

Equality and Non-Discrimination

In line with the Equality Act 2010, Kennet Valley CofE VA Primary School is committed to treating all parents, carers, and families equitably, regardless of marital status, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, disability, or family structure. The school will not discriminate against any parent or carer and will ensure that all communications and opportunities for involvement are accessible and inclusive.

Roles and Responsibilities

School Leadership and Staff

The Headteacher is responsible for the overall implementation of this policy, ensuring that all statutory requirements are met and that the school's values are reflected in practice. As Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), the Headteacher will oversee the management of parental responsibility records, court orders, and safeguarding concerns. All staff are expected to:

- Familiarise themselves with the legal framework around parental responsibility.
- Treat all parents and carers with respect and impartiality.
- Communicate information accurately and securely to all those entitled to receive it.

- Seek advice from the Headteacher or DSL if unsure about any aspect of parental responsibility or information sharing.

Staff will receive regular training to ensure they are confident in applying the policy and responding appropriately to the needs of diverse families.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Provide the school with up-to-date information about who holds parental responsibility for their child, including copies of any relevant court orders.
- Inform the school promptly of any changes in family circumstances that may affect parental responsibility or contact arrangements.
- Work in partnership with the school, communicating openly and respectfully with staff and other parents or carers.
- Prioritise the best interests and welfare of their child in all interactions with the school.

The school recognises that family circumstances can be complex and will offer support and guidance to parents and carers as needed.

Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of this policy.
- Ensuring that the policy is reviewed regularly and updated in line with changes to legislation or statutory guidance.
- Holding the Headteacher and school leadership to account for compliance with statutory duties and the promotion of the school's values.
- Ensuring that all policies and procedures relating to parental involvement are accessible, inclusive, and reflect best practice.

Procedures and Protocols

Identifying Parental Responsibility

Upon admission, Kennet Valley CofE VA Primary School will request full details of all individuals who have parental responsibility for each pupil. Parents and carers will be asked to complete a Parental Responsibility and Court Order Form (see Appendix 11.2) and provide copies of any relevant legal documents. The school will:

- Record all information securely on the school's management information system.
- Review and update records annually, or sooner if notified of changes by parents or carers.
- Verify the authenticity of court orders and seek clarification from the issuing court or legal representatives if necessary.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the current parental responsibility arrangements for each child, while maintaining confidentiality.

If there is any uncertainty about who holds parental responsibility, the school will seek advice from the Local Authority or legal counsel.

Communication with Parents

Kennet Valley CofE VA Primary School is committed to clear, consistent, and impartial communication with all parents and carers who have parental responsibility. The school will:

- Use a range of communication methods, including digital platforms (e.g., secure parent portals, email), letters, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings, to ensure accessibility.
- Provide key information (such as reports, newsletters, and invitations to events) to all parents with parental responsibility, unless restricted by a court order.

- Offer simultaneous or separate communications to parents who are separated, respecting their privacy and preferences.
- Ensure that staff do not take sides or become involved in disputes between parents, maintaining a neutral and professional approach at all times.
- Respond promptly to requests for information or clarification from parents, and keep a record of all significant communications.

Where parents have difficulty accessing digital communications, alternative arrangements (such as printed copies or phone calls) will be offered.

Information Sharing and Access

All parents with parental responsibility are entitled to receive information about their child's education, progress, attendance, and welfare, unless a court order states otherwise. The school will:

- Provide access to school reports, attendance records, and information about school events to all entitled parents.
- Ensure that information is shared securely, in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Respect the confidentiality of each parent's contact details, only sharing information with other parents or third parties where legally required or with explicit consent.
- Respond to requests for additional information or meetings from parents with parental responsibility, arranging appointments at mutually convenient times.

If a parent's access to information is restricted by a court order, the school will act strictly in accordance with the terms of the order and will inform all relevant staff of the restrictions in place.

Managing Court Orders and Legal Restrictions

Where a court order is in place, the school will:

- Request a copy of the order from the parent or their legal representative.
- Record the details of the order securely and update the pupil's records accordingly.
- Ensure that all staff who need to know about the order are informed of its terms, while maintaining confidentiality.
- Act in strict accordance with the order, including any restrictions on contact, collection from school, or information sharing.
- Seek advice from the Local Authority or legal counsel if the terms of the order are unclear or if there are concerns about compliance.

The school will not become involved in disputes between parents regarding the interpretation of court orders and will refer parents to legal advice where appropriate.

Handling Disputes and Disagreements

Disputes between parents can be distressing for children and challenging for schools. Kennet Valley CofE VA Primary School will:

- Prioritise the welfare and best interests of the child in all decisions and communications.
- Maintain a neutral and impartial stance, not taking sides in disputes between parents.
- Encourage parents to resolve disagreements amicably and, where appropriate, signpost them to mediation services or legal advice.
- Escalate concerns to the Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead if a dispute is impacting the child's welfare or education.
- Keep a clear record of all communications and actions taken in relation to disputes.

If a dispute cannot be resolved and is affecting the child's education or welfare, the school may seek advice from the Local Authority or refer the matter to Children's Services.

Safeguarding and Child Welfare

Safeguarding is at the heart of all decisions and procedures at Kennet Valley CofE VA Primary School. In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), the school will:

- Ensure that all staff are alert to the potential safeguarding risks associated with family disputes, including the risk of emotional harm to the child.
- Share information with parents and carers in a way that does not compromise the child's safety or welfare.
- Act immediately if there are concerns that a child is at risk of harm, following the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Work closely with external agencies, including Children's Services and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), where necessary.

All actions taken under this policy will be guided by the principle of acting in the best interests of the child.

Training, Awareness, and Implementation

Staff Training

All staff at Kennet Valley CofE VA Primary School will receive regular training on:

- The legal framework around parental responsibility and court orders.
- Effective communication with separated parents and carers.
- Recognising and responding to safeguarding concerns in the context of family disputes.
- Data protection and confidentiality requirements.

Training will be delivered as part of the school's annual safeguarding and professional development programme, with additional sessions provided as needed in response to changes in legislation or guidance.

Policy Dissemination

This policy will be shared with:

- All staff, through induction and ongoing training.
- Parents and carers, via the school website, newsletters, and on request.
- The wider school community, through information sessions and parent forums.

The policy will be available in accessible formats and languages as required to ensure that all families can understand and engage with its content.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The implementation and effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through:

- Regular audits of parental responsibility records and communication logs.
- Feedback from parents, carers, staff, and pupils via surveys, meetings, and suggestion boxes.
- Review of incidents or complaints relating to parental involvement or disputes.
- Annual review by the Governing Body, with recommendations for improvement as needed.

The school is committed to continuous improvement and will adapt its procedures in response to feedback and changing needs.

Confidentiality, Data Protection, and Record Keeping

Data Protection Principles

Kennet Valley CofE VA Primary School is committed to handling all personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. This includes:

- Collecting only the information necessary to fulfil statutory duties and support the child's education and welfare.
- Processing data lawfully, fairly, and transparently.
- Ensuring that data is accurate, up-to-date, and stored securely.
- Respecting the rights of parents, carers, and pupils in relation to their personal data.

The school's Data Protection Policy provides further details on data handling and individuals' rights.

Record Keeping

The school will maintain accurate and up-to-date records of:

- All individuals with parental responsibility for each pupil.
- Copies of court orders and legal documents.
- Communications with parents and carers, particularly where there are disputes or legal restrictions.
- Actions taken in response to changes in family circumstances or legal status.

Records will be stored securely, with access limited to authorised staff, and retained in line with the school's retention schedule and statutory requirements.

Confidentiality and Information Security

All staff are required to maintain the confidentiality of sensitive information relating to pupils and their families. The school will:

- Use secure systems for storing and sharing information.
- Limit access to sensitive data to those who need it to fulfil their professional duties.
- Provide training on information security and confidentiality to all staff.
- Respond promptly to any data breaches or concerns about information security, in line with the school's Data Protection Policy and reporting procedures.

Inclusivity and Respect for Diverse Family Structures

Recognition of Family Diversity

Kennet Valley CofE VA Primary School recognises and values the diversity of family structures within its community, including single-parent families, blended families, families with same-sex parents, and families where children are cared for by relatives or guardians. The school will:

- Ensure that all policies, communications, and practices are inclusive and respectful of different family arrangements.
- Avoid assumptions about family roles or relationships, seeking clarification where necessary.
- Celebrate diversity through the curriculum, assemblies, and school events, promoting understanding and acceptance among pupils and staff.

Promoting Respect and Empathy

The school is committed to fostering an environment of respect, empathy, and support for all families. This includes:

- Listening to the views and experiences of parents, carers, and pupils.
- Responding sensitively to the challenges faced by families experiencing separation, divorce, or other changes.
- Providing support and signposting to external agencies where families need additional help.
- Embedding the school's values of compassion, curiosity, and courage in all interactions with families.

Through these actions, Kennet Valley CofE VA Primary School aims to create a welcoming and supportive community where every child and family feels valued and included.

Policy Review and Continuous Improvement

Review Schedule

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Headteacher and Governing Body, or sooner if:

- There are significant changes in legislation or statutory guidance.
- Feedback from parents, carers, staff, or pupils indicates that changes are needed.
- There is a serious incident or complaint relating to parental involvement or disputes.

The review will consider the effectiveness of current procedures, feedback from stakeholders, and any new developments in best practice or statutory requirements.

Responding to Regulatory Updates

The school will monitor updates from the Department for Education, Ofsted, and the Local Authority to ensure that the policy remains compliant with current legislation and guidance. Where changes are required, the policy will be updated promptly and all stakeholders will be informed of the revisions.

Appendices and Supporting Materials

Template Letters and Communication Protocols

Sample Letter: Notification of Parental Responsibility

Dear [Parent/Carer Name],

We are updating our records to ensure that we have accurate information about all individuals who have parental responsibility for your child, [Child's Name]. Please complete the attached form and return it to the school office, along with copies of any relevant court orders.

If you have any questions or need support, please contact [Name of Designated Lead] at [Contact Details].

Yours sincerely,

[Name of Headteacher]

Headteacher

Sample Letter: Information Sharing with Separated Parents

Dear [Parent/Carer Name],

We understand that you are separated from [Other Parent/Carer Name]. Please let us know your preferred method of communication and whether you would like to receive information separately. Our aim is to ensure that both parents with parental responsibility are kept fully informed about [Child's Name]'s education and welfare.

If there are any court orders or legal restrictions in place, please provide a copy so that we can act in accordance with the terms.

Yours sincerely,

[Name of Headteacher]

Headteacher

Parental Responsibility and Court Order Form

Parental Responsibility and Court Order Declaration

- Child's Name: _____
- Date of Birth: _____
- Names of all individuals with parental responsibility: _____
- Relationship to child: _____
- Contact details: _____
- Are there any court orders in place? Yes [] No
If yes, please attach a copy and provide details: _____
- Signature(s): _____
- Date: _____

Staff Training Materials Outline

Key Topics for Staff Training:

- Understanding parental responsibility and legal definitions
- School duties under the Children Act 1989, Education Act 1996, and Equality Act 2010
- Procedures for recording and updating parental responsibility and court orders
- Effective, impartial communication with separated parents
- Safeguarding considerations in the context of family disputes
- Data protection and confidentiality requirements
- Responding to disputes and managing challenging conversations

Flowcharts and Process Maps

Flowchart: Handling Parental Responsibility Queries

1. Parent/carer notifies school of change in family circumstances
↓
2. School requests completion of Parental Responsibility and Court Order Form
↓
3. Parent/carer submits form and any court orders
↓
4. School updates records and informs relevant staff
↓
5. Communications and information sharing proceed in line with updated records and any legal restrictions
↓
- 6.

Flowchart: Responding to Disputes Between Parents

1. School receives notification of dispute
↓
2. Headteacher/DSL reviews the situation and checks for court orders
↓
3. School maintains impartiality and prioritises child's welfare
↓
4. Parents encouraged to seek mediation or legal advice
↓
5. If safeguarding concerns arise, follow Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
↓
6. Record all actions and communications

References

- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005
- Data Protection Act 2018 & UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Equality Act 2010
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- Department for Education (DfE) Guidance: Understanding and Dealing with Issues Relating to Parental Responsibility (2016)
- Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF)
- National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) guidance on parental engagement
- Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) guidance on working with separated parents
- Kennet Valley CofE VA Primary School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Kennet Valley CofE VA Primary School Data Protection Policy
- Wiltshire Local Authority guidance on parental responsibility and information sharing