Cornwall Education Learning Trust

Separated Parents Policy

Cornwall Education Learning Trust Policies
Cornwall Education Learning Trust (CELT), Atlantic Centre, Trenance Leisure Park, Newquay, Cornwall TR7 2LZ

Our Mission

At Cornwall Education Learning Trust (CELT), our mission is clear: to provide every learner with an **exceptional educational experience.** One that enables them to thrive, achieve and succeed in life. We believe in a **100%** mindset, that every learner, in every classroom, in every school, deserves the very best we can offer. For us, 100% means no compromise: no learner left behind, no community overlooked, and no opportunity wasted.

Our strategic goals reflect this ambition. We are committed to empowering and growing our people, building an ambitious all-through entitlement, forging exceptional relationships with our communities, transforming provision through meaningful partnerships, and leading an ethical, effective and innovative organisation. These are not just aspirations; they are promises that shape the way we work and the culture we are building together.



Our Values

Our values are at the heart of everything we do. We believe in the power of **Collaboration**, building strong relationships and working together as one team to achieve our collective goals. We are committed to **Empowerment**, creating a culture where initiative, innovation and trust flourish, and where every individual feels valued, respected and motivated.

As a Trust, we are grounded in promoting **Leadership**, sharing a moral and ethical purpose to improve the lives of others and make a lasting difference for our learners and communities. And we embrace **Transformation**, approaching change positively so that we can all become our best selves and do our best work.

These values guide every decision we make and every action we take. They are the foundation of our Trust and the reason we can offer such exceptional opportunities for our learners and staff. If you choose to join CELT, you will be part of a values-driven organisation where people are supported to grow, contribute, and thrive.

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1. Policy Overview

1.1 Policy Purpose and Aims

Cornwall Education Learning Trust (CELT) recognises that parental separation can be challenging for both parents and children. CELT schools aim to support families whilst ensuring that the welfare of the child remains paramount.

This policy is designed to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from CELT Schools and its staff.

Where there are any differences between this policy and any court order, the terms of the court order will prevail.

1.2 Policy Approval and Review

Policy Version Number:	4
Approved By:	Trust Board
Approved On (Date):	23rd July 2026
Review Period:	Bi-Annually by end of July 2028

1.3 Policy Version History

Policy Version	Date Issued	Summary of Changes
1	October 2021	First Issue – No Changes
2	October 2022	
3	October 2023	

2. Who is a parent?

2.1. For the purposes of education legislation, the term 'parent' has a meaning that is wider than its 'ordinary' meaning. It includes:

- the child's biological parents
- any other person who has parental responsibility for the child
- any other person who has care of the child, that is a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child

This may therefore include stepparents, grandparents, foster carers or other relatives who care for the child.

2.2. All persons meeting the above definition will be subject to the legal obligation that the child receives a suitable full time education.

3. What is parent responsibility and who has it?

3.1. Parental responsibility is a legal term and means having all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent of a child has by law in relation to that child. Parental responsibility can be shared by a number of people who are able to act independently in respect of the child.

3.2. Parents married to each other at the time of a child's birth both have parental responsibility for that child. If the biological parents of a child were not married to each other when the child was born, the mother automatically has parental responsibility, but the biological father does not, unless he has subsequently acquired parental responsibility by registering the birth (after 1 December 2003), a parental responsibility agreement or court order. Other persons may also acquire parental responsibility, generally following legal proceedings which result in residence orders, adoption orders or care orders being made (in the case of a local authority).

3.3 Where more than one person holds parental responsibility, each person can generally act independently in relation to the child unless a court order restricts this. The school will treat all individuals with parental responsibility equally.

4. CELT Schools approach

4.1. CELT recognises that all parents have a legal right to participate in their child's education. Except as specified in this policy, CELT schools will treat all parents equally.

4.2. As defined more specifically in this policy, all parents are entitled to be:

- sent information by the school both of a general nature and in relation to the child
- informed if special educational provision is made for the child at the school
- given the opportunity to participate in school activities e.g. vote in elections for parent Local Governing Body Members
- to meet with school staff

- told about meetings regarding the child

4.3. Disputes between parents over the exercise of their parental rights need to be resolved between the parents concerned and/or the courts. It is not for CELT or their schools to provide advice on domestic arrangements or become involved in parental disputes.

4.4. ~~The school is not generally party to court orders which are in place in relation to the family. As such, the school is not responsible for enforcing orders of the court. Individuals should seek their own legal advice in the event of any alleged breach of the terms of any order.~~ The school will comply with any court orders brought to its attention. The school is not responsible for monitoring or enforcing compliance between parents but will act in accordance with the terms of any order when making decisions.

5. Informing the school of a change in family circumstances

5.1. We encourage parents to tell us at an early stage if there is a change in family circumstances, such as the separation of parents. Whenever possible, staff will be informed of such changes so that suitable support can be offered.

5.2. The school will need to be provided with updated contact details, details of agreed arrangements for collecting children and contacts for emergencies. In particular, the school will need to be informed with which parent the child will be primarily resident i.e. who the child will spend more than half of their time living with (known in this policy as the 'resident parent').

5.3. Where any court orders are issued which are relevant to the child and the school, a copy of the order should be provided to the school as soon as possible.

6. Contacts

6.1. Unless there is a court order or the school has been notified in writing of alternative arrangements, the school will treat the resident parent as the school's main contact and the other biological non-resident parent as the school's second contact. Any other parent will be noted on the school's records in the alphabetical order of their surname. Being recorded as the main contact does not give greater legal rights or decision-making authority.

6.2. The school will only accept alternative contacts or an alternative order of contacts which have been:

- agreed by all those with parental responsibility who are known to the school and notified to the school in writing, or,
- provided by way of a court order.

7. Provision of information

7.1. Day to day information about the child will normally be passed to the resident parent or the parent/person collecting the child from the school that day. Parents are expected to liaise with each other in relation to such information. Schools will take reasonable steps to ensure that all parents with parental responsibility receive communications directly where contact details are provided.

7.2. Where possible, parents should endeavour to attend parent meetings together. Where this is not possible, parents should notify the school in reasonable time so that alternative arrangements can be investigated.

7.3. A copy of the annual written report of a pupil's progress and attainment in the main subject areas taught will be provided to the resident parent and any other parent who requests a copy of it.

7.4. Requests from parents for access to information (including educational records or personal data) will be managed in accordance with the school's data protection and records policies. Where appropriate, the school may seek further information to verify identity and parental responsibility before releasing information.

8. Consent

8.1 Where more than one person holds parental responsibility for a child, each person may generally act independently in giving consent or making decisions in relation to the child, unless a court order states otherwise.

8.2 The school will normally accept consent provided by any one person with parental responsibility. The school will not routinely require agreement from all persons with parental responsibility where consent has been provided by one.

8.3 The school may, in specific circumstances, require the consent of *all* persons with parental responsibility who are known to the school where:

- there is a legal requirement to obtain joint consent; or
- the decision is considered to have a significant or long-term impact on the child's welfare, education, or identity.

Examples of when joint consent may be required include (but are not limited to):

- removal of a child from the school roll (including elective home education or transfer to another school)
- extended or residential visits, particularly those involving travel outside of the United Kingdom
- changes relating to a child's legal or recorded identity, including name changes

- decisions which may significantly affect a child's health, wellbeing, or long-term educational provision (e.g. certain medical interventions arranged via school, or significant changes to provision where parental disagreement is evident)

8.4 Where there is a disagreement between persons with parental responsibility about a decision requiring consent, the school will:

- act in the best interests of the child
- avoid becoming involved in the dispute
- advise parents to seek resolution directly or through legal processes where appropriate

9. Collection of children from school

9.1. The school will release a child to any person with parental responsibility, or a person authorised by them, unless alternative arrangements have been notified to the school or the school has safeguarding concerns about sending a child home with a particular parent/person. The school will only accept alternative arrangements which have been:

- agreed jointly by all those with parental responsibility who are known to the school and notified to the school in writing, or,
- provided by way of a court order.

9.2. If a person seeks to remove the child from school in contravention of notified alternative arrangements, the following steps will be followed:

- a member of staff will meet with the parent/person seeking to collect/remove the child and, in his/her presence, telephone the person to whom the child would normally be released and explain the request
- if the person to whom the child would normally be released agrees, the child may be released and the records will reflect that the permission was granted verbally
- unless it is reasonable to comply with the request, the member of staff may have to refuse permission if agreement/consent cannot be obtained
- if there is a belief that a possible abduction of the child may occur or if the parent is disruptive, the police and the local authority will be notified immediately

10. Requests for a change of pupil name

10.1. Where a child is deemed by the school to be of sufficient age or maturity and requests that their informal / known-by name is changed, then the school's records will be updated accordingly.

10.2. In all other cases, the school will require the written consent of all those with parental responsibility for the child who are known to the school to change the informal / known by name of the child in the school's records.

10.3. Where there is a special guardianship order or a child arrangement order which relates to whom a child will live, the school is legally unable to arrange for a child to be known by a new surname (even informally) without the written consent of every person with parental responsibility or evidence of a court order confirming the change.

10.4. The school will only change the child's legal name in the school's records on receipt of a change of name deed poll which has been enrolled with the court. This will require the agreement of all persons with parental responsibility.

11. Requests to remove a child from the school roll

11.1. The school will ordinarily require confirmation that all those with parental responsibility for a child consent to the removal of the child from the school roll to attend another school or be home educated.

11.2. Where there is disagreement between parents about the removal of a child from the school roll, parents should seek their own legal advice and/or a court order. The school will refer the matter to the local authority where there are concerns about the welfare of the child.

12. Procedure following contact from absent parent

12.1. The school has no legal obligation to make enquiries of those enrolling children at the school on whether other individuals with parental responsibility agree with their decision. On enrolment, we do expect to be provided with the contact details of all those with parental responsibility for the child, if known. Information provided to the school when the child was enrolled will be presumed to be correct unless a court order or original birth certificate proving otherwise is provided to the school.

12.2. Where the school is contacted by a parent of a child on roll at the school with whom the school has no previous information (known in this policy as an 'absent parent'), the school will contact the resident parent to confirm whether the person is known to them and whether there is any legal reason why information should not be provided, i.e. a court order.

12.3. If no court order exists, the school will contact the absent parent to ask them to confirm their identity and to confirm whether they have parental responsibility for the child.

13. Safeguarding considerations

13.1 The safety and welfare of the child is the school's paramount concern in all decisions relating to parental responsibility, information sharing, and contact arrangements. Where concerns exist regarding the safety or wellbeing of a child or another individual, the school may depart from its usual approach to information sharing, communication, or contact arrangements.

In such cases, the school will:

- act in accordance with its safeguarding and child protection policies
- seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and, where appropriate, external agencies
- consider whether sharing information with a parent or allowing contact may place the child or another individual at risk

13.2 The school may lawfully limit or refuse:

- the sharing of information with a parent; or
- a parent's presence on site or involvement in school activities

where it is necessary to safeguard the child or others, or where required by a court order.

13.3 Where appropriate, the school will work with the local authority, police, or other relevant agencies to ensure that safeguarding concerns are managed effectively.