



Separated Parents Policy

At St Bernards Day Nursery, we recognise that family separation can be a difficult and emotional time for children and their families. We will work closely and sensitively with parents and carers to support the child through any changes, with the child's welfare, emotional well-being and best interests at the centre of our practice.

Staff will monitor children's well-being and will share significant changes in behaviour or emotional presentation with the appropriate parent or carer. Where appropriate, families may be signposted to relevant services and organisations for additional support.

Parental responsibility

Parental responsibility includes the legal rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority a person has in relation to a child and the child's property. Nursery staff will take account of who holds parental responsibility when sharing information, planning events, updating data, and any other aspects relating to a child.

Key aspects of parental responsibility may include:

- providing a home for the child.
- having contact with and living with the child.
- protecting and maintaining the child.
- making decisions about the child's education.
- agreeing to medical treatment.
- making decisions about the child's name, religion and travel outside the UK.
- being responsible for the child's property.
- appointing a guardian where necessary; and
- agreeing to the disclosure of confidential information about the child where appropriate.

Parents do not automatically lose parental responsibility following separation or divorce. The nursery will not make assumptions about parental responsibility based solely on where a child lives or the parents' relationship status.

Where family arrangements are complex or there is uncertainty about parental responsibility, court orders or the sharing of information, the nursery will seek appropriate legal or safeguarding advice.

Nursery registration and information

As part of the registration process, St Bernards Day Nursery will request information about parents and carers, including details of who holds parental responsibility.

- Parents must inform the nursery of any relevant court orders, injunctions or legal restrictions.
- Where a court order or other relevant legal document affects nursery arrangements, the nursery will request a copy for the child's confidential records.
- If a child is registered by one parent following separation, the nursery will request all relevant information needed to support the child safely and lawfully.
- Parents are responsible for informing the nursery promptly if arrangements or legal orders change.

Our approach when parents are separated

St Bernards Day Nursery will:

- ensure the child's welfare is always paramount
- comply with relevant court orders that have been provided to the nursery
- provide information about the child's learning and progress to parents who are entitled to receive it
- where appropriate, invite parents with parental responsibility to consultations and nursery events
- ensure accidents and incidents are communicated appropriately
- maintain confidentiality regarding family circumstances
- remain neutral and not take sides in disputes between parents
- treat parents respectfully and fairly while prioritizing the child's welfare
- not restrict a parent with parental responsibility solely at the request of the other parent where there is no legal basis to do so; and
- seek legal or safeguarding advice where disputes arise about care, collection, access or the sharing of information.

Collection of children

The nursery's normal collection and safeguarding procedures will continue to apply. Parents must keep the nursery informed of authorised collectors and any legal restrictions affecting collection. Where staff are presented with a dispute at collection time, they will prioritise the child's immediate safety and welfare and seek management, legal or safeguarding advice as appropriate.

Safeguarding

Family separation itself is not a safeguarding concern. However, if information shared with the nursery, a child's presentation, a dispute between adults or any other circumstances give rise

to a concern about a child's safety or welfare, staff will follow St Bernards Day Nursery's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and local safeguarding procedures.

Confidentiality and information sharing

Information about family separation will be treated sensitively and confidentially. Information will be shared only with those who need it for the child's care, welfare, safeguarding or where there is another lawful reason to share it. Staff will not discuss one parent with the other or become involved in private family disputes.

What we ask of parents and carers

We ask parents and carers to:

- provide accurate information about parental responsibility, court orders and injunctions
- tell the nursery promptly about any relevant changes
- work with the nursery to provide consistency and continuity of care for the child
- avoid involving nursery staff in family disputes unless information is directly relevant to the child's care, safety or welfare
- discuss sensitive matters with the manager or key person away from the child; and
- understand that nursery staff must remain neutral and act in the best interests of the child.

Staff responsibilities

All staff must follow this policy consistently. Any uncertainty or disagreement about parental responsibility, collection, court orders, information sharing or safeguarding must be referred to the Nursery Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead before action is taken wherever practicable.

Policy monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed regularly and whenever there are relevant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding procedures or nursery practice.