

St John the Baptist Infant Girls' School
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Scoil Eoin Baisde Cailíní Naoidh
Bóthar Ghort na Mara
Cluain Tarbh
Baile Átha Cliath D03 XK27
Principal: Dearbhla O'Driscoll
Chair, Board of Management: Paul Nolan
Roll No: 19007S

Custody/ Separation Policy

Introduction and Rationale:

This policy was formulated to provide the school community of St John the Baptist IGS, Belgrove with guidelines regarding situations of parental separation and custody matters. It was written based on the guidelines outlined by the Irish Primary Principal's Network, and is reflective of The Children and Family Relations Act 2015, which came into effect on 03.06.21

Procedures:

The Board of Management and the Staff of St John the Baptist IGS, Belgrove encourage parents experiencing separation to come and speak confidentially to their child(ren)'s class teacher(s) and/or the school Principal. It is our aim to handle such matters with sensitivity and compassion, and ultimately, our primary concern is for the well-being and overall development of the child.

The following are the key procedures in place with separated parents of pupils in the school:

- When a child spends time in two homes, it is requested that the school be provided with both sets of emergency/contact numbers and both addresses for correspondence purposes.
- Regarding the collection of child/ren from school - it is requested that the school be informed of any changes in collection arrangements in writing (in line with the school's pupil collection form).
- It is the school policy to offer the option of separate parent/teacher meetings, if so desired. However, in the interest of the child's welfare, we recommend that both parents attend together. Each parent has a right to attend such meetings and receive school reports unless there is a court order to the contrary.
- When the school communicates with parents regarding their child, we will communicate with the parent with whom the child principally resides. It is assumed that this parent will inform the other parent of meetings, arrangements etc. Special requests for separate communication can be accommodated. If there is a custody arrangement by which the child spends equal time with both parents, then both parents will receive the school communication.
- Regarding school communication such as notes via schoolbags it is assumed that the parent with whom the child is residing at the time of that particular communication will keep the other parent informed of such.
- Regarding school communication such as notes via webtexts and emails sent via Aladdin, both parents can be registered on Aladdin.
- In the absence of a custody arrangement, both parents will be treated as equal partners in terms of parenting rights and responsibilities

- The school cannot be asked to withhold a child from either parent in the absence of a court order. In this regard, a solicitor's letter is not a court order and cannot be adhered to.
- If there is a serious concern about a parent abducting or leaving the country with the child, the parents/carer should request their solicitor to seek a court order instructing the school and any other carers regarding rights of access.
- In the case where the estranged parent/carer is not known to the class teacher, the concerned parent/carer should provide a family photograph enabling the class teacher to identify the person in question.
- In the case of unmarried parents, the natural father has no initial custody or guardianship rights. The onus is on the father to produce evidence of a court order in the case of a dispute regarding the collection of a child during or after school. A copy of the court order should be provided to the school.
- The school is under no legal obligation to provide any reports about a child if requested to do so by any third party (e.g. Solicitor/psychologist)
- The school principal or child's teacher are not obliged to attend court unless under subpoena or summons.
- In the case where a legal order is in place, a copy of this order must be furnished to the school by the parents.
- The parent/carer of each child has full responsibility for informing the school in writing of any change in circumstances at home e.g. separation, divorce, custody arrangements.
- The staff may recommend books, videos, publications etc. dealing with the issue of separation, on request.
- Teachers are expected to:
 - a. act in a fair, open and even-headed manner in respect of both parents
 - b. advise both parents of meetings if the teacher believes that one parent will not inform the other
 - c. facilitate separate meetings, if for good reason, both parents cannot attend together
 - d. comply with the parent who has de facto day to day control of the child in the event of a dispute
 - e. respect the confidentiality of family circumstances and only discuss relevant information with others within the school where necessary
 - f. seek advice from the principal or the Board of Management regarding any queries or concerns they may have.

Communication of the policy:

A copy will be provided to all staff members in the school. It will be available for all parents/carers from reception. It will be made available to the P.A. and published on the school's website.

Ratification and review of the policy:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 02/06/2021

This policy will be reviewed in 2024, or earlier should the need arise regarding legislation etc.