

# ESTRANGED FAMILIES - CORRESPONDENCE AND COMMUNICATION



## Preamble and Context

Nunthorpe Multi Academy Trust is committed to ensuring that we are entirely impartial in the unfortunate circumstances of separated and divorced parents/carers who are estranged.

Where parents/carers are unwilling and/or unable to communicate directly with each other, the appropriate NMAT Academy will deal primarily with the parent/carer listed as living with the child/young person at the Main Residence.

## Definition

A parent is defined by section 576 of the Education Act 1996 as anyone who is the natural parent of the child, a person who although not a natural parent has parental responsibility for a child or any person who although not a natural parent, has the day to day care of a child.

A birth certificate proves a biological link however this does not automatically mean that there is a parental responsibility for the child, as fathers do not have automatic parental responsibility.

A father will have parental responsibility of a child if they were married to the mother at the time of the birth or subsequently married her or if father was not married to mother at time of the birth nor has married her since, but the father will have parental responsibility if he has:

- A residence order,
- A court order which gives him parental responsibility,
- A formal parental responsibility agreement with the mother or
- He was named on the birth certificate for a child born on or after 1.12.2003

***In all such circumstances, the needs of the child/young person will be paramount at all times.***

## What service do we provide to estranged parents/carers?

All NMAT Academies will guarantee that, where a legitimate written request from an estranged parent/carer is received, we will ensure the following information is routinely shared with them.

1. For the most up to date information on a student, regarding attendance, punctuality, behaviour points and achievement points, it is essential to have access to the parental portal used by the appropriate NMAT Academy.

*n.b. All parents/carers with parental responsibility for a student can apply for access to the parental portal by requesting the appropriate form from the Academy's Main Reception.*

2. A copy of the Academy Student Reports issued each academic year – either electronic (preferred) or paper (please specify in any written request as above).

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**This policy will be kept under regular review in light of legal developments and best practice.**

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3. Parental Review Evenings/Parents Evenings are held across the year (see Academy calendar) a pre-booked interview with the student's tutor for **Pastoral** Parental Review Evenings, or pre-booked individual teacher interviews for **Academic** Parental Review Evenings.

*We offer one or other of the above to the parent/carer listed in the Main Residence; where parents/carers are unable to jointly attend this/these interviews, additional appointment times for the estranged parent/carer will be made available at request via emailing your child's form tutor/subject teachers.*

4. Any additional correspondence the Academy deems significant enough for an estranged parent/carer to see.

**ALL OF THIS IS ONLY SUPPLIED TO A PARENT/CARER WITH FULL LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR A CHILD/YOUNG PERSON.**

**Any estranged parent/carer (with full legal responsibility for a student) wishing to receive such information as listed above should write to the Office Manager at the appropriate Academy.**

## **What about legal disputes over parental rights?**

Legal advice (from the Trust's solicitors) will be sought by the Trust with regards to the disclosure of information on students in any cases of family disputes such as where court orders apply.

Court orders under section 8 of the Children Act 1989 (often called section 8 orders) settle areas of dispute in relation to the exercise of parental responsibility or a child's care or upbringing, and can limit how an individual exercises their parental responsibility.

There are two types of section 8 orders which can be made to address particular issues:

- A **prohibited steps order** imposes a specific restriction on the exercise of responsibility. This means that no step specified by the Court, which a parent could take in meeting his/her parental responsibility, can be taken without the consent of the Court.
- A **specific issue order** is an order giving directions for the purpose of determining a specific question which has arisen, or may arise, in connection with any aspect of parental responsibility.

## **How can I keep up to date with my child's progress if I am an estranged parent/carer?**

Obviously, you can do so by writing to the academy as described above – especially by registering to get access to the Parent Portal.

For up to the minute general information about the academy log on to the Academy website.

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