



St James' Preschool (Petts Wood)

Parental Responsibility

At St James' Preschool we believe that children benefit most from early years education and care when parents and settings work together in positive partnership.

St James' Preschool aim is to support parents as their children's first and most important educators by involving them in their children's education and in the entire life of the setting. We also aim to support parents in their own continuing education and personal development.

Some parents are less well represented in early years settings. These include fathers, parents who live apart from their children but who still play a part in their lives and working parents. In performing the following procedures, we will ensure all parents are included.

When we refer to 'parents' we mean both mothers and fathers. These include both natural or birth parents and step-parents and parents who do not live with their children, but have contact with them and play a part in their lives.

'Parents' also includes same sex parents and foster parents.

The Children Act (1989) defines parental responsibility as 'all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property.'

Parental Involvement and Developing Positive Relationships

At St James' Preschool:

- We have a means to ensure all parents are included - that may mean we have different strategies for involving fathers or parents who work or live apart from their children
- We consult with all parents to find out what works best for them
- We ensure ongoing dialogue with parents to improve our knowledge of the needs of their children and to support their families
- We inform all parents about how the setting is run and its policies through access to written information and through regular informal communication
- We check to ensure parents understand the information that is given to them
- We encourage and support parents to play an active part in the governance and management of the setting
- We inform all parents on a regular basis about their children's progress
- We involve parents in the shared record keeping about their children - either formally or informally - and ensure parents have access to their children's written developmental records
- We provide opportunities for parents to contribute their own skills, knowledge and interests to the activities of the setting
- We inform parents about relevant conferences, workshops and training
- We consult with parents about the times of meetings to avoid excluding anyone
- We provide information about opportunities to be involved in the setting in ways that are accessible to parents with basic skills needs, or those for whom English is an additional language
- We hold meetings in venues that are accessible and appropriate for all
- We welcome the contributions of parents, in whatever form these may take
- We inform all parents of the systems for registering queries, complaints or suggestions and check to ensure these are understood. All parents have access to our written complaints procedure
- We provide opportunities for parents to learn about the curriculum offered in the setting and about young children's learning, in the setting and at home

Parental Responsibility

Parental responsibility defines who is responsible for the well-being of a child and who can, legally; make decisions in areas such as the child's health care, medical treatment and education. St James' Preschool understands and demonstrates an understanding that:

- Mothers automatically have responsibility, as do a married couple who have a child together. Parental responsibility usually continues after divorce
- Where the parents are not married, the unmarried father can gain parental responsibility if:
 - The father was present at the registration and his name is registered on the birth certificate. (Military families – the father may not be present but he will still have parental responsibility if he is named on the birth certificate)
 - the father later marries the mother
 - both parents have signed an authorised parental responsibility agreement
 - the father obtains a parental responsibility order from the court
 - the father obtains a residency order from the court
 - the father becomes the child's guardian
- Other adults such as grandparents and step parents do not have parental responsibility. They can only acquire it by:
 - being appointed as a guardian to care for a child if their parent dies
 - obtaining a residence order from a court for a child to live with them
 - adopting a child
- Foster parents do not hold parental responsibility for a child in their care. Parental responsibility is with the local authority into whose custody they have been placed.

As part of our Safeguarding procedures St James' Preschool needs to obtain necessary information from parents in advance of a child being admitted to the nursery.

- St James' Preschool must determine who has parental responsibility for each child attending the nursery
- This must be known before a child starts at a setting
- Parents must be asked to provide their child's birth certificate when their child begin to attend St James' Preschool
- The Parental Responsibility Form must be filled in and the full birth certificate must then be copied and attached to it, together with any court orders
- This information must then be held with the child's registration documents
- Adults who do not have parental responsibility will not be permitted to make decisions about a child whilst that child is in the setting's care
- Parental responsibility for a child can only be withdrawn if there is a court order stating this which must be copied and kept on the child's file
- This information must be shared with all staff that need to know this information
- Parental responsibility is not the same as collection procedures and parents will still be able to advise the preschool of the person(s) that they have authorised to collect their child.

Parent Separation

When parents separate it is a difficult situation for all concerned. The preschool understands that emotions run high and this policy lays out how the preschool will support the child and their family within the preschool. We feel this policy at St James' Preschool will:

- Support all parties in this difficult time including our team.
- Ensure the child's welfare is paramount in all operations relating to their time within the nursery
- Comply with any details of a Court Order where they are applicable to the preschool's situation, provided the preschool has seen a copy and has a copy attached to the child's file
- Provide information on the child's progress within the preschool to both parents
- Invite both parents to preschool events, including parental consultations and social evenings
- Ensure any incident or accident within the preschool relating to the child is reported to both parents as soon as possible
- Ensure that all matters known by the staff pertaining to the family and the parent's separation shall remain confidential Ensure that no member of staff takes sides within the separation and treats both parents equally and with due respect
- The preschool cannot restrict access to any parent with parental responsibility unless a formal Court Order is in place. We respectfully ask that parents do not put us in this position.

We ask parents to:

- Provide us with all information relating to parental responsibilities, Court Orders and injunctions
- Update information that changes any of the above as soon as practicably possible
- Work with us to ensure continuity of care and support for your child

- Not involve preschool staff in any family disputes, unless this directly impacts on the care we provide for the child
- Talk to the manager/key person away from the child when this relates to family separation to avoid the child becoming upset. This can be arranged as a more formal meeting or as an informal chat
- Not ask preschool to take sides in any dispute. We will only take your child's side and that will require us to be neutral at all times.

This policy is in compliance with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) May 2018. St James' Preschool is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, employees, students, volunteers, trustees and parents and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Manager of the Preschool	Rebecca Mason
Signed & Dated by Manager of the Preschool	
Chair of the Preschool Management Committee	Danni Forzoni
Signed & Dated by the Chair of the Preschool Management Committee	
Frequency of policy review	Annual
Date next review due	1st January 2026