

School Factsheet

Parental responsibility

The issue of parental responsibility (PR) can cause concern for teachers especially when children are being collected from school. This guide will help schools and teachers to understand their responsibilities in this area.



Who has parental responsibility (PR)?

- All mothers automatically.
- Fathers who are or have been married to the child's mother.
- Fathers who are not married to the child's mother but are named on the child's birth certificate when the child was born after 1st December 2003.
- Any other person who holds a Residence or Special Guardianship Order.
- Any other person to whom the mother has devolved or granted PR.
- The Local Authority under a Care Order.

Effect of parental responsibility

- Gives the holder all the 'parental rights and obligations' over the child.
- If there is a Special Guardian or the LA hold PR then their PR is overriding.
- Where more than one person has PR they hold it equally and can both independently make decisions about a child although they have a duty to consult with any other person holding PR.

Issues and actions

- If a parent who does not normally collect the child or who may not be known to the school arrives mid afternoon to collect the child what should you do?
 - Identify the person.
 - Ensure they have PR or authority to remove.
 - Do not allow the child to leave until the known PR holder has been contacted.
 - If the PR holder is unavailable or you have concerns contact the duty social worker or the police.
 - If the visitor is aggressive/abusive etc contact police.
 - Advise both parties to seek legal advice.
- Requests for information:
 - any person with PR is entitled to copies of reports, invitations to parents' events etc but again ID and PR need to be evidenced.
- If the PR holders cannot agree i.e. as to who should collect a child after school:
 - it is a civil matter and unless there are obvious child protection/safety issues the police will not want to be involved
 - the only duty the school has is to let the other person with PR know what is happening and to ensure the child's safety in school hours
 - can the school refuse to allow a child to be removed early? Arguably only where the child's safety requires it.

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