

Oyster Bay Nursery

Separated Parent Policy

Date written: October 2026

Date of last update: October 2026

Date agreed and ratified by October 2026

Date of next full review: September 2027

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and/or following any lessons learnt and/or updates to national or local guidance and procedures.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Debra Hines
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead(s)	Grace Sidders Rachel Finch
Nominated Individual	Debra Hines
Nursery Manager	Grace Sidders

1. Policy Statement

At Oyster Bay Nursery, we recognise that parents and carers who are separated can continue to work together in the best interests of their child. However, we understand that separation, divorce or family disagreements can sometimes be difficult and may affect a child's emotional wellbeing, relationships and experience at nursery.

Our priority is always the safety, welfare and best interests of the child. We aim to treat parents fairly, communicate professionally and minimise the impact of family disagreements on the child and the nursery.

This policy explains the responsibilities of parents and the procedures Oyster Bay Nursery will follow when working with separated, divorced or estranged parents.

The nursery will remain neutral in private family disputes and will not act as a mediator or make decisions about parental disputes. We will follow applicable legal requirements, court orders and safeguarding procedures.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Promote the child's welfare, safety and emotional wellbeing.
- Treat parents fairly and respectfully.
- Clarify the nursery's responsibilities and the information parents need to provide.
- Support appropriate communication between the nursery and parents.
- Explain arrangements for sharing information, attending meetings and collecting children.
- Ensure court orders and relevant safeguarding information are considered.
- Protect children from exposure to adult disagreements wherever possible.

3. Parental Responsibility and Parental Rights

Parental responsibility is defined in law and concerns the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority a person has in relation to a child.

A child's mother will generally have parental responsibility from birth. A father or other parent may have parental responsibility depending on the circumstances and the applicable legal arrangements. Other individuals may also hold parental responsibility through relevant legal processes.

The nursery will establish and record relevant information about those with parental responsibility and other adults involved in the child's care.

Where appropriate, the nursery may request documents to clarify parental responsibility or legal restrictions. Staff will handle these documents sensitively and securely.

A person who has parental responsibility will generally be entitled to appropriate information about their child, subject to applicable law, court orders, safeguarding considerations and the child's welfare. The nursery will consider each situation individually and will not automatically restrict a parent's access to information solely because the parents are separated.

The nursery will not assume that one parent can remove the other parent's rights or restrict their involvement simply by making a request. Where the legal position is unclear, the Nursery Manager may seek advice from the local authority or an appropriate legal professional.

4. Court Orders and Legal Arrangements

Parents must inform the nursery of any court order or other relevant legal arrangement that affects parental responsibility, contact, collection or the sharing of information.

Where a court order is provided, the nursery will:

- Request a complete and legible copy for its records.
- Review the parts relevant to the nursery's responsibilities.
- Inform the Nursery Manager and relevant safeguarding staff on a need-to-know basis.
- Ensure collection and communication arrangements reflect applicable legal restrictions.
- Seek advice from the local authority or appropriate legal professionals if the order is unclear or difficult to apply.

A letter from a solicitor or a verbal statement from a parent will not automatically be treated as equivalent to a court order. However, any information suggesting a risk to a child will be taken seriously and assessed under the nursery's safeguarding procedures.

Where the nursery receives information about a potential restriction but the legal position is uncertain, the Manager will take appropriate advice before making a decision, while prioritising the child's immediate safety.

5. Information Parents Must Provide

Parents are responsible for informing Oyster Bay Nursery promptly of changes to family circumstances that may affect their child's care or the nursery's arrangements.

Information should include, where relevant:

- Current contact details for each parent or person with parental responsibility.
- Details of the child's usual living arrangements.
- Emergency contact information.
- The names of adults authorised to collect the child.
- Relevant court orders or legal restrictions.
- Any safeguarding concerns or circumstances that may affect safe collection or communication.

The nursery will request updates to the child's records periodically and whenever a significant change is reported.

Information will be recorded securely and shared only with staff who need it for their role or where sharing is otherwise lawful and necessary.

6. Communication and Sharing Information

Oyster Bay Nursery aims to communicate openly and appropriately with parents, recognising that both parents may have an interest in their child's development and nursery experience.

Where legally appropriate and practicable, parents with parental responsibility will be given access to relevant information about their child, subject to court orders, safeguarding considerations, data protection requirements and the child's welfare.

This may include:

- General nursery updates and newsletters.
- Information about the child's progress and development.
- Invitations to relevant meetings and events.
- Information about significant incidents involving their child.
- Access to records where there is a lawful entitlement.

Where separate contact details are available and it is appropriate to do so, the nursery may send communications directly to each parent. Parents should tell the nursery if they require separate communications.

Parents are encouraged to share nursery information and communicate with one another about their child. However, the nursery will not assume that one parent has passed on information to the other where direct communication from the nursery is appropriate.

The nursery will not disclose one parent's private contact details, address or other personal information to the other without a lawful basis.

7. Meetings and Appointments

The nursery normally encourages parents to work together when attending meetings about their child. We recognise that joint meetings may not always be suitable or comfortable following separation.

Where appropriate, the Nursery Manager may arrange separate appointments by prior agreement, particularly where this supports the child's welfare or where there are safeguarding concerns or relevant legal restrictions.

Separate meetings will not be used to take sides in a parental dispute. Staff will aim to provide consistent information to each parent and keep appropriate records of important discussions and agreed actions.

Parents are expected to communicate respectfully with nursery staff and each other while on nursery premises or when contacting the nursery.

8. Fees and Financial Arrangements

Parents are expected to make their own arrangements regarding nursery fees, additional charges and other financial responsibilities.

The nursery will follow its registration agreement, contract and fees policy when determining who is responsible for payment. Separation does not automatically change contractual responsibilities.

Parents should inform the Nursery Manager of the appropriate contact for payment queries. The nursery will not mediate financial disputes between parents.

9. Collection and Handover of Children

Oyster Bay Nursery will follow its Arrivals, Departures and Uncollected Child Policy and its safeguarding procedures for all collections.

- Children will normally be released to adults authorised under the nursery's collection procedures, subject to any relevant legal restrictions.
- Parents must provide written updates to collection arrangements and ensure contact information remains current.
- Staff will check the identity of an unfamiliar adult where necessary.
- Any court order or legal restriction affecting collection must be provided to the nursery as soon as possible.

- Staff will not release a child to a person where doing so would breach a known, applicable court order or create an immediate safeguarding concern.

If a parent arrives to collect a child and staff identify a conflict between the request, the nursery's records and the information provided by the other parent, the Manager or designated safeguarding lead will assess the circumstances promptly.

The nursery will take reasonable steps to keep the child safe while the situation is clarified. Staff may contact the other parent, where safe and appropriate, and seek advice from children's social care or the police as required.

The nursery cannot determine or enforce private contact arrangements beyond its legal responsibilities. However, it will act on relevant legal restrictions and safeguarding concerns. If there is an immediate risk of abduction, violence or harm, staff will contact the police on 999.

During any disagreement at collection, staff will prioritise the child's safety, ensure the child is appropriately supervised and avoid exposing the child to conflict wherever possible.

10. Safeguarding and the Child's Welfare

If parental conflict, threatening behaviour or disputed arrangements appear to affect a child's safety, emotional wellbeing or welfare, staff will inform the Nursery Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

The nursery may seek advice from local authority children's social care or other appropriate agencies. Where there is an immediate risk of harm, emergency services will be contacted.

Staff will:

- Remain neutral and professional.
- Avoid discussing adult disputes in front of children.
- Record relevant incidents and concerns factually.
- Follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Share information with appropriate agencies when necessary to protect a child.

The nursery will not promise absolute confidentiality where information must be shared to safeguard a child or comply with the law.

11. Behaviour on Nursery Premises

All parents and visitors are expected to behave respectfully towards staff, other families and children.

Aggressive, threatening, intimidating or disruptive behaviour will not be tolerated. The Nursery Manager may take reasonable steps to protect children, families and staff, including arranging separate appointments, limiting direct interactions on site or contacting the police where necessary.

Any restrictions on a parent's access to nursery premises or involvement with the nursery will be considered individually, proportionately and in accordance with the law, relevant court orders and safeguarding requirements.

12. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

The nursery will keep appropriate records of:

- Parental responsibility and contact details.
- Relevant court orders and legal arrangements.
- Authorised collection arrangements.
- Significant communications and meetings.
- Collection disputes, incidents and safeguarding concerns.
- Decisions made and advice received.

Records will be factual, securely stored and handled in accordance with the nursery's Data Protection and Privacy Policy. Access will be restricted to authorised individuals.

Information will only be shared with parents, professionals or agencies where there is an appropriate legal basis and it is consistent with the child's welfare and any relevant restrictions.

13. Responsibilities

The Nursery Manager will:

- Ensure this policy is implemented consistently.
- Review relevant documents and collection arrangements.
- Seek advice when legal or safeguarding issues are unclear.
- Ensure staff receive relevant information on a need-to-know basis.
- Support appropriate communication with parents.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will:

- Respond to safeguarding concerns arising from family circumstances.
- Ensure concerns are recorded and escalated appropriately.

- Liaise with relevant agencies where necessary.

Staff will:

- Treat parents fairly and professionally.
- Follow agreed communication and collection procedures.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Report concerns or conflicting information promptly to the Manager or DSL.

Parents and carers will:

- Provide accurate and up-to-date information.
- Supply relevant court orders and legal restrictions.
- Communicate changes to collection and emergency arrangements promptly.
- Treat staff, children and other families respectfully.
- Avoid involving the nursery in disputes that are matters for the parents or the courts.

14. Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly and whenever changes in legislation, statutory guidance or nursery practice make a review necessary.