

Parental Responsibility and Schools

A short guide for Parents



What is Parental Responsibility?

PR means having the right and responsibility to make important decisions in the life of a child. Decisions like:

- Where they live.
- Where they go to school.
- What medical treatment they receive.

This leaflet is about Parental Responsibility and Schools. If a school knows all the people who have PR for a child then they can make sure that they keep them informed about that child's educational progress.

Who has it?

A child's mother ALWAYS has Parental Responsibility. She can only lose it if her child is adopted by someone else. Other people can share PR including:

- The child's father if he was married to the mother when the child was born.
- People who have a court order granting them PR.
- A step-father who adopts the child.

The situation for unmarried fathers is more complicated and depends on when the child was born. If a child was born before 1 December 2003 unmarried fathers can get PR by:

- Marrying the mother of the child.
- Registering a parental responsibility agreement with the court or applying for a court order granting them PR.

For children born after December 1st 2003 unmarried fathers can get parental responsibility by:

- Registering the child's birth jointly with the mother.
- Marrying the mother of the child.
- Registering with the court for PR.

Other Parents

There are some people who are legally seen as parents but who don't have Parental Responsibility. Anyone who has the day to day care of a child is seen as a parent. They would be expected to make sure that:

- their child receives an education
- they are fed and cared for appropriately

They have to look after their children as much as a person with Parental Responsibility. The main difference is that the person with PR will have final say in the important decisions mentioned above. If they fail to look after their children they will be treated in the same way as a person with PR who fails in these duties. For example if a child does not go to school regularly, then all parents, whether they have Parental Responsibility or not, can be prosecuted and could be fined.

School and PR

Please keep your child's school informed about any changes in your family circumstances. If schools are told about the changes then they can make sure that they keep everyone up to date about how their children are getting on.

Families sometimes have difficulties, and courts can become involved in the care and living arrangements of the children. In these cases schools need to know about any Court Orders that have been made. If you are not sure if the information will be useful you can arrange to talk in confidence to someone at school.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For general information about the contents of this leaflet please contact your local Education Welfare Office:

Stafford and South Staffordshire
Steve Hewitt, District Education Welfare Officer Tel: 01785 356940

Lichfield and Cannock
Sue Thrupp, District Education Welfare Officer (Acting) Tel: 01543 512050

East Staffordshire and Tamworth
Annie Capehorn, District Education Welfare Officer Tel: 01283 239090

Newcastle and Leek Moorlands
Liz Conlin, District Education Welfare Officer Tel: 01782 297521
Central Offices
Ian Westerman, Principal Admin Officer Tel: 01785 278940

If you have specific query about Parental Responsibility you might find it useful to contact: your local Citizens Advice Bureau, a solicitor or a local Legal Centre.