



PARENT COMMUNICATION POLICY: WHATSAPP MESSAGING

1. INTRODUCTION

Michael Oak Waldorf School actively encourages the use of WhatsApp and WhatsApp broadcast groups. This platform is an extremely useful form of communication for classes as it provides a simple and effective way for arranging school activities, sharing logistical needs and getting immediate answers to urgent questions.

It is important to clarify that WhatsApp and other social media platforms are not official channels for school communication. The Leaflet, written letters, email, school text messages (SMSs) and phone calls are our only official forms of communication.

We hope that all parents and guardians will join their child's Class WhatsApp group – for it to be truly successful, it should span the entire parent community. Contact your Class Link to be added to the group. Give it a try - if you are not sure, you are always free to change your mind!

2. GROUPS

There are usually two WhatsApp groups in each class:

Official Class Group

- The official group is for class representatives to notify and remind parents of class work, activities and events.
- This group is usually administered by the Class Communications Link and is often broadcast-only (only Admins can send messages). The class teacher must be part of this group.
- Naming convention: “MO Class x - Official (or Announcements)”

Social Class Group

- The social group is intended as a forum for parents to ask questions and post about immediate class-related issues, such as homework, birthdays and school outings.
- This is an unofficial group administered by one or more parents, and class teachers may not be part of this group.
- Naming convention: “MO Class x - Social (or Social Group)”

In addition, some class teachers/guardians have their own broadcast-only group. If this is the case in your class, then the following naming convention is to be used:

- “MO Class x - from (Name of Teacher)”

3. GUIDELINES - for Social Class Groups

Parents should note the following guidelines:

1. As with all communication that happens within the school community, WhatsApp and social media communication should at all times be respectful and considerate of others included,

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and not included, in the group.

2. In accordance with the POPI Act, consent must be obtained for the use and distribution of personal information such as phone numbers and photographs. It is for this reason that all class WhatsApp groups are 'opt-in': any parent who participates does so voluntarily.
3. The posts in the group chat are opinions of the individuals, not the group as a whole and not that of the school.
4. All participants in the WhatsApp group must be current parents or guardians in the group. (Please note that if a former parent wants to stay connected to the class, they are free to create their own private social group. This group will have no formal affiliation with the class or the school.)
5. School secretaries may send school communications, event information, etc to the class communications links for distribution to the groups.
6. The group should not be used as a platform to air views/grievances regarding a teacher, child or parent in the class or school. If you have a query or concern about the teacher or the school leadership please speak with them directly, as per the Bringing a Concern procedure.
7. The group is not a political platform for airing opinions on current affairs. Do not post adverts, religious or motivational 'meme's', political statements or anything that may be deemed offensive or is irrelevant to the group.
8. It is best not to answer a question unless you know the answer, as guesses can cause confusion.
9. Please be mindful of when you send messages, and try not to send messages too early in the morning, too late in the evening or on public holidays.
10. The group should not be used for private conversations with anyone else in the group. If you need to privately message anyone in the group, remember that you can view the group members by tapping the group name and scrolling down. It would be helpful if all members had a meaningful name and photo on their WhatsApp profile to aid identification.
11. Keep in mind that whatever you share on social media may be forwarded to someone else and thereby find its way into the public domain. In addition, please be mindful of what is shared on these groups as they may be inadvertently read by your child at any time should your phone be left unattended.
12. Parents and students must not breach confidentiality, defame or make threats to any person in the school community. Instances of suspected or proven breach shall be brought to the attention of the group administrator and/or class teacher or guardian.
13. As this form of communication impacts the data costs of all receiving the posts, please limit the sharing of any 'data heavy' posts.

In addition to the above, parents should note the following guidelines when using WhatsApp to communicate with personnel at school:

1. Unless agreed with the individual teacher or other staff member, communication should take place via email or phone, and not WhatsApp.
2. Should any digression occur, then the teacher or staff member has the right to cancel the agreement, such that any further communication would be done via email or phone.

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## 4. Adoption

This document was approved by the College of Teachers at their meeting of 24 October 2022.

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Resource from Camilla: [APPAA 'WhatsApp' Usage Guidelines](#) is brilliant! They talk to the points above but also include Do's, Don'ts and Etiquette of using the groups.