



TERMS OF REFERENCE: HIGH SCHOOL PARENT FORUM

Introduction

Waldorf Schools around the world are known for being vibrant communities where teachers and staff work together to manage the daily operations, supported by the constructive and enthusiastic involvement of the parent body. To bring this to life, Michael Oak's organisational structure is based on a system where groups of committed persons are mandated to fulfil certain responsibilities. The High School Forum ("HS Forum") is an important example of this.

The HS Forum is one of three Stakeholder Forums referred to in the school's Trust Deed, which is the document that describes the school's governance structure. The purpose of the HS Forum is to serve as a channel of communication to support and enhance the governance of the school, by facilitating open engagement between the High School parents and the High School Faculty.

Purpose of the Terms of Reference

The purpose of these Terms of Reference is to set out the HS Forum's Role and Responsibilities, as well as the requirements for its composition, meeting procedures and performance monitoring.

Composition

The HS Forum is composed of parents representing each High School class from 8-12 (but not including matric). These Class Forum Representatives are chosen by each class at the beginning of each year, in agreement with the class guardian of that class.

Recruitment for and membership in Committees and Working Groups at our school shall be guided by the following principles:

- Diversity of views and background adds depth to decision-making,
- Membership is a training ground for future members of the Board of Trustees and College of Teachers, and
- The inclusion of the broader parent body and faculty members brings greater legitimacy to governance structures.

The HS Forum meetings are open to all High School parents, guardians and faculty who wish to attend.

The HS Forum Working Group

The members of HS Forum select their own Chairperson and Secretary at the first meeting of each year.

The HS Forum is coordinated by the High School Working Group ("HS Working Group"), which is composed of the HS Forum Chairperson, HS Forum Secretary, the HS Faculty Representative, and the

TERMS OR REFERENCE: HIGH SCHOOL PARENT FORUM

School Administrator (or representative from the School Administration). For continuity, it is preferred that the HS Faculty and Administration representatives commit to at least one year.

Please note the following:

- It is important that HS Working Group members take parental ideas and concerns seriously and are proactive in helping to resolve them.
- The HS Faculty Representative is responsible for coordinating the faculty's engagement with the issues raised.

Role of the Chairperson

The primary role of the Chairperson is to:

- Meet with the HS Working Group to prepare the agenda;
- Chair meetings in a balanced and careful manner, seeking consensus by creating an atmosphere of openness and respect, recognising that consensus is not reached unless consent and dissent are voiced.
- Share relevant information with and consult with other school bodies as needed.
- Follow up after each HS Forum meeting to ensure all agenda items are answered as well as possible, and for minutes to be shared with the school community.
- Write a report to the Trustees before their termly meeting, as well as a review of the HS Forum's annual plan, which will form part of the HS Forum's annual report to the Trustees and the AGM.

The chair is elected by nomination at the first Forum meeting of the year and is able to stand for re-election for one additional year only. Should no candidates be forthcoming, the HS Faculty may approach suitable parents to fill this role. Prospective candidates are to be presented to the Forum, two weeks prior to election.

Role of the Secretary

The primary role of the Secretary is to:

- Coordinate the meeting calendar with the Chairperson and High School Secretary.
- Call the meeting and distribute the agenda.
- Take minutes at the HS Forum meeting.
- Prepare the first draft of the minutes, as detailed below.

Current members

The list of current Class Forum Representatives and HS Forum Working Group members, including their dates of service, can be found in the Admin Group's governance database, available on the school's intranet.

Tenure

Class Forum Representatives are free to serve as long as they are re-elected. If a representative has served for a year, and someone else would like to have a turn, the new person would take preference.

The HS Forum Chairperson and the HS Forum Secretary may serve for a maximum of 2 consecutive years.

TERMS OR REFERENCE: HIGH SCHOOL PARENT FORUM

Role

The role of the HS Forum is to provide a discussion space for HS parents on High School matters that are not learner-, teacher-, or parent-specific, and to assist and support the HS Faculty with the smooth running and development of the High School.

The HS Forum is a discussion and brain-storming forum only, with no mandate to make decisions. Yet the intention behind the HS Forum is to move processes forward in the most effective way possible.

The HS Forum is an open, supportive and engaging communication channel for each class community around broad topics pertaining to school-life, including:

- Assisting new families to settle into the school community
- Encouraging parents' to gain deeper understanding of the methods and approach of a Waldorf school
- Organising delegated events, fundraising and class activities
- Coordinating the annual review of the Parent Handbook
- Discussing issues that go across classes

Responsibilities

The HS Forum is responsible for organising a termly meeting with High School parents and representatives from HS Faculty and the School Administration.

- There are four HS Forum meetings scheduled in any one calendar year, one per term, the dates of which are communicated and publicised by the 2nd week of the 1st term.
- The Class Forum Representatives are to seek out agenda items which will be brought to the HS Working Group.
- Forum meetings are open to all interested HS parents across all HS classes.
- The Working Group may invite guests, such as representatives from the College, the Board, other committees and working groups, as well as individuals such as the sports coordinator, to address specific issues.
- A minimum of two teachers from the HS Faculty are to attend each Forum meeting.
- It is also recommended that one meeting per year be a larger workshop-forum in which High School issues and plans can be discussed and "workshopped".

The Class Forum Representatives support communication between parents and the teachers.

- They also direct individual or pedagogical queries or issues to the teacher or other correct school body, in accordance with our various policies. For this reason the Class Forum Representatives are requested to familiarise themselves with the school's Policies & Procedures, and to assist all High School parents in becoming familiar with the working of the school. Some of these documents include: [Parent Bringing a Concern Procedure](#), [High School Student Bringing a Concern Procedure](#), [Anti-bullying Policy](#) and the various [Codes of Conduct](#). The Bringing a Concern procedures should be followed in raising any concerns involving pedagogy, teachers and staff.
- All Class Forum Representatives are required to represent their classes in a non-judgemental, transparent and equitable manner, encouraging open communication and fair representation.
- The Class Forum Representatives are to give feedback to the class parents at their next class meetings. Class Guardians are to be informed of any matter to be brought to the meeting a week before, so that there is time for the teacher to decide what goes on the agenda and what is better addressed privately or by the Faculty or other mandated group

TERMS OR REFERENCE: HIGH SCHOOL PARENT FORUM

at the school.

Board's Nominations Committee

The HS Forum selects one (1) member for the Board's Nominations Committee every year, in accordance with the procedures described in the Terms of Reference for the Nominations Committee. This member is any parent who understands the workings of Trustees and is a parent in the High School. The purpose of the Nominations Committee is to select the slate of nominees for the Board of Trustees.

Annual Objectives

The HS Forum Working Group shall establish an annual plan to ensure that all relevant issues and events are covered by the agendas of the meetings planned for the year. This can include activities such as Meet the teacher evening, Career evening, Fundraising for each class, etc. The plan must be submitted to the HS Faculty after the Forum's first meeting of the school year. Approval of the plan is automatic, unless objections are raised by the HS Faculty.

If deemed necessary, the HS Forum is free to divide its work into Working Groups for the sake of effective workflow.

Agenda, Minutes & Reporting

- Two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting, the HS Forum Secretary instructs the High School Secretary to email all HS Class 8-12 parents reminding them of the High School Forum meeting date and calling for agenda items to be submitted directly to their Class Forum Representative.
 - Agenda items may not be individual concerns, but rather have the broader collective in mind.
- The minutes of the previous HS Forum are attached to the email. The HS Forum working group meets the week prior to the HS Forum meeting to finalise the agenda and channel issues to their appropriate mandates for response or resolution.
 - The agenda is to be drawn up based on the prioritised needs of the school community.
 - Any proposed items not falling under the role of the HS Forum, such as pedagogical or disciplinary matters, will be directed to the relevant Faculty or Mandate Groups. The Procedure for a Parent bringing a Concern is to be followed at all times.
- A detailed agenda together with supporting documentation (prepared by the HS Forum Chairperson in conjunction with the HS Forum Secretary) must be circulated at least 3 (three) working days prior to each meeting to the Class Forum Representatives and any other invitees.
 - A reminder of the meeting date and time is published by the High School Secretary in the newsletter and sent to the class WhatsApp groups.
- The HS Forum Secretary is to take the minutes.
 - Minutes are to follow our approved rolling agenda template to make it easier to track the status of action items. The template includes attendance, date, time, location, approval of previous minutes, issues brought, short summary of discussion, action items, person responsible and deadlines, as well as instructions on distribution and storage of documents (from a POPI perspective).
 - Minutes must be completed as soon as possible after the meeting, preferably within one week so as not to lose momentum, and circulated to the HS Forum Working Group for approval.
 - The HS Forum Chairperson composes a covering letter that highlights topics of interest.

TERMS OR REFERENCE: HIGH SCHOOL PARENT FORUM

- The High School Secretary distributes the approved minutes with the covering letter by email to all High School parents (incl. Matric year), the HS Faculty, College and the School Administrator, within 2 weeks of the High School Forum meeting date.
- Any parent or staff member within the school may request the HS Forum minutes from the High School Secretary.
- The HS Faculty Representative is to take the relevant matters from the minutes for discussion at the HS Faculty Meeting. The HS Faculty Representative is responsible for feeding back any pertinent decisions or progress updates at the subsequent HS Forum meeting, when the first agenda item is to review previous minutes.
- Highlights of minutes and key issues are reported to Trustees in advance of their next meeting.

Meeting Procedures

- The HS Forum will hold sufficient scheduled meetings to discharge all its duties as set out in these Terms of Reference, but subject to a minimum of one (1) meeting per term.
 - Meetings in addition to those scheduled may be held at the request of the HS Working Group, HS Faculty, the Trustees or College.
- Meetings may be held in-person or via electronic means depending on prevailing restrictions and circumstances.
- Class Forum Representatives must attend all scheduled meetings of the HS Forum unless a prior apology has been submitted to the HS Forum Chairperson.
 - Should a representative be unable to attend the meeting, it is their responsibility to ask another parent to represent the class.
- If the HS Forum Chairperson is absent, the members present must elect one of the members present to act as chairperson for the meeting.
- If the HS Forum Secretary is absent, the members present must select one of the members present to take the minutes of the meeting.
- The meeting shall end with a review of the action items discussed and deadlines assigned, and agreement on the date of the next meeting.

Quorum

As this is not a decision-making body, a quorum is not necessary for meetings.

Evaluation

An annual review of the performance of the HS Forum will be made based on the yearly objectives and annual work plan developed at the beginning of each year. The review is to be performed by the Trustees, with input from HS Faculty and College.

Approval of these Terms of Reference

If the evaluation demonstrates that the HS Forum isn't managing to achieve its goals because of governance issues, or because of issues raised by the Administration, College or Trustees, these Terms of Reference can be amended as required, subject to the approval of the Trustees after consultation with HS Faculty and College. When a revision is recommended, the original as well as the revised versions must be made available, and the reason for the revision specified.

Adoption

These Terms of Reference were adopted by the Board of Trustees at their meeting of 26 October 2022.

TERMS OR REFERENCE: HIGH SCHOOL PARENT FORUM

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