

Victoria Park High School WhatsApp Group Guidelines



WhatsApp is a messaging app and falls within the category of social media.

WhatsApp Group Administrator's Duties:

- Monitor the content posted by members. Watch out for hoaxes and fake messages. Verify the sources content, if in doubt.
- Managing improper conduct and communications:
 - Delete improper content
 - Warn people who are not adhering to group guidelines and remove them, if necessary.

WhatsApp Group Guidelines Members Responsibilities:

- Legal cautions:
 - In the eyes of the law anything said on the WhatsApp group is "published" content, and the person who posted it as well as everyone in the group is responsible for it. A member who objects to the posting must register the objection and distance him/herself from it by stating that he/she does not condone the content posted. The objector/s can also leave the group immediately. A person who fails to act remains in the "chain of publication" and is as liable as the person who created the message.
 - A statement made on the group may constitute the offence of defamation or crimen iniuria (infringement of dignity) even if the name of the person defamed is not mentioned. If it is possible to guess (correctly) who is being referred to, the person who posted the message is liable as well as everyone else in the group who did not object to it or leave the group. The same is applicable to a defamatory statement about the school, even if the school is not named.
- Protection of communications:
 - Communications on a WhatsApp group are for the purpose intended as stated in the agreement form when the member joined, and only for those who are members of the group.
 - Protect your device from unauthorised use. For example, a learner must not be able to access content of a parent's SGB WhatsApp group. This would be an offence on the part of the parent in terms of the Code of Conduct for SGB members because it breaches the obligation relating to confidentiality.
 - Delete all communications once per week except for items that are needed for a longer period such as a fixture list or school calendar.
 - Delete all communications when the group stops operating or on leaving the group.

- Hours of operation:
 - All groups must indicate the hours during which messages may be posted or responded to UNLESS THERE IS AN EMERGENCY, (for example, 06:00 –20:00 for activity groups but more limited for staff, say 07:00—17:00 Mondays to Fridays only.
 - Notifications should be sent well in advance. Just because you have contact with members on WhatsApp is not an excuse for poor planning and last-minute notification.
 - Members cannot be expected to monitor their messages continuously. If an urgent response is needed, a phone call may be necessary. Members are not on call 24/7.

- DO:
 - Agree on the language to be used in the group. It is likely that the school's Language of Learning and Teaching would be the language. The administrator may have made this decision in terms of the school language policy when the group was set up.
 - Restrict messages to the business for which the group was set up.
 - Keep messages as short as possible.
 - Use a polite, professional, and respectful tone in messages, even if you are annoyed.
 - Be careful about what you share. Protect your personal information and that of children.
 - Only reply to a message if necessary. Message should state "Please reply (PR)" if a response is wanted from everyone, for example "Yes" or "No", "Monday" or "Wednesday". If a question such as "Who can help?" is asked, only reply "Yes" if you can. "No" or "Sorry" responses are not needed. If no response is needed state "Do not reply (NR)".
 - Refrain from saying "Thank you" to a notification posted. Receiving "Thank you" from thirty members indicates a very polite group but is not necessary and it can be annoying.
 - Exercise caution with forwarded items. In general, if a message is forwarded, it must state from where it came.
 - Limit the use of emojis that are commonly understood. Some emojis may be misinterpreted.
 - Avoid sending videos or files that are large as these consume phone memory and data.
 - Respect silent observers. It is not compulsory for members to participate in group discussions.
 - One-on-one discussions must be conducted outside the group.

- DO NOT
 - Change the group's icon or name.
 - Post personal information about other people and especially not children's information without the necessary prior informed consent.,
 - The above rule also applies to photographs, videos and voice recordings.
 - Forward any messages posted on the group to any other person or group without the administrator's permission.
 - Post improper communications, including, but not limited to: gossip, defamatory and discriminatory remarks, hate speech, threats of violence or harm, swearing, blasphemy, pornography, incitement to any unlawful action, one-on-one arguments, birthday greetings, advertising, jokes, political comments, religious messages (unless a

religious group/school), self-promotion, promotion of causes other than the school activity for which the group was set up, chain messages, and links unless authorised by the administrator.

- Use school-related groups for complaints against a parent, learner, or staff member. The official school reporting channels must be used.
- Bother other members personally by communicating with them frequently. “Stalking” or “trolling” is not permitted.

- When things go wrong:

- Delete an improper communication immediately, for all on the Group.
- If misinformation has been posted, do correct it as soon as possible. You may require members to respond indicating that they have noted your correction.
- If something inappropriate is posted by a member, ask the administrator to address it. Being reprimanded publicly on the group or even privately by 30 other members is not helpful.

- Leaving the group:

- Anyone may leave at any time. It is preferable to give a brief reason (to the administrator—who may inform the group of the reason but does not have to do so) for leaving but this is not compulsory.
- The administrator may remove persons who have been admitted incorrectly.
- The administrator may remove members who have breached the guidelines of the group. Prior warning may or may not be given depending on the circumstances.

WhatsApp Messages sent to our groups:

Good morning Learners

Please read through the following message carefully.

WhatsApp Group Guidelines Members Responsibilities:

- Anything said on a WhatsApp group is considered "published" content, and the person who posts messages AS WELL AS everyone in the group is responsible for it.
- Operating Hours:
 - VPHS WhatsApp groups will be operational between the hours of 06:00 – 17:00 Monday to Fridays only.
 - This also means that you may only message your teachers during these operating hours.
- DO's:
 - Restrict messages to the subject at hand.
 - Use polite, professional and respectful tone in messages.
 - Only reply to a message is necessary.
 - Exercise caution with forwarded items. In general, if a message is forwarded, it must state from where it came.
- Do Not:
 - Change the groups icon or name.
 - Post personal/harmful information about other people especially not children's information, this includes photographs, videos and voice recordings.
 - Forward any messages posted on the group to any other person or group WITHOUT the administrators permission.
- Leaving a Group:
 - Anyone may leave at any time. It is preferable to give a brief reason (to the administrator – who may inform the group of the reason but does not have to do so) for leaving but this is not compulsory.
 - The administrator may remove members who have breached the guidelines of the group.

By reading this message you agree to remain on this group which is associated with Victoria Park High School. This also means that your parents have given CONSENT for you to be a member of this group for the purposes for your education.

If your parents have not given their permission and would prefer to be on this group themselves to represent you, you would need to leave this group and they are requested to join the group on your behalf for further communications.