



**St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School**  
**Parent WhatsApp Classroom Groups Policy**  
**2023/2024**

**Aims and Objectives**

Parent WhatsApp Classroom Groups are defined as groups administered by PTA Class Reps on behalf of St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School.

As such, all communications within these groups should be respectful of the school's Catholic ethos and reflect the values of the school: **Equality, Friendship, Respect, Courage, Excellence, Perseverance, Forgiveness, Service and Kindness.**

The aim of this policy is to outline the purpose, extent and reach of the Parent WhatsApp Classroom Groups.

This policy communicates the procedures that will support the safe space of Parent WhatsApp Classroom Groups, including a resolution pathway to report and escalate issues of concern

**Purpose of Groups**

The main method of communication from school to parents is via Parentmail, this contains essential information which parents are expected to read.

Parent WhatsApp Classroom Groups are set up by PTA Class Reps to support home school communications in addition to Parentmails sent out by school.

The main purpose of Parent WhatsApp Classroom Groups is to share information regarding school activities, support needs and calendar events. The groups also support the work of the PTA, including events, collections and school-related parent socials.

The school has a safeguarding responsibility and duty of care responsibility for all pupils, families and staff members in the school and these groups have a right to privacy and respect.

The school must respond where emotional distress or reputational damage to individuals or the school are at risk.

The school takes its responsibilities seriously and reported incidents will be investigated and where considered necessary, referred to external agencies.

## **Extent & Reach of Groups**

All parents in a class are invited to join the Parent WhatsApp Classroom Group by the Class PTA Rep. This may be by direct personal contact or by letter.

The school will not share any parents' contact details with the Class PTA Reps to set up groups.

The Parent WhatsApp Classroom Group must include only current class parents and parents who have left the class must be removed from the group.

Parents may choose not to be part of a Parent WhatsApp Classroom Group.

## **The role of the PTA Class Rep**

### **The PTA Class Rep will:**

- Invite parents to join the Parent WhatsApp Classroom Group
- Respect parents' wishes not to be part of the Parent WhatsApp Classroom Group
- Foster a supportive, kind space, where parents feel welcome
- Monitor postings on the group and take action if they see inappropriate comments or if parents raise concerns. This may involve deleting or requesting the deletion of posts which do not adhere to this policy.
- Communicate information at the request of the PTA and school
- Help to clarify simple queries in a positive and constructive manner and contact the school office if they need further information and clarification
- Encourage parents to contact the school with queries, concerns or complaints
- Inform Mrs Diver in the first instance of any breaches of this policy

## **Posting on the Parent WhatsApp Classroom Group**

The primary purpose of the Parents WhatsApp Classroom Group is to share communications from school or the PTA to a class of parents.

All members of the Parents WhatsApp Classroom Group should think carefully before posting online and consider the feelings that might be experienced by the recipients. In a text environment, non-verbal communication has been eliminated. It is easier for a written message to be misunderstood or to cause offence.

All members of the Parents WhatsApp Classroom Group should be aware that as with all written communications, posts can be shared beyond the intended audience and parents are asked not to do this.

Parent WhatsApp Classroom Groups must not be used to air grievances, nor to co-ordinate parent involvement in non-school related activity.

If parents have a school-related query or concern, they should contact the school office who will be able to answer the query or direct the query to the relevant staff member.

Parents WhatsApp Classroom Group members should not use WhatsApp or other social media platforms as a tool to;

- Identify or post images/videos of pupils and for safeguarding reasons, children's names and personal details should never be used
- Post abusive or personal comments about staff, pupils (including your own child) or other people
- Bring the school into disrepute
- Post defamatory or libellous comments
- Circulate or initiate postings that have abusive, discriminatory or racist content
- Use the platform to publicly challenge school policies or discuss issues about individual children/families, including your own child/family
- Use behaviour or language which could be interpreted as threatening or intimidating

The points above also apply within households. WhatsApp is not an appropriate platform for sharing or airing home issues.

Humour and jokes by their very nature, can be made from one person/group to the detriment of another. It is often difficult to differentiate between jokes and discriminatory comments and therefore, in the interest of mutual consideration – humour / jokes / memes should not be shared on the Parent WhatsApp Classroom Group.

Politics can be divisive. To ensure that the Parent WhatsApp Classroom Group remains a neutral space, you are requested to refrain from political narrative.

The Parent WhatsApp Classroom Group should not become an open chat space. Individual / smaller group conversations should be conducted outside the Parent WhatsApp Classroom Group.

### **Associated WhatsApp Groups**

To separate communication flow, but also to acknowledge the value and social convenience of electronic communication, some class reps have established Associated WhatsApp Groups. These groups offer extended support for the classroom community, sharing non-classroom related information and offering a community space. This model eases information flow, particularly for families who prefer minimal electronic communication.

This policy applies to the Parent WhatsApp Classroom Groups set-up for the benefit of the entire classroom community **only**, which are administered by class reps.

## Safe Space of Groups and Escalation Pathway

Parent WhatsApp Classroom Groups should be a safe, supportive space, where families receive and share useful information about school activity.

If you have a concern about a posting on the Parent WhatsApp Classroom Group, in the first instance – raise your concern with your PTA class rep. Through a process of local discussion, the issue may get resolved informally and speedily.

If local resolution with the support of a PTA class rep does not address your concern you can escalate the matter to Mrs Diver, Deputy Headteacher, for investigation.

Mrs Diver will investigate your concern within 2 weeks, and will feedback her decision to all parties. There could be many potential outcomes, examples of which are that a party would be issued with a caution or that the PTA class rep will be required to temporarily or indefinitely exclude parties from the Parent WhatsApp Classroom Groups that are set-up for the benefit of the classroom community **only** and administered by class reps

An indefinite exclusion would extend beyond the relevant academic year.

If parties remain dissatisfied at the conclusion of Mrs Diver's investigation – they have the right of appeal to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher's decision will be regarded as full and final.

While an investigation is in progress – all parties involved are requested not to make any postings on the Parent WhatsApp Classroom Group. If this is not adhered to, the class rep will be required to remove the relevant party from the groups, while the matter is being investigated or pending outcome.