



The Stalyhill Schools' Federation

Code of Conduct for the Acceptable Use of Parental WhatsApp Groups within the Stalyhill Schools' Federation

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At Stalyhill Schools' Federation we will continuously strive to ensure that everyone is treated with respect and dignity. Each person will be given fair and equal opportunities to develop their full potential regardless of their gender, transgender, ethnicity, culture and religious background, sexuality, disability, or special educational needs and ability. The school will actively promote equality and foster positive attitudes and commitment to an education for equality.

Introduction

Parent/Carer WhatsApp groups, which operate independently of the schools within the Stalyhill Schools' Federation, can be a valuable way to connect parents in a particular class or year group. These groups are voluntarily set up by parents and aim to include all parents with children in the respective class or year. Participation in these groups is entirely voluntary.

Ideally, these group chats are used as an efficient means of sharing relevant updates and reminders about school events that have been published in school newsletters, websites, or other official channels, and for sharing information of general interest to all parents.

Messages in these WhatsApp groups come from parents and carers in their personal capacity. The Stalyhill Schools' Federation does not post directly on any parent/carers WhatsApp groups, nor do we have 'parent advocates' who post messages on our behalf.

Code of Conduct

While group chats can be a beneficial resource, it is crucial to maintain a respectful and supportive environment. To prevent offence or upset, we ask that everyone using these groups within our school community read and follow the guidelines listed below:

- The group must never be used as a platform to air views/grievances regarding any member of staff, student, or parent/carers within the schools of the Federation.
- Messages posted on the WhatsApp groups should be supportive and respectful of all other group users.
- The group is not a political platform for airing opinions on current affairs.
- The group should not be used for private conversations between individuals.
- All interactions within the group should be conducted with mutual respect and cultural sensitivity.
- Each group should have a parent/carers moderator (typically the parent representative who set up the WhatsApp group) responsible for monitoring posts to ensure appropriate use. However, please be aware that any parent administering Class or Year WhatsApp groups could have legal responsibility, and potential legal liability, for managing personal data shared within these groups.
- Links to other online information posted in WhatsApp messages should only be made to sites relevant to school, education, or extra-curricular activities. Links and other requests should not be posted if they relate to commercial services, unrelated campaigns, or personal appeals.
- No one is under an obligation to chat or respond to questions posed.
- If another parent considers a message inappropriate, they should contact the person who posted it and request removal of the message if desired.
- Some group members may message you directly. There is no obligation to answer. If this direct personal approach does not suit you, please let the individual know.
- **WhatsApp groups with many participants are not private, and therefore please keep in mind that content could be widely shared.**
- **The group may include parents who are school staff members, governors, PTA members and/or other school representatives.**
- **Naming a member of staff in a derogatory or defamatory way, or inciting others to view individual members of staff or children negatively, will result in the school taking further action, which could include legal advice.**
- **Taking a phone number from a WhatsApp group for the purpose of directly contacting another parent about an incident involving their child is considered inappropriate.**

We expect parents, carers, and visitors to:

- Respect the ethos, vision, and values of the Stalyhill Schools' Federation and its individual schools.
- Work together with staff in the best interests of our students.
- Treat all members of the school community with respect, setting a positive example through speech and behaviour.
- Seek peaceful solutions to all issues.
- Approach the appropriate member of school staff to help resolve any issues of concern.

The Stalyhill Schools' Federation considers the following WhatsApp activity inappropriate:

- Abusive, personal comments, or open criticism about staff, students, parents/carers, or any member of the school community.
- Displays of anger, including swearing or offensive language.
- Actions that bring the schools within the Federation into disrepute.
- Posting aggressive, defamatory, or libelous comments.
- Using social media to publicly challenge school policies or discuss issues related to individual students.

Raising Concerns

For individual concerns regarding student performance, school policies, staff conduct, etc., please raise any issues directly with the relevant class teacher or, where necessary, the Headteacher of the appropriate school within the Stalyhill Schools' Federation, rather than using WhatsApp as a platform to air views.

If a parent or carer breaches this code of conduct:

- A member of the Senior Leadership Team of the relevant school within the Stalyhill Schools' Federation will contact them.
- They could be removed from the group.
- They could be asked to attend a meeting in person with the Headteacher of the relevant school.

Governing Body Oversight

The Governing Body of the Stalyhill Schools' Federation will review this policy periodically to ensure its effectiveness and relevance.