



"We Only Reach for The Highest"

Worthington Primary School

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Year Group WhatsApp Groups

Parent/Carer WhatsApp groups, which operate independently of the school, can be a very useful way to connect parents in a particular class or year group.

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To aid communication between parents and carers, many of you will have WhatsApp groups, which operate independently of the school.

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The aim of using WhatsApp is to send messages to an entire group, which are relevant to school or to the parents in the group. Ideally, these group chats are used as an efficient means of receiving relevant updates and reminders about school events that have been published in the newsletter or on Class Dojo, the sharing of information that is of general interest to all parents in the class or a forum to offer any supportive parenting advice.

The class / year group WhatsApp groups have been voluntarily set up by the parents in each class and endeavour to include all parents with children in the class. There is no requirement to join these groups and participation is voluntary.

These groups are not monitored by the PTA or school and it is up to the class parents to oversee and ensure appropriate use. It is important that the Admin for your Whatsapp group monitors the activity, addresses any issues that may arise in terms of conduct within the group and remove any inappropriate messages.

The messages in the class / year group WhatsApp groups come from parents in their personal capacity or are messages forwarded on behalf of the PTA. The school does NOT post directly on any WhatsApp parent/carers groups.

At Worthington, we believe it's important to:

- Work in partnership with parents to support their child's learning
- Create a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for pupils, staff and parents
- Model appropriate behaviour for our pupils at all times

- To help us do this, we set clear expectations and guidelines on behaviour for all members of our community. This includes staff (through the staff code of conduct) and pupils (through our behaviour policy).

This code of conduct aims to help the school work together with parents by setting guidelines on appropriate behaviour. A copy of our parent code of conduct is available on our website:

<https://www.worthington-primary.trafford.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=176&type=pdf>

We ask that everyone using these groups should read and follow the guidelines listed below:

- Messages posted on the WhatsApp Year Groups should be supportive and respectful of all other group users.
- No one is under an obligation to chat or respond to questions posed.
- The group should never be used as a platform to air views/grievances regarding a teacher, child or parent in the class or school.
- The group is not a political platform for airing opinions on current affairs.
- The group should not be used for private conversations with anyone else using the group. 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.
- The group should be used keeping in mind mutual respect and cultural sensitivity between all its members.
- Each group should have a parent/carer moderator / Admin who is responsible for monitoring posts in order to oversee and ensure appropriate use; however, please be aware that any parent administering Class or Year WhatsApp groups are likely to qualify as 'data controllers' and could therefore have legal responsibility, and potential legal liability, for managing personal data shared within these groups.
- Respect the confidentiality of anything posted on the group, and avoid mentioning names and other details in your own posts if there is any risk that these could cause you difficulties.
- Private Dojo messages between a parent and Class Teacher should not be screenshot and posted on WhatsApp/Social Media - this breaks both confidentiality and trust.
- Bullying is not to be tolerated.
- People who are not directly related to or responsible for a child in the school, should not be invited to the group.
- Links to other online information posted in WhatsApp messages should only be made to sites which are 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.
- If another parent / carer considers a message inappropriate they can contact the person who posted it or the group Admin and seek removal of the message if desired.
- Concerns about school should be discussed with the school using admin@worthingtonprimary.co.uk or by telephoning 0161 973 3504 (school office is open Mon-Fri: 8:00 - 16:00).

We anticipate parents, carers and other visitors to:

Respect the ethos, vision and values of our school;

- Work together with staff in the best interests of our pupils;
- Treat all members of the school community with respect - setting a good example with speech and behaviour;
- Seek a peaceful solution to all issues;
- Approach the right member of school staff to help resolve any issues of concern.
- Be a role model to the children and share the *Worthy Way*.



Please note, the school considers the following online activity inappropriate:

- Abusive or personal comments about staff, pupils or other parents
- Bringing the school into disrepute
- Posting defamatory or libellous comments about another parent or any school staff member on the WhatsApp Group.
- Emails / messages circulated or sent directly with abusive or personal comments about staff or pupils
- Using social media to publicly challenge school policies or discuss issues about individual children
- Threatening behaviour, such as verbally intimidating staff, or using bad language

To avoid uncomfortable or unpleasant situations for other group users, parents/carers are therefore politely asked to consider the nature of their WhatsApp post carefully as any opinions expressed are the opinions of individual members and may not be representative of the whole group.

Before posting in the WhatsApp group, please consider the guidelines outlined above and consider the following:

If someone posted the same message that you are considering posting, but it was about you, your child, your family or friend - would you believe it to

be acceptable? Would you be reporting it? Would you be upset, offended, disrespected or feel targeted as a result?

The school takes safeguarding responsibilities seriously and will deal with any reported incidents appropriately. The above inappropriate activity may be considered for further action by the school.

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one of many apps which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about WHATSAPP

WhatsApp is the world's most popular messaging service, with around two billion users exchanging texts, photos, videos and documents, as well as making voice and video calls. Its end-to-end encryption means messages can only be viewed by the sender and any recipients; not even WhatsApp can read them. Updates to its privacy policy in 2021 (involving sharing data with parent company Facebook) caused millions to leave the app, but the new policy was widely misinterpreted – it only related to WhatsApp's business features, not to personal messages.

UK AND EUROPE
16+
TOP REST OF THE WORLD

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

SCAMS
Fraudsters occasionally send WhatsApp messages pretending to offer prizes – encouraging the user to click on a link to win. Other common scams involve warning someone that their WhatsApp subscription has run out (aiming to dupe them into disclosing payment details) or impersonating a friend or relative and asking for money to be transferred to help with an emergency.

POTENTIAL CYBERBULLYING
Group chat and video calls are great for connecting with multiple people in WhatsApp, but there is always the potential for someone's feelings to be hurt by an unkind comment or joke. The 'only admins' feature gives the admin(s) of a group control over who can send messages. They can, for example, block people from posting in a chat, which could make a child feel excluded and upset.

DISAPPEARING MESSAGES
Users can set WhatsApp messages to disappear in 24 hours, 7 days or 90 days by default. Photos and videos can also be instructed to disappear after the recipient has viewed them. These files can't be saved or forwarded – so if your child was sent an inappropriate message, it would be difficult to prove any wrongdoing. However, the receiver can take a screenshot and save that as evidence.

CONTACT FROM STRANGERS
To start a WhatsApp chat, you only need the mobile number of the person you want to message (the other person also needs to have the app). WhatsApp can access the address book on someone's device and recognise which of their contacts also use the app. So if your child has ever given their phone number to someone they don't know, that person could use it to contact them via WhatsApp.

ENABLING FAKE NEWS
WhatsApp has unfortunately been linked to accelerating the spread of dangerous rumours. In India in 2018, some outbreaks of mob violence appear to have been sparked by false allegations being shared on the app. WhatsApp itself took steps to prevent its users circulating hazardous theories and speculation in the early weeks of the Covid-19 pandemic.

LOCATION SHARING
The 'live location' feature lets users share their current whereabouts, allowing friends to see their movements. WhatsApp describes it as a "simple and secure way to let people know where you are." It is a useful method for a young person to let loved ones know they're safe – but if they used it in a chat with people they don't know, they would be exposing their location to them, too.

Advice for Parents & Carers [CLICK HERE](#)

CREATE A SAFE PROFILE
Even though someone would need a child's phone number to add them as a contact, it's also worth altering a young person's profile settings to restrict who can see their photo and status. The options are 'everyone', 'my contacts' and 'nobody' – choosing one of the latter two ensures that your child's profile is better protected.

EXPLAIN ABOUT BLOCKING
If your child receives spam or offensive messages, calls or files from a contact, they should block them using 'settings' in the chat. Communication from a blocked contact won't show up on their device and stays undelivered. Blocking someone does not remove them from your child's contact list – so they also need to be deleted from the address book.

REPORT POTENTIAL SCAMS
Young people shouldn't engage with any message that looks suspicious or too good to be true. When your child receives a message from an unknown number for the first time, they'll be given the option to report it as spam. If the sender claims to be a friend or relative, call that person on their usual number to verify it really is them, or if it's someone trying to trick your child.

LEAVE A GROUP
If your child is in a group chat that is making them feel uncomfortable, or has been added to a group that they don't want to be part of, they can use WhatsApp's group settings to leave. If someone exists a group, the admin can add them back in once; if they leave a second time, it is permanent.

THINK ABOUT LOCATION
If your child needs to use the 'live location' function to show you or one of their friends where they are, advise them to share their location only for as long as they need to. WhatsApp gives a range of 'live location' options, and your child should manually stop sharing their position as soon as it is no longer needed.

DELETE ACCIDENTAL MESSAGES
If your child posts a message they want to delete, WhatsApp allows the user seven minutes to erase a message. Tap and hold on the message, choose 'delete' and then 'delete for everyone.' However, it's important to remember that recipients may have seen (and taken a screenshot of) a message before it was deleted.

CHECK THE FACTS
You can now fact-check WhatsApp messages that have been forwarded at least five times, by double-tapping the magnifying glass icon to the right of the message. From there, your child can launch a Google search and decide for themselves whether the message was true or not.

Meet Our Expert
Parveen Kaur is a social media expert and digital media consultant who is passionate about improving digital literacy for parents and children. She has extensive experience in the social media arena and is the founder of Kids N Clicks, a web resource that helps parents and children thrive in a digital world.

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