



WhatsApp Group Policy

Policy Statement

WhatsApp is a beneficial messaging service, allowing information to be shared quickly and securely between team members. It also provides the opportunity for managers to give additional support to team members when it is needed.

The use of WhatsApp in the workplace has the potential to create some problems areas and this policy seeks to address these to ensure the continued positive use of the messaging service in the workplace.

WhatsApp Group Administrator

If a WhatsApp group is felt to be beneficial for a team, an “administrator” will create a group and invite relevant parties to join. The administrator(s) will usually be a department manager and will be responsible for overseeing the group and monitoring conduct.

A second manager may be invited to the group. This is to ensure that if the administrator is not able to access the group for any reason, a manager can allocate the group administrator to another member of the management team or oversee the group themselves.

WhatsApp Group Members

The group’s members should consist only of employees of Pavilion Pre School (Aigburth) CIO.

All relevant employees will be invited to join as a participant of the group being created unless there is a legally valid reason for exclusion which has been agreed by the department manager and explained in full to the person being excluded.

Any ex-employees will be removed from the group by the administrator after their last working day.

Purpose/Objective of a Workplace WhatsApp Group

To avoid any confusion, the purpose or objective of the group needs to be made clear to all participants. Primarily, groups will be created for the purpose of sharing important information quickly and securely as well as all participants being able to advise and support each other, however there may be other specifically stated purposes which will be individual to each group and this needs to be made clear to all participants on group formation.

General Rules and Conduct

As previously stated, there are rules of conduct which need to be adhered to by all participants, this will minimise the risk of complaints i.e. bullying and harassment or inappropriate content.

A list of rules will be sent out when a group is first created and each time a new participant joins the group.

1. Always keep to the purpose of the group
2. Don't share irrelevant messages about other topics
3. Don't spam the group i.e. sharing memes, adverts or deals
4. Posts should only be made between 7.00am and 18.30pm Monday to Friday
5. Groups may be used at weekends by managers if cover is needed for the following week
6. Please do not share sensitive information in any group
7. Do not identify any child or their families. Names should be anonymised
8. You may choose to "mute" notifications to prevent your phone alerting you every time a message comes through
9. Individuals can leave the chat at any time
10. Photos of children and not permitted on any group

Employee Engagement

Although WhatsApp groups can be useful in regards to sharing information and having access to support and advice, it is not a mandatory requirement for employees to join the group.

There is also no requirement for participants to respond outside of their working hours, this applies to all members of the group. If a participant does choose to respond outside of working hours, this will be of their own volition and not an expectation of the organisation.

The group rules clearly state that participants can leave the chat at any time and importantly, that notifications can be muted to avoid being disturbed outside of their working hours (allowing individuals participants to choose when they want to access the group).

Confidentiality/Data Protection

WhatsApp is end to end encrypted. This means that only participants of the group can read or see what has been sent. Each message has a unique "lock and key", this means that even the WhatsApp service is unable to see any of the content within the group.

As another element of confidentiality, there is a group rule which states that all names are anonymised, and this also includes not revealing identifying features of a person (including children), revealing a person's address or sharing photos.

Each participant has a responsibility to ensure that the device they use to access the group is secured i.e. password/pin protection and the group is not left open for others to see. If a participant allows other "non participants" to view the content of a group then this will be considered a breach of confidentiality and the matter will be investigated further.

The rules governing the use of information are similar to paper records, emails and telephone calls, there is a responsibility by everyone involved to adhere to the data protection principles.

When a staff member's employment ends, the chat is cleared (all messages) and then the ex-employee removed from the group which prevents access to historical messages. This is also carried out once a month as a precaution by the department manager.

Complaints/Grievance

It's recognised that one administrator may not always be able to actively monitor the group and fully minimise the risk of inappropriate or offensive comments being made.

There are clear rules and a policy in place; however, there could be an occasion where a participant is offended by comments made by other participants and wishes to complain.

The complainant must not respond or engage in any discussion which they are offended by.

They should approach the administrator of the group to ensure that they are aware of the situation and the administrator will then investigate further and take any action deemed reasonable and proportionate, some examples included:

- Reiterating the group rules to all participants
- Informally discussing with relevant participants to ensure there isn't a repeat of any inappropriate discussion
- Removing relevant participants from the group (depending on the context of the situation)
- Managing relevant participants of the group through the disciplinary process (depending on the context of the situation)

Ungoverned Groups

There is far more potential for ungoverned groups to create situations which will not be appropriately managed, i.e. claims of bullying and harassment. Pavilion Pre School (Aigburth) CIO does not authorise ungoverned workplace groups (workplace groups set up within teams without a manager's involvement).

If there are complaints regarding the content of an ungoverned group, this will be investigated further and, if deemed necessary, disciplinary action taken against all those responsible.

This policy was adopted in September 2024

It will be reviewed annually or as required

Last updated: 24.09.24

Signed by Chair of Trustees:

Signed by Club Manager: