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**Re: WhatsApp Groups**


Dear Parent/Guardian,

The school and the PTA are writing to you in relation to parent WhatsApp groups. Technology and social media have developed incredibly quickly over the past few years and an aspect of this development has been the advent of WhatsApp groups. These groups have become commonplace and are now a feature of school life for parents. These informal groups are set up by parents in individual classes for communication with other parents in their son's class. They are not an official means of communication of the school or PTA. However, we feel it is appropriate to provide some guidance on the use of such social media groups.

In general, parent WhatsApp groups are very positive forums for communication, allowing for information about homework, class activities and school events to be shared and clarified easily. They also provide an opportunity for parents to get to know other parents and can play a part in the organisation of social events. Both the school and PTA recognise these very positive aspects of parent WhatsApp groups.

However, while recognising the positive uses of these groups, we would like to draw attention to some uses which are not appropriate. It is worth pointing out that we have not experienced any significant issues to date, but issues have arisen in other schools and we wish to avoid similar incidents here at St. Mary's BNS. In particular, we ask parents to be mindful of the fact that when using the groups, they are communicating with a large audience. Comments of a personal nature about your own child, other children, other parents or teachers should be avoided. In the event of an issue about school arising, the most appropriate approach is for the parent concerned to talk to the class teacher or school management. Teachers and management are best positioned to support parents and pupils and to resolve issues should they arise. Caution is also advised in relation to the sharing of pictures/video of school events. At events where photography is permitted, it should be noted that photos/video are for private use only and should not be posted on social media.

As a school community we should aim to set an example for our children that promotes the responsible use of social media and technology. By setting such an example, it is hoped that we can avoid issues arising and that our children will follow in our footsteps and use social media and technology responsibly as they progress through the school, through their teenage years and as they mature towards adulthood.

  
Daniel Kirwan  
Principal

  
Keith Flynn  
PTA Chairperson

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Principal: Mr. Daniel Kirwan

Deputy Principal: Ms. Jennifer Ring