



Community Spirit and Digital Responsibility: A Guide to Parent Social Media Groups

As we navigate another busy term, I want to take a moment to reflect on the wonderful sense of community we have here at Vyners. A significant part of that connection now happens digitally, particularly through parent-led social media and WhatsApp groups.

We are aware that many of you find it helpful to connect with one another through independent social media groups or messaging platforms. While the school does not officially endorse or monitor these private channels, we recognise some families find them a useful source to stay organised and connected.

To ensure these spaces remain safe, positive and supportive environments for everyone, I would like to offer some gentle guidance on best practice.

The Purpose: Information, advice, and guidance

The most effective school-related groups act as a **digital noticeboard**. Their primary goal should be the exchange of practical information:

- **Clarifying school events** and deadlines.
- **Sharing advice** on lost property or local activities.
- **Guidance** on school-run initiatives.

The Role of Moderators

A successful group is rarely a 'free-for-all.' The most constructive forums usually have clear **ground rules** and active **moderators**. These moderators act as "guardians of the group," ensuring conversations stay on track and helping to redirect off-topic or inappropriate content. If your year-group chat doesn't have a basic set of 'community Standards', I would encourage you to establish some. I would also ask administrators **not to use the school badge or logos** for their groups as this may imply that these are official groups.

Navigating the Emotional Response

We all care deeply about our children's education, which can naturally lead to high emotions. However, WhatsApp is a notoriously difficult medium for nuanced conversation.

A Golden Rule: If a message feels emotionally charged or is written in the heat of the moment, it is likely not appropriate for the group chat.

Sharing frustrations or unverified information can lead to the rapid spread of **misinformation**. This often creates unnecessary anxiety for other parents/carers or their children and can inadvertently damage the reputation of staff members or students.

Addressing Concerns and Complaints

While it may feel tempting to 'vent' in a group chat, these forums are not the place for grievances. Using them as such often escalates issues rather than solving them.

- **Follow Policy:** If you have a concern regarding your child's learning, a school incident, or a specific policy, please use the formal **concerns and complaints policy** found on our website.
- **Direct Communication:** Speaking directly to a class teacher, tutor, Year Leader, Subject Leader or a member of the Senior Leadership Team ensures your voice is heard by the people who have the ability to help.

By keeping WhatsApp and other social media groups focused on helpful information and mutual support, we protect the positive atmosphere of our school community as well as our school values of Community and Respect. Let's work together to keep our digital spaces as respectful and welcoming as our school environment.

Gary Mullings
Headteacher