



MICHAEL OAK WALDORF SCHOOL

Links & Parents' Handbook

April 2017

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Role of the Links

Introduction

The Links are a voluntary group of parents from each class who support the class teachers and parents, keep parents informed, motivate parents to get involved, raise parental concerns and help build a vibrant and caring school community.

The role of the Links has evolved over time. At first Links focused on providing support for the Class Teacher, later they took on responsibility for coordinating crafts and food for the Michael Oak Fair, and today the Links Meetings provide a channel through which parents can raise concerns, take initiative and play an active role in the life of the school.

Different kinds of links

There are many different ways in which parents can get actively involved in Michael Oak. Each parent has their own special gift to offer. Some excel at crafts and handwork, others have a gift with words and others have the ability to inspire others to take action. So whatever your particular gift, we encourage you to take a turn at linking.

Here are some of the many roles Links have played in the past. These roles can be taken on by one person or by a group of links – depending on what works best for you and your Class community:

Communications Link - This person provides the e-mail communication centre for the Class - anyone who has information for circulating to the parent body simply sends it to this one address, from where it gets sent on to all the class parents. This is a good job for someone who is familiar with e-mail, checks their in-box often and can manage a master mailing list. Genevieve (in the office) also uses this address for school messages to the parent body. It is an invaluable service to the Class.

Meetings Link - This is the Class representative who attends the Links meetings twice a term (on a Tuesday night from 7.30pm to 9.30pm) and reports back to the class - usually via e-mail with the minutes, through the Communications Link. This is also the person in the Class whom parents can bring issues to for inclusion on the Links agenda or to other school bodies. The meetings are extremely informative and good fun! This person gets an 'inside view' of the workings of the school and the opportunity to get to know both the teachers and members from every class in Michael Oak.

Teacher's Link - This is the parent that the Teacher turns to for help in sorting out lifts for the class outing or to arrange tea and coffee for the parents evening or to find out where to get the cheapest balloons for a class experiment, drawing up a flower roster etc. Teacher's buddy!

Craft Link - Preferably someone who loves craft, this person's task is to organise the parent body in the making of craft for the fair (which is run by Class 6 and takes place at the end of October). This is better taken on by two parents. Craft links don't make all the craft themselves, but simply focus on organising their Class craft.

Food Link – Coordinates food for the fair and oversees pancake evening and any other events where the Class may be required to provide food/refreshment, for example, the introductory parents' workshop, AGM or school play. See catering roster on page 42.

Bursar - Some classes like to appoint a Bursar to take care of class funds.

Maintenance Link - In some cases, there are parents who can help to maintain and renovate the classroom both with the structural maintenance and soft furnishings - curtains, cushions etc. It is helpful for the Teacher to know if any parents are skilled and willing to help make the classroom beautiful.

Diversity Link

In this handbook we focus on six core roles of the Links:

1. Linking the Class Teacher and Parents
2. Supporting the Class Teacher
3. Participating in the Links Meetings
4. The art of communication and building community
5. Catering for class and school events
6. Coordinating crafts for the Fair

1. Linking the Class Teacher and Parents

Links play a key role in keeping the channels of communication open and providing a “link” between the class teacher and parents. Communication Links have a key role to play in nurturing an ethos of positivity, warmth and transparency in the class community, and keeping the channels of communication open.

You can:

- plan a social at the beginning and end of the year to welcome parents and then to say thank you
- talk to your class teacher and parents regularly – before and after school
- communicate regularly via email
- send reminders via email or sms
- forward school emails promptly (this includes minutes of the Links Meetings)
- take minutes or record class meetings where possible so that you can share what happened with parents who couldn't make it
- take forward any issues that have come up
- behave with integrity with other people concerns/opinions, so that parents do come to you in a crisis
- report back effectively when an issue has been resolved

2. Supporting the Teacher

Class Links play an invaluable role in supporting the Teacher by helping to organise class events and by encouraging other parents to get involved.

You can:

- check in regularly to find out what support your teacher needs
- help organise class events and activities
- encourage parents to get involved and to share their ideas and suggestions

This could include holding a cake sale to fundraise for class outings, asking parents to donate plants for the class garden, or organizing a parent workshop to create a clean and beautiful classroom and surroundings

- act as intermediary when parents feel they cannot communicate a sensitive issue with the teacher directly

Class teachers strive to maintain an element of warmth and openness in their class communities. However, there may be times when, for whatever reason, this is challenged and some parents may feel unable to contact the teacher directly with a concern and/or complaint. In this case the Class Link would ideally take on the role of a go-between or intermediary.

(For more information see the Parent's Grievance Procedure on page 15.)

3. Participating in the Links Meetings

The Links Meetings bring together representatives from each class from Playgroup to Class 7, as well as representatives from the College of Teachers, Board of Trustees, Sports Committee, PR Group and invited guests. The Links meet together twice a term. These are open meetings and any parent is welcome to join the circle/attend.

The Working Group provides continuity between Links Meetings. They follow up on progress and meet before each Links meeting to prepare and streamline the agenda. The Working Group is open to any Link willing to make the commitment to attend meetings regularly for the course of the year. The Chair of the Links works closely with the Working Group and is responsible for coordinating and chairing the Links Meetings, and providing feedback to the College of Teachers.

The Links Meetings provide a forum where parents can raise a range of issues which affect the whole school community (such as school maintenance, security, catering and extramural activities). Concerns and suggestions can then be fed through to the College of Teachers or the appropriate Sub-Committees and Working Groups such as the Sustainability Committee or Diversity Group. It also serves as an incubator where new ideas are developed, key points are discussed, suggestions are put forward, and implementation and progress are monitored.

Participating in Links Meetings will keep you in touch with the latest developments at Michael Oak and deepen your understanding of how the school works, including the roles of the Faculties and College of Teachers, Committees and Working Groups so you can share this information with parents and know where to refer people to for help and more information.

Meetings Links play a key role in making sure communication flows smoothly between parents in the class and the broader school community. This includes raising parent's concerns, participating in the Links Meetings, and reporting back to the class.

- **Raising parents' concerns**

Before each meeting, Links forward parents' concerns, questions, suggestions and good ideas to the Chair of the Links, who will meet with the Working Group to discuss and plan the agenda for the next Links meeting.

- **Participating in the Links Meetings**

At the Links meetings, the Links discuss a range of issues and may either: decide on a course of action; allocate a task to particular individual; call for a group of volunteers to take things forward; or refer the issue to the College of Teachers, Trustees or the appropriate Sub-Committee or Working Group.

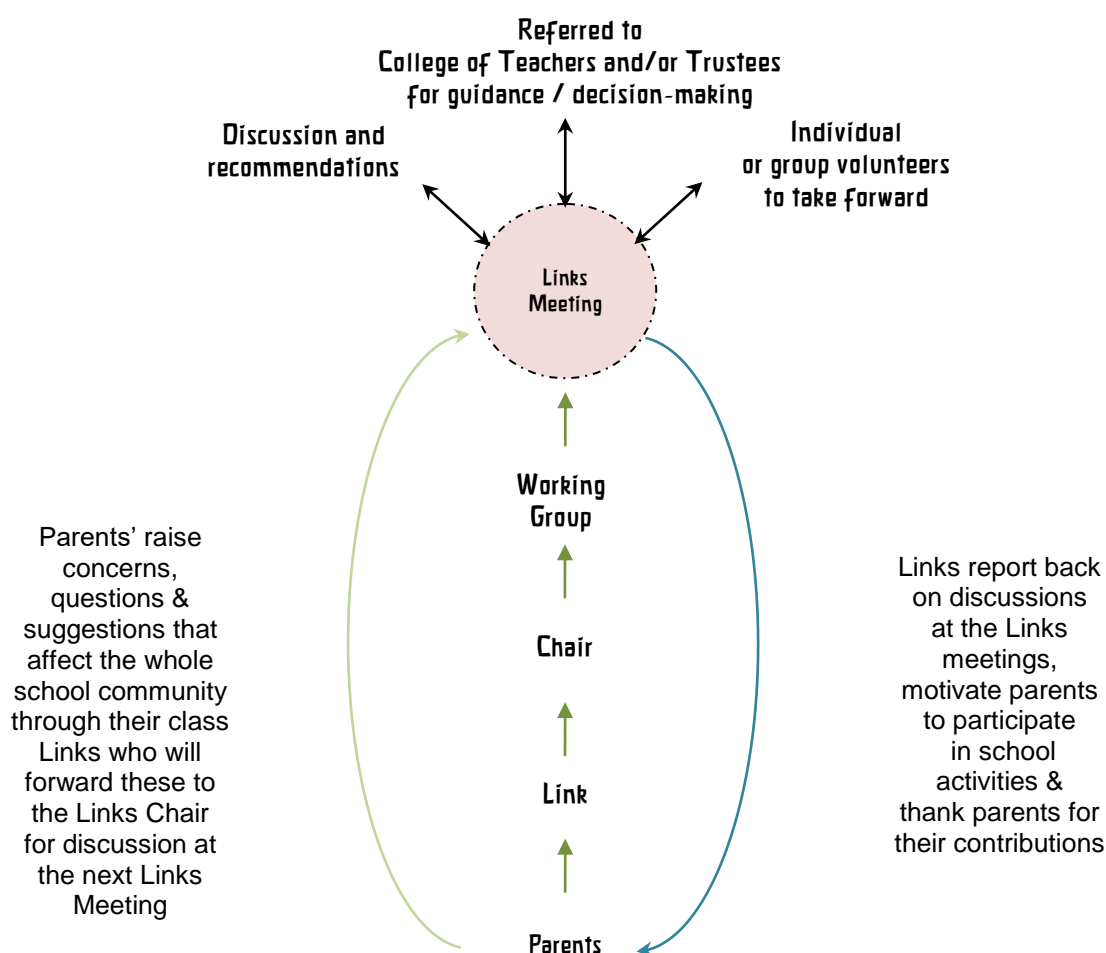
- **Reporting back to the class**

Progress is reported back to the Links Meetings, and the Links have a responsibility to give feedback to the parents in their class to complete the cycle of communication (as illustrated below).

Minutes are circulated to everyone who attended the meeting for approval. Links who attended the meeting should then send out the final version of minutes together with a short cover letter that highlights the key points of interest for their class.

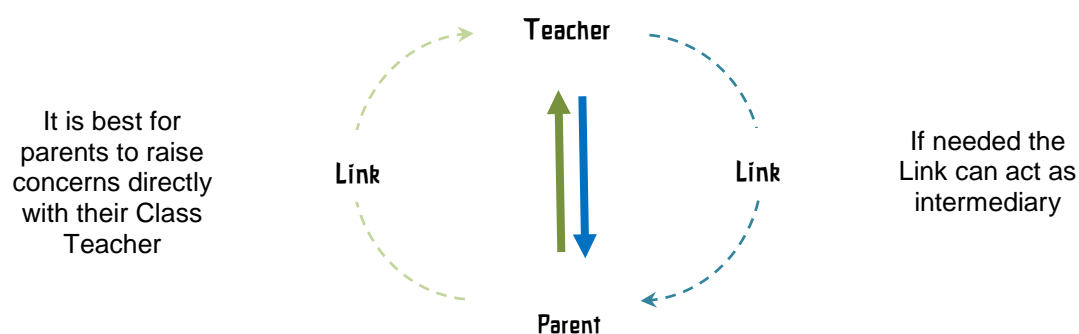
A two-way flow of communication between parents, Links and the school community

Matters that affect the whole school community can be taken forward to the Links Meetings.



A two-way flow of communication between parents, Links and Class Teachers

Matters that affect a particular child or class should ideally be raised directly with the Class Teacher.



4. The art of communication and building community

In essence, linking is about communicating and building community. Remember that communication is a two way process – it is about talking and listening – about breathing in and breathing out. It is also about following the correct channels so that we bring everyone into the same conversation and everyone has a chance to speak, listen, and be heard.

You can:

- Start by listening to parents, ask people what they think. You can then raise parent's concerns with the teacher or put them on the agenda of the Links Meeting, where issues can be raised with the College of Teachers or taken forward by a small action group.
- Get personal, but don't take it personally. Get to know the parents in your class. Ask what they need from you. Find out what kind of communication style works best for your class: face-to-face communication, email groups, sms or phone calls.
- Listen to the gossip on the playground or Marlow Road, recognise people's need to let off steam, but also note what is of value and what needs to be fed back to the class teacher or into the Links meetings so that we can find real solutions.
- Appreciate what parents have to offer. Thank them for their contribution, respect their point of view, and encourage them to get involved in whatever way works for them.
- Be patient. Respect that parents have other commitments, that they have different strengths and weaknesses, and that they may be able to help at different times.
- Report back on progress. Remember to close the circle of communication as soon as possible. Let parents and teachers know what action has been taken or when they can expect an answer.

5. Catering for class and school events

The food link coordinates all the catering for parents' evenings (arranging snacks on a roster basis), school events, and food for the fair. Catering for school and class events also needs to be in line with guidelines outlined in the Michael Oak Food Policy (see page 32).

School events

Catering for school events is shared by the different classes. Each class is responsible for one event, for example, Class 5 prepares food for the AGM. See the catering roster on page 42 to see which event your class is responsible for.

Food for the Fair

- Each family is expected to make food for whichever classes their children are in.
- The fair food coordinator will be in touch with each class about what kind of food and how much food they are expected to make for the Fair.

- The food link is responsible for coordinating the food for their class – this includes liaising with parents and deciding how best to manage the shopping and food preparation
- Fundraising during the year is a great way of building up money in the class kitty to pay for your ingredients.
- The food link also needs to draw up a roster for the food stall in consultation with the craft link. Each family is expected to do 1 hour per class – on either the food or craft stall. Some families are happy to do more than one shift, so do put out a request to your class should you need more help. Please do not include any class 6 parents on the roster since they will already be working a full day at the fair.
- If you have any questions speak to the fair food coordinator.

6. Coordinating craft for the Fair

The craft link plays a key role in coordinating the making of craft for the fair. This includes help the class choose what craft to make, sourcing materials, setting up workshops, and drawing up a roster for the craft stall at the fair.

Craft links:

- Help in the choice of craft that the class makes by creating a space where the parents can put forward some suggestions and then make some decisions on what to make.
- Facilitate the making of the craft.
 - The craft link is not responsible for the making of all of the craft, but they do act as a central organizational point to keep the process on track.
 - This can be done in a number of ways depending on how you would like to approach it. You can play an active hands-on role in coordinating all the crafts, or you can ask for volunteers to take on the responsibility for coordinating particular crafts, and this team of 'project managers' can continuously feedback to the craft link.
- Set up workshops where the parents can meet to do craft.
 - These happen about once a month. A few years ago the links asked that communal craft dates be set so that all the classes could meet and see what the other classes were doing and join in if they would like to. The fair coordinator now sets this up after consulting the school calendar.
 - Please note that these dates are not compulsory. Your class might want to craft more often or on a different day or gather at someone's home and must feel free to do so.
 - Make up craft packs for the parents who are unable to come to the workshops, should they want them.
- Source materials.
 - Always speak to the class 6 craft coordinator should you need any assistance. The class 6 craft coordinator has a resource list and should be able to help source materials. There may also be leftover materials from previous years.
 - You can also get a donations letter from the craft coordinator with which to approach businesses for donations or discounts.

- You can claim from the school but this must be discussed with the craft coordinator first. The craft coordinator will also explain how they will be managing the claims procedure.
- Keep a record and compile a costing sheet and stock sheet. The craft coordinator has templates of these should you need them.
- Have samples ready for the pricing committee by the beginning of the 4th term.
- Set a roster for the craft stall in consultation with your food link.
 - Generally each family in the class needs to do a 1 hour shift per child, so if you have three children, you would have three 1 hour shifts **per family**.
 - Do set this at the end of the 3rd term or beginning of the 4th term so that parents have time to swop shifts should they need to.
 - The craft coordinator has roster template.
- Plan your stall display so that it really shows off your craft.
- Compile a final stock sheet and count the remaining craft at the end of the fair.
- Return all left over craft and unused materials purchased by the school to the craft coordinator.
- Enjoy!

Some useful tips:

- Draw on your parents' strengths when making your choices but also encourage parents to push themselves a bit, since it is a great opportunity to learn a new skill.
- Keep up communications with the Class 6 craft coordinator/s. They are there to help.
- Crafting is about building community and many friendships are built in the company of parents and children sharing a common activity.

ROLE OF THE CLASS DIVERSITY LINK

These notes are as currently conceived and envisaged and are subject to amendment and development

What is a Diversity Link?

- This is a new role, as proposed by the Diversity Group, to start second term of 2016
- A parent volunteer from each class who will promote activities around diversity in the classroom, in close collaboration with the class teacher

Who will be the Diversity Links?

- One parent from each class in Kindergarten and Primary School
- This is a voluntary role – a Diversity Link is desirable, but not compulsory, in each class
- Please talk to your class teacher if you would like to take on this exciting role

What would be expected of me if I volunteer as a Diversity Link?

- To meet with the Diversity Group twice a term in the evenings – near the start and near the end of each term
- To communicate with parents and work closely with the class teacher
- To assist with and/or co-ordinate any event or activity that is planned that term

What will the format be for the twice-termly meetings with the Diversity Group?

- Check in with how Linking is going (any diversity/logistical issues).
- Diversity Group to hand out list of suggestions for possible diversity activities for the term ahead, and then discuss as a group
- Feedback from past term's events and ideas for going forward

Who will decide which events/activities will take place in the classroom that term?

- The teachers will be in charge of everything that happens in their classrooms
- The Diversity Group will provide some suggestions for that term to the Diversity Links
- The Diversity Link to discuss with the teacher what could work in their particular classroom and for their children's age and when it would be best to take place
- The Diversity Links with teachers to initiate any suitable activity or event that addresses or exposes the children to diversity and engage and involve parents in diversity activities

What sort of activities or events is being suggested?

Some examples might be:

- Look at all the reading books in the classroom and assess whether the people in the books depict a good array of diversity in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, disability
- Choose a religious holiday from the upcoming term and ask someone to come and talk to the class about the significance of it, or bring a sample of the food eaten at that celebration
- Communicate with parents about their positive or negative experiences of diversity
- A discussion could be initiated about what name each child calls his/her grandparents
- The children could each bring a photograph of their family to school to be put up on the wall, so that they become aware of all the different ways that families are made up
- A person with a physical disability could come and talk to the children and let them ask questions. Could be followed by allowing the children to experience for a few minutes what it might be like to have a physical disability (eg blindfold them briefly to understand visual impairment)

Why Diversity?

- Living in a country like South Africa, we want to equip our children to be well-adjusted to living in our diverse society
- Exposure to difference (and the consequent realisation of similarity) has significant educational and developmental value for our children and enriches the lives of those in the Michael Oak community
- Addressing and promoting diversity will have a positive effect on sustainability of the school

Teachers/Links code of understanding

1. This code of understanding aims to develop a shared appreciation of what linking involves in order to sustain a healthy relationship and mutual support between class teachers and the Links
2. All Links will be given *The Links Handbook* and have access to all policy documents which will soon be available on the Michael Oak website and on request from the office.
3. All Links will be given the links meeting dates and can view the school calendar on the website, so they know when Links Meetings and other school events are scheduled. They will also be sent a copy of the catering calendar so they are clear what events their class is responsible for catering for.
4. Teachers agree to:
 - a. acknowledge with appreciation their parent Links
 - b. respond efficiently and appropriately to concerns/grievances brought to them on behalf of other parents
 - c. seek help and support from colleagues should they need to do this before responding to parents
 - d. discuss agenda items of upcoming Parents' Evenings with their Links
 - e. respect the 24 hour and the 5 day rules:
 - Any minor request to Links should be made at least 24 hours before the required support. Genuine emergencies that could never have been predicted should be treated as such.
 - Any request that might require class parents to give of their time should be known at least five days in advance. This includes all transportation requests.
5. Class teachers and Links could consider:
 - a. the possibility of having more than one class Link to share roles and tasks more equitably (see page 3 of the Links Handbook)
 - b. setting up e-mail communication network in the class
6. The following issues need to be discussed openly with the class:
 - a. Communication with the class community should ideally go through the communication link.
 - b. Email is best used to share information and make practical arrangements and is not to be used for discussing contentious issues or airing grievances. (See communication protocol).
7. Links should ideally be chosen:
 - a. in the fourth term to provide continuity from one year to the next
 - b. for a set period so that all parents get a chance to be involved
 - c. in such a way that there is a smooth handover period so current Links can offer to provide support and advice to the new Links

Teachers may call for volunteers or parents may elect the class Links at a parents' evening. Having the time, willingness to share, contribute and communicate are essential criteria.

Communication guidelines

Michael Oak relies on parent participation at all levels of the school's functioning. Your feedback and comments regarding any aspect of the school is welcomed.

These guidelines are designed to facilitate effective communication at Michael Oak and to help point parents in the right direction – so you know who to talk to and how best to raise your concerns, make suggestions or simply ask a question. **For guidance on how to register a formal complaint or grievance, please see the Grievance Procedure.**

1. If you have a concern about:

- **Your child or class teacher, start by talking to the teacher.**
 - Please don't approach a teacher at school when s/he is arriving, leaving, or busy with the children. Class teachers will let parents know at the start of the term how best to set up a meeting at a time that is convenient for you both. Some teachers prefer talking in person before or after class, and others prefer to communicate by email, phone and/or sms. You can expect a response within two days of receipt of your message.
 - If it is not possible to approach your class teacher directly with your particular concern, then you can approach your class link or another teacher for assistance.
 - **Financial matters**, speak to the business manager.
 - **The sports programme**, talk to the sports coordinator.
 - **Extramurals not organized by the school**, speak to the individual teachers and coaches. The receptionist has their contact numbers.
 - **New admissions** speak to the enrolment secretary.
 - **Food, aftercare, tuck-shop or market** speak to the Food Group.
 - **The fair**, talk to the school fair coordinator or any parent in Class 6.
 - **The school building, grounds and facilities** record your comments in the Maintenance Book (in the pigeon holes opposite reception). Comments about cleaning can be noted in the Housekeeping Book (also in the pigeon holes).
2. **Contributions to The Leaflet** can be emailed or hard copies handed to either the editor or the receptionist.
 3. **General queries about teaching and learning** should be addressed to the Kindergarten, Primary School or High School faculty. Submissions should reach the receptionist by 8am on Monday morning to be included on the agenda of the weekly Faculty meetings on Tuesday.
 4. **Class meetings** provide the ideal platform for sharing information within the class community. The Links will work together with the Class Teachers to draw up the agenda for class meetings, and parents are encouraged to suggest topics for the agenda a week before the class meeting, so that there is time for the Teacher to decide what goes on the agenda and what is better addressed privately.
 5. **Broader school issues, topics and suggestions**, should be raised through the Links.

- The Links Meeting provides a forum where new ideas are developed and discussed, and where implementation and progress are monitored. These meetings take place twice a term and any parent is welcome to attend. Speak to your class Link for more information.
 - The Communications Links should also report back after each Meeting, and make sure parents are kept up-to-date with recent developments by distributing a copy of the minutes together with a covering letter that highlights topics of interest.
6. **If at any point you feel that your concern is not being addressed**, please contact the College of Teachers. Submissions should reach the receptionist by 8am on Wednesday morning to be included on the agenda of the weekly College meetings on Thursday
7. **Please do not email grievances or concerns through general mailing lists**, as this can be misinterpreted. Correspondence, including emails, should only be addressed to the following people who are there to help address your concerns:
- the College of Teachers,
 - the Faculty chairs,
 - the Links Chair
 - the School Coordinator
8. General communications should be routed through the PR and Marketing Coordinator for distribution to the whole school community via email.

2017 Contact list			
School Business Manager	Pam Schneider	pschneider@michaeloak.org.za	021 797 9728
Receptionist	Faiza Abdurahman	reception@michaeloak.org.za	021 797 9728
Enrolment Secretary	Lesley Swart	lswart@michaeloak.org.za	021 797 9728
Leaflet Editor	Charles Abbott	cabbott@michaeloak.org.za	021 761 3717
Bookkeeper - Creditors	Judith Samupindi	jsamupindi@michaeloak.org.za	021 797 9728
Bookkeeper - Debtors	Romano Kempers	rkempers@michaeloak.org.za	021 797 9728
School Coordinator	Richard Cox	rcox@michaeloak.org.za	021 797 9728
PR, Marketing & Events Coordinator	Genevieve Langenhoven	glangenhoven@michaeloak.org.za	021 797 9728
Sports Coordinator	Claudia McCaig	cmccaig@michaeloak.org.za	021 797 9728
Maintenance	Rob Howe	maintenance@michaeloak.org.za	021 797 9728
Links Chair	Brian Heydenrych	brianheydenrych@gmail.com	021 689 1234
HS Forum Chair	Trinity Loubser	trin@mweb.co.za	021 761 8623

Grievance procedure for parents

A grievance is defined as any cause or feeling of dissatisfaction about the school that needs to be addressed. This includes any concern or complaint about the school, teachers, class, curriculum or teaching practice.

1. Parent – teacher / class-related complaint, concern, grievance:

In all instances, open communication with class teacher is encouraged. A mediator can be requested if necessary. A parent having a class-related grievance may raise this matter with the teacher in question by either:

- a. requesting a meeting with the teacher or
- b. making a written submission to the teacher – a response can be expected within two school days
- c. in some cases the teacher may not be able to deal with the issue immediately, and an appointment will be set up to meet with the parent as soon as possible/ at an appropriate time
- d. should there be no satisfactory outcome, the parent/s may write to the College of Teachers (or speak with a member of College) who:
 - will consult with the teacher (and if necessary the parent) to establish a clear understanding of the problem
 - decide whether to involve the mentor, faculty or an impartial mediator in cases of hostility and/or open conflict
 - inform the parents of the College decision
- e. If any matter needs to be raised a second time, this should be followed by a written submission. Reported conversations, whether direct or telephonic, will not be tabled for discussion at any formal meeting. Only written submissions will be tabled. Speaking on behalf of others will require their approval in writing in order to be tabled.

2. Broader school-related complaint, concern, and grievance:

A parent having a broader school-related and/or pedagogical grievance may raise their concerns with the College of the Teachers. College will:

- a. acknowledge communication promptly and respond within two days after the College meeting
- b. pass on communication to relevant teacher, mentor, faculty, Links and/or implementation group
- c. consider the grievance very seriously and take care to find the best possible solution
- d. keep the parent informed throughout the process and provide an indication of when they can expect a final outcome

Confidentiality

If requested, your concern will be addressed in confidence, and the College of Teachers asks you to do the same while the College of Teachers is in the process of resolving the issue. Should the grievance concern a specific teacher, then the teacher needs to be informed of the details of the case so that they can deal with it. Open, transparent communication is encouraged wherever possible.

Letters of concern or complaint or formal communications concerning a staff member, a parent or a pupil that need to be kept in confidence may be submitted to the College Liaison Group. The group will handle the matter to the best of its ability. The issue will not be tabled at College or brought to a wider group without the complainant's consent. If the complainant

is not satisfied with the outcome and it needs to be raised a second time, then it will have to be opened up to hear both sides of the story.

Mediation

Should the parent and College of Teachers fail to achieve a satisfactory resolution of the issue; a mutually acceptable mediator will be appointed.

Code of Conduct - Parents

It is an acknowledged fact that the ultimate responsibility for a learner's discipline and behaviour rests with his/her parents or guardians.

School's expectations of parents' support:

- Respect the pedagogical judgement and aspirations of the teachers.
- Be open to familiarise themselves with the structures and Waldorf education so that they can support the endeavours of the teachers.
- Bring concerns regarding pedagogical matters to teachers themselves.
- Make appointments to speak to teachers.
- Follow through on agreements made with the teachers.
- Respect the "sanctity" of the classroom. While children are present in the classroom they take precedence over adults and teacher supervision should not be interrupted.
- Ensure punctuality.
- Ensure children have enough sleep and come to school rested.
- Ensure that your child is appropriately dressed for school.
- Ensure that your child eats a healthy diet.
- Cut down on electronic and social media – television, videos and computer games to be minimised.
- Take an active interest in children's school work and make it possible for children to complete assigned homework.
- Adhere to the policies of the school
- Discuss the schools' behaviour code with your children.
- Let the school know if problems occur within the family environment
- Parents are expected to attend class evenings, week-end school activities and festivals.
- Parents are expected to participate in fundraising.
- Parents are responsible for all fees and levies due to the school.
- Verbal abuse from teachers, parents or students will not be tolerated.
- Parents are expected to intervene if they observe unacceptable behaviour from children on school grounds by asking for the name of the children involved and reporting it to a teacher. In the case of Kindergarten, call the teacher to take the children to the teacher.
- Parents may not admonish or confront other children on the school grounds

Absentee Policy

March 2015

In the interests of improving our communication, we remind you of the systems in place when your child is ill and not coming to school. It is incumbent on parents to telephone the office before 09h00 to let the school know that their child will not be at school that day, and the reason. We keep an absentee register in the office (a central place), which is available for all the teachers, aftercare supervisors, extra-mural teachers, therapists and sports staff to consult. The high school classes send a list of their absentees to the office each morning, and we will call those parents if they have not let us know that their children are not at school, in the interests of safety.

We understand that many parents SMS the teachers to let them know if their children will not be at school. Please would you all remember that this information is also needed for other school activities, and call or email the office (the existing system of communication) as well as sending an SMS to the teacher?

If you know your child is going to be late, please give them a note for the teacher, and send them via the office to report so that we can mark them present (we cannot interrupt the classes to inform the teachers the reasons for late-coming).

Please note that messages for Primary and High School students should be sent **before** big break (12h30) so that we can put them in the appropriate class teacher or guardian's message slot for delivery to your child. It is very difficult for us to get messages delivered after that, although in an emergency we will interrupt the class. If school has already dismissed, it is unfortunately not possible unless the child attends Aftercare.

Internet and Media Guidelines for Parents

It is clear that parents today are required to manage the way in which the internet and media impact on their children's lives. Michael Oak would like to offer guidelines to deal with a challenge that is increasingly dominating the free time activities of our children and their thought patterns.

Our guidelines are based on the following perspective:

- The technology available is truly remarkable and provides tools that have brought great efficiencies and progress to the world.
- PC's and smart phones are rapidly becoming an indispensable part of our lives and it is quite evident that their usage is spreading to younger and younger children.
- The physically passive engagement with the internet and electronic media is very seductive and diverts the child from the fundamental, health promoting activities of physical exercise, real-life, creative play and open social interaction.
- The internet and media powerfully promote a culture that, to a large extent, supports instant gratification, sensationalism and consumerism. Sex, fear, dysfunction and violence all sell well. Fortunately there is also humour and sport.
- Perseverance and depth tend to be replaced with impatience and superficiality.
- Inner activity and self-created imaginations are crowded out with a flood of external images and sensations.
- What is experienced in the media by the child comes straight into the classroom and the class community.

It is from this perspective that we as a school expect moderation in the use of the internet and the media according to the following guidelines.

- TV, PC and cell-phone viewing is not free but managed by the parents.
- An age appropriate viewing schedule is set up that limits viewing to selected programs, preferably to weekends.
- No TV or PC should be in the bedroom.
- Cell phone times should be managed to enable the child to "switch off" from the ceaseless pressure for responses.
- Parents are urged to know the technology and protect their children from exposure to inappropriate material which exists in abundance.
- Children should be well informed of both the opportunities and pitfalls of social media.
- Children need help to critically evaluate information and develop discernment eg project based work and avoiding plagiarism – set requirements use real books + internet – in both cases seek and know how to recognise credible sources
- Parents need to look at role modelling – how do they use the technology – does a phone call take precedence over people in the room, during meal times, etc.

There are some great online resources. In particular, the **google family safety centre** that was set up by UNICEF, which includes tools to adjust your search settings in both google and YouTube to prevent children coming across pornographic or violent content. **Netsmartz.org** also has some great age appropriate video clips that highlight potential challenges (such as cyberbullying) that you can use at home or in the classroom to kick-start a discussion about these issues rather than telling children what they can or cannot do.

Mobiflock provides tools that allow parents to set limits to how cell phones are used. This includes blocking downloads of certain apps and content, blacklist numbers of people who harass you, set times when the phone is on or off, and locate your child at any time. This can be helpful in setting boundaries with new phone users but would be tricky to negotiate with older teens.

THE RIGHT TOOLS AT THE RIGHT TIME

Guidelines for the home use of Electronic Media

Michael Oak Waldorf School

- *Unsupervised internet access, on any device, is the area to be most cautious of when establishing rules around electronic media. Set wise and well-monitored rules early on.*
- *Permanent screens in children's bedrooms should be very strongly discouraged.*

Class	Device	Suggestion
Playgroup and Kindergarten	Any electronic media with a screen including TV, computer, iPad, cell phone and iPod etc.	Every effort should be made to protect the Kindergarten child from electronic devices and flickering screens
Lower Primary Classes 1,2 & 3	Any electronic media with a screen including TV, computer, iPad, cell phone and iPod etc.	We believe that there is no place for access to Electronic media in the Primary School. Research for projects can be done at the library, from books at home and through talking to people. Arrangements for playdates etc. can be made using a landline.
Middle Primary Classes 4 & 5	Any electronic media with a screen including TV, computer, iPad, cell phone and iPod etc. Limited TV and DVD viewing	It can be wonderful as a family to sit together on a weekend and watch a program that you all enjoy. We recommend that programs be agreed on beforehand and that adults are present.
Upper Primary Classes 6 & 7	Simple "non-smart" cell phone without internet access. Limited TV and DVD viewing	By the time a child reaches 12/13 it may become appropriate for them to have a practical means of their parents around travel plans, lifts or logistics with extra-murals etc. In this instance it is strongly recommended to provide a cheap and simple "non-smart" phone for them.
Lower High School Classes 8,9 & 10	Limited TV and DVD viewing, with strong boundaries around internet access on smart devices.	We think it is wise to exclude smart phones and tablets form meal times (parents included) and that they be collected before bedtime.
Upper High School Classes 11,12 & 13		It remains the parents prerogative to set the rules "of the house" while the child/young adult is at home.

CYBER-BULLYING POLICY – February 2016

Michael Oak School embraces the advantages of modern technology used appropriately in terms of the pupil's age as outlined in our Internet and Media Policy and the schedule, "The Rights Tools at the Right Time". Michael Oak also recognises the potential danger of cyber-bullying, and the need to have a clear cyberbullying policy.

DEFINITION OF CYBER-BULLYING

Cyber-bullying is an aggressive, intentional act carried out by an individual or a group using electronic and social media to communicate threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating material to cause distress to a targeted individual or group.

Examples of cyber-bullying are the communication of such material in the following ways:

- Through calls or texted messages or images on mobile phones.
- By posting such material on websites, including blogs, personal websites and social networking sites.
- Through the use e-mails.
- Through making remarks in chat rooms, including Facebook and YouTube.
- Through hijacking/cloning e-mail accounts.

LEGAL ISSUES

Criminal law applies to cyber-space and cyber-bullying is generally criminal in character.

- It is unlawful to disseminate defamatory information in any media including internet sites.
- It is an offence to send, by means of a public electronic communications network, a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or one of an indecent, obscene or menacing character.
- It is an offence to knowingly pursue any course of conduct amounting to harassment.

POLICY

Michael Oak undertakes to educate its pupils both in the proper use of electronic social media and about the serious consequences of cyber-bullying.

- All bullying is damaging, but cyber-bullying and harassment can be particularly invasive of privacy at all times.
- Michael Oak will offer support to those being bullied and will work with the Police to detect those involved in criminal acts.
- Michael Oak will use, as appropriate, the full range of sanctions to correct, punish or remove pupils who bully others in this way, both in and out of school, when this is brought to our attention.
- All members of the school community have a duty to bring to the attention of the teachers, the school counsellor or the College of Teachers any example of cyber-bullying or harassment that they know about or suspect.
- The school has the duty to inform the parents of the pupils involved should such an incident be brought to our attention.
- It is in the child's best interests for parents to share such information with the child's teacher, the school counsellor or the College of Teachers.

GUIDANCE FOR STAFF AND PARENTS

The family ultimately carries the responsibility to resolve an incident of cyber-bullying, but Michael Oak undertakes to support them in this. It is vital that parents and the school work together to ensure that all pupils are aware of the serious consequences of getting involved in anything that might be seen to be cyber-bullying.

- Parents should explain the criminal nature of cyberbullying to their children.
- Parents can help by making sure their child understands the school's policy and, above all, how seriously Michael Oak takes incidents of cyber-bullying.
- Michael Oak reserves the right to take action in cases wherever cyberbullying impacts on a pupil, regardless of whether it happens during the holidays or during the school term.
- Staff are not to engage with current learners on social media and the learners are to be informed of such.

If you suspect or are told about a cyber-bullying incident, follow the protocol outlined below:

Mobile Phones

- Ask the child to show you the mobile phone
- Note clearly everything on the screen relating to an inappropriate text message or image, to include the date, time and names
- Make a transcript of a spoken message, again record date, times and names
- Tell the child to save the message/image
- Download the message or image for the attention of the College of Teachers.

Computers

- Ask the child to get up on-screen the material in question
- Ask the child to save the material
- Print off the offending material straight away
- Make sure you have got all pages in the right order and that there are no omissions
- Accompany the child, taking the offending material, to see a Faculty colleague
- Normal procedures to interview the child and to take statements will then be followed, particularly if a child protection issue is presented.

GUIDANCE FOR PUPILS

- Do not answer abusive messages but log and report them
- Do not delete anything until it has been saved (even if it is upsetting, the material is important evidence which may be needed later as proof of cyber-bullying)
- Do not give out personal IT details
- Never reply to abusive e-mails
- Never reply to someone you do not know
- Stay in public areas in chat rooms
- At all times, be careful and conscious of the effect on others of what you post and say on social media

If you believe you or someone else is the target of cyber-bullying, you must speak to an adult as soon as possible. This person could be a parent/guardian, a teacher or the school counsellor.

Social Networking Guidelines for Students

Remember that social media venues are very public, extremely so. Whatever you post is encoded and available for decades and centuries for those interested. Deleting cannot erase what has been spread through social media.

1. Post only what you want the world to see.
2. Don't post anything that you might regret, – angry comments, personal details, bad language, offensive comments and bullying or insulting words - anything that you wouldn't want your friends, parents, future children or future employer to see.
3. You can be sued for defamation by even agreeing to a comment that damages a person's reputation.
4. You can be sued for harassment for repeated negative messaging.
5. Be cautious about publishing photographs and providing personal details. Avoid phone numbers, addresses and birthdates.
6. Do not share your password with anyone.
7. Change your passwords regularly.
8. Copying someone's work without permission or acknowledging it is an offence.
9. Be mindful of phishing scams that arrive via email or on your Facebook wall. Particularly suspicious are those making big promises or "coming to your rescue", claiming something is about to go wrong.

Email Policy

Applicable to: Teachers, links, parents.

This email policy concerns the promotion of efficient school communication and the adequate protection of personal information as required by South Africa's Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act (see summary in Annexure).

Efficient and compliant email systems

As email constitutes a vital part of the school's communication processes and is an important interface in school-parent and class-parent communication, it is important to both comply with the law and to promote practices that lead to communication that supports the functioning of the school and promotes a culture of community among teachers, staff, parents, and, by extension, learners.

Communication from the school's centralised functions (administration, communication etc.) are sent to the class links, which are the contact points between the school and teachers, on one hand, and parents, on the other. This is the primary mechanism through which school communication flows to parents.

Furthermore, in order to protect parents' personal information and to ensure that email communication channels are not misused, the following email policy guidelines apply.

- Links will send parents **relevant information** only, as approved by the school, college of teachers, trustees, administrative staff and/or the class teacher.
- Parents are not to receive communication for which they have not opted in, e.g. information that falls outside the business of the school.
- Emails sent to parents through this channel must be set up so that their email addresses are inserted into the blind carbon copy (BCC) field. This doesn't apply to the email addresses of teachers and links. Useful resources on how to BCC across different email clients are provided below.
- Parents receiving communication through this channel should not attempt to respond to the whole group, but rather use the appropriate channels (as outlined in the communications handbook or, if it applies, the grievance procedure).

How to blind carbon copy (BCC)

This link provides instruction on how to use the BCC field across different email clients:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Use-BCC-in-an-Email>

For ease of use, links may prefer to use distribution lists in conjunction with BCC, so that they do not need to add email contacts individually with every email sent. Here are resources to assist with creating distribution lists in various clients:

<http://email.answers.com/distribution-list/how-to-create-and-use-distribution-lists>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Mailing-List-in-Gmail>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Add-a-Mailing-List-in-Outlook>

Alternatively, the link may choose to use Google Groups to manage email communication within the class. In this instance, refer to the following guidelines on setting up a Google Group:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Create-a-Google-Group>

ANNEXURE

(Summary of POPI courtesy of www.popi-compliance.co.za)

Email and the Protection of Personal Information Act

South Africa's **Protection of Personal Information Bill** seeks to regulate the Processing of Personal Information. **Personal Information** broadly means any information relating to an identifiable, living natural person or juristic person (companies, CC's etc.) and includes, but is not limited to:

- **Contact details:** email, telephone, address etc.
- **Demographic information:** age, sex, race, birth date, ethnicity etc.
- **History:** employment, financial, educational, criminal, medical history
- **Biometric information:** blood type etc.
- **Opinions** of and about the person
- Private **correspondence** etc.

Processing means broadly anything done with the Personal Information, including collection, usage, storage, dissemination, modification or destruction (whether such processing is automated or not).

Some of the **obligations** under POPI are to:

- only collect information that you need for a specific purpose
- apply reasonable security measures to protect it
- ensure it is relevant and up to date
- only hold as much as you need, and only for as long as you need it
- allow the subject of the information to see it upon request

School Structures 2017

Introduction

The school operates on a mandate system, whereby groups of committed persons are mandated to fulfil certain responsibilities. Parents are encouraged to give of their time, either to some of these groups or to specific projects that arise from time to time.

The College of Teachers

The College of Teachers is responsible for all pedagogical matters and the daily running of the school. The current members are: Anette Bestwick, Anne-Marie Winkelman, Derina Wille, Kathy Abbott, Richard Cox, Tine Bohm, Vincent Message and Leigh Whitesman.

College meets on Thursday afternoons and tasks are rotated and shared. They study together, conduct interviews, receive visitors, handle correspondence and address discipline issues and other problems that have not been dealt with in the weekly teachers' meetings. There is a holding slot in the office for receiving correspondence, or it can be emailed to info@michaeloak.org.za. All correspondence is answered promptly and dealt with in confidence. It should reach the school by Wednesday 08h00 for inclusion on the agenda for that week, although it may be held over for a week, depending on pressure of other business.

If parents have a concern about a child or the school, it is preferably addressed in terms of the agreed school grievance procedures - through the class teacher, and then through the relevant faculty if required. Parents can also contact college directly through the College Liaison Group.

Kindergarten, Primary School and High School Faculties

Kindergarten (which includes Playgroup), Primary and High School faculties meet once a week on a Tuesday and the three groups meet collectively at least once a term to discuss general school topics in a longer meeting. The faculties discuss day-to-day school issues, how best to deal with festivals, timetables, difficulties in the classrooms, etc and provide support for each other and the children. One of the important aspects of meetings is to focus on individual children in order to understand them better and help them forward in an appropriate way. The applications on the enrolment waiting lists are presented to the faculty as part of the application process, and this, as well as a credit check, is done before the next step can be taken in the enrolment process.

The Board of Trustees

In terms of the Trust deed of the Michael Oak School Association, the Trustees are responsible for ensuring that the objective of the Trust is achieved; that is, to organise and promote the teaching of children in accordance with the principles and methods expounded by Rudolf Steiner. The Trustees are ultimately also responsible for the long-term sustainability and the legal and financial stability of the school. In order to ensure that they fulfil these responsibilities the Trustees meet on a monthly basis and are guided by a formal charter. The Trustees comprise a minimum of six and a maximum of twelve members, at least three of which need to be teachers. The parent members are selected annually as recommended by the Nominations Committee. New members may be co-opted in the course of the year if required. The current members are: Garth Solomon (Chair), Anne-Marie Winkelman, Mandy Barnett, Peter Digby, Richard Cox, Rob Macdonald, Eitan Prince, Camilla Thorogood, Leigh Whiteman and Clive Goodchild-Brown (Treasurer).

The Trustees have delegated certain responsibilities to various sub-committees and working groups as set out as follows:

Trustee Subcommittees and Working Groups

The Admin Group is responsible for the administration of the school. This group consists of: Faiza Abdurahman (Reception Secretary), Lesley Swart (Enrolment Secretary), Pam Schneider (School Business Manager), Judith Samupindi (Bookkeeper – Creditors), Romano Kempers (Bookkeeper – Debtors), Richard Cox (Coordinator), Marion Penfold (Sponsorships), Michael Archer (Hall Hiring), Rob Howe (Maintenance), Claudia McCaig (Sports Coordinator), Genevieve Langenhoven (PR, Marketing & Events) and Charles Abbott (Leaflet Editor). Any issues relating to the administration of the school can be directed to Pam Schneider.

The Finance & Audit Committee is responsible for administration efficiency, financial systems, planning, monthly management accounts, banking, the annual budget, recommended fee increases, appointment of the auditors, the annual audit and the annual financial statements. Current members are: Clive Goodchild-Brown (Chair), Pam Schneider, Judith Samupindi, Nikki Pallini, Richard van Helden and Romano Kempers.

The Sustainability Committee is responsible for public relations and marketing, fundraising, bursaries, enrolment and diversity. Current members are: Peter Digby, Rob Macdonald, Richard Cox, Lesley Swart, Eitan Prince, Camilla Thorogood and Genevieve Langenhoven. In order to fulfil its mandate the Committee has formed the following working groups:

- **Public Relations and Marketing Group**
- **Diversity Group**
- **Fundraising Group**
- **Enrolment Group**
- **Fee Assistance Group**
- **IT Group**

The Personnel & Remuneration Committee is responsible for the overall remuneration philosophy of the school, employment contracts, employment and performance of non-teaching staff, variable pay on an annual basis, any other issues relating to the employment of teachers and staff. Current members are: Garth Solomon (Chair), Leigh Whitesman, Pam Schneider, Mandy Barnett, Clive Goodchild-Brown and Richard Cox.

The Risk Committee is responsible for monitoring the key risks facing the school and dealing with all legal issues, as well as for ensuring that the school is adequately insured. Current members are: Garth Solomon (Chair), Pam Schneider, Richard Cox and Clive Goodchild-Brown.

The Building Maintenance and Safety Committee is responsible for the maintenance of the buildings, upkeep of the gardens, the management of new building projects, systems and procedures with regard to the safety of the staff and children, security matters as well as projects relating to the protection of our environment. Current members are Pam Schneider (chair), Richard Cox, Martin Firer, Garth Solomon and Simon Tippet. In order to fulfil its mandate the Committee has formed the following working groups:

- **Accommodation Group**
- **Refurbishment Group**
- **Garden Group**

- **Facilities, Safety & Security Group**

The Links are responsible for the communication between parents and the teachers, College and Trustees, as well as raising parents' concerns and insights. Each class has a parent or parents (links) who act as liaison between parents and teacher. They are a communication channel for the class family and help to organise class events, fundraising and fair activities. They meet as a group twice a term, with teacher, College and Trustee representatives also in attendance. The class links should be selected by the whole class community and the teacher/guardian of that class. The minutes from the latest Links meetings are tabled at the Trustee meetings.

The High School Parents Forum consists of teachers and parents who come together to discuss, air and seek answers to any High School issues. This is a relatively new group that has arisen out of the realization that there was a need to create a specific place to raise high school matters.

The Sports Group organises and timetables sports for the Primary and High School. Current members are: Claudia McCaig, Roy Davids, Tine Bohm and Rob Macdonald.

Other projects

The Fair Committee: Class 6 elects co-ordinators for portfolios such as craft, food, to run the annual Fair, with the assistance of the PR and Marketing Officer.

Big Walk: Class 5 coordinates this community event.

Fundraising:

- Class fundraising markets may take place on Fridays for all items not food related, and must be booked in advance through the office. Should a class wish to sell any food items, they may do so on a Tuesday. All goods must conform to the food policy at Michael Oak (view in the office foyer).
- All classes take on projects (e.g. The Big Walk with Class 5, the Fair with Class 6).
- MySchool cards used by parents in listed shops bring in much-needed funds for the school. Please contact Genevieve Langenhoven if you would like a new card (glangenhoven@michaeloak.org.za).

Friday Market offers healthy treats for the children. Other suppliers and crafters from among the parent body may also join from time to time, by arrangement. The school stipulates that anything on offer must be appropriate to be sold at school and adhere to the food policy (view in the office foyer). Contact the office for more information.

Hall Hiring: The hall is let for private functions, when school functions permit. Contact Michael Archer for details (marcher@michaeloak.org.za).

Each year 5% of the general fundraising profit is donated to a sister school in need (Zenzeleni, Imhoff and Dassenberg have benefitted in the past).

Aftercare

- Primary and Kindergarten supervisors offer aftercare for children until 17h30 (there is a system of safe houses and a penalty of R100 if any child is not collected by then).
- No lunch is provided for children booked into Aftercare, but there is a tuck-shop where light lunches and snacks can be pre-ordered.
- Children are collected via the Marlow Road gate.
- Children whose school fee accounts are in arrear will not be able to attend Aftercare, and other arrangements must be made by the parents.
- Teachers in Classes 1, 2 and 3 will remain in the classroom up to 15 minutes after school if necessary to be with uncollected children. The children who have not been collected by then will be taken to the Aftercare. In the event of an emergency there will be no Aftercare charge.

Introducing Waldorf education

- **New and Prospective Parents Introductory Programme:**
Saturday morning talks are given during the year, as we feel it is vitally important that all new and prospective parents are given an overview of Waldorf teaching methods and the underlying educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner.
- **Parents' Open Day:**
Every year the teachers at Michael Oak invite prospective and current parents to experience Waldorf Education first-hand on a Saturday morning. We expect all parents to attend at least once, so that our teaching methods and expectations can be explained in a practical way. You will visit the classrooms, see an exhibition of children's work and take part in discussions with teachers.
- **Primary Introduction to the High School:**
This is a talk offered in the first term each year by the high school teachers for Michael Oak parents and other interested people to find out more about the advantages of our high school. The students also have the opportunity of experiencing the high school at the Student Open Day.
- **Parent Enrichment Programme:**
This is a series of lectures offered by the teachers for Michael Oak parents and other interested people to deepen their knowledge of Waldorf principles.

The Leaflet

The **Leaflet** is Michael Oak's weekly newsletter, published on Fridays. Staff members take it in turn to write the editorial, and this is how school notices, information and articles of interest are distributed, so it is most important that you read it, either the black and white printed copy distributed to younger children and those whose parents do not have access to the internet, or in electronic format (called the **e-Leaflet**). It also appears on our website each week (www.michaeloak.org.za). The e-Leaflet includes all the content of the printed version, plus extra community notices and photographs of school activities when available, as well as adverts. Hard copies may be collected from the foyer.

We invite you to use our 'Smalls' column for short advertisements in the e-Leaflet (donations are requested). The Editor reserves the right of publication, and to shorten adverts.

Facebook

We post a number of interesting articles and photos of school events within our Facebook Groups. Please do join up, even if you are not active on Facebook since it is a great resource of current information and up to date articles.

- **Michael Oak Waldorf School** – a group for current parents & students
- **Michael Oak Past Pupils, Parents & Teachers** – a group for anyone related to MO
- Page – **Michael Oak Waldorf School**

Google Calendar

An up-to-date calendar with all school events and known class meetings dates is on our website: www.michaeloak.org.za

The Parents Library

This is housed outside the office and any parent is welcome to choose books from it. There are books and pamphlets on Waldorf education, Anthroposophy, child development etc. and the loan period is three weeks. The key is held at reception. We would be grateful if parents using the library would give us a review of any books they may have found useful (send to leaflet@michaeloak.org.za).

Security

We always having a staff member on traffic duty during the day. There is also a dedicated Princeton Security van for our area and this company monitors our alarm system. There is also a Princeton Neighbourhood Watch system organised by the Kenilworth Residents Association, to which the school belongs.

Financial matters/fees

We stipulate that fees are paid by the 10th day each month, after which there is a late-payment charge. Non-payment will result in exclusion of the child. Accounts are sent to you by email. Payment is preferred by EFT but you can also pay by credit card in the accounts department. However, if you wish to make your payment in cash, please do this at any Standard Bank, as we are not able to accept cash payments at school, making certain that the reference line on the deposit slip shows **your child's surname, followed by first name or the number that appears on your fee statement**, so that the payment can be easily identified. Please do not send copies of your payment to the school. Our banking details are as follows:

Standard Bank Claremont Branch

Michael Oak School Association

Account no: **07 187 604 9**

Branch code: **02 51 09**

- Please note, we are unfortunately not able to keep places open for children whose families are considering extended visits overseas or for any other reason unless fees are kept up to date while they are away.
- All parents need to give 1 full term's written notice if they intend to remove their child from the school. Fees in lieu of such notice will otherwise be charged.

In the event of non-payment of fees, the **Exclusion Procedure** outlined below will be put in place:

- After 1 month of non-payment, the bursar speaks to the parents and should come away with a payment plan agreed upon between them for covering the backlog as well as the way forward (30 days default).
- If no agreement is reached, or if agreement is breached, the Business Manager, 1 Trustee and 1 College member will meet with the parents to find a way forward, and the agreement reached will be documented (60 days default).
- Should this agreement be breached, the Business Manager will send a letter by registered mail, notifying the parents that the learner will be excluded at the end of the current term, and any outstanding fees will be handed over for collection (90 days).

General food policy

This policy applies to all markets, fairs, food sales, class fundraising and aftercare. There are two categories: guidelines and fixed rules, which also apply as far as packed lunches for pupils, are concerned.

We at Michael Oak embrace and support the following principles, which will ensure an ever-growing awareness in the community concerning the quality of our food.

Guidelines:

- Biodynamic or organically grown ingredients are preferred.
- Home made
- Fresh and wholesome, avoiding the following:
 - Processed and highly refined foods
 - Margarine
 - Artificial additives and colouring
 - Genetically modified food.

Rules:

- No pre-packed snack foods such as chips, chocolate etc are allowed.
- No concentrated sweet confectionery/sweets.
- No fizzy, artificially flavoured cool-drinks

Any proposed deviation from the above policy requires special permission.

FRIDAY MARKET

- Stallholders to be members of the Waldorf community, and their goods should fit in with the ethos of the school.
- Food on offer must comply with the Food Policy (see below).
- Friday is the only 'treat' day.
- Stallholders (both class fundraisers and parents) are responsible for setting up, their own floats, goods, funds, packing away and clearing up afterwards etc. Cars to be removed from school grounds as soon as goods offloaded.
- Stallholders (both class fundraisers and parents) to pay a flat rate of R25 per table to the Financial Administrator. 5% of funds paid will be used for needy Waldorf schools, 5% towards Capital Bursary Fund and 90% to Capex Fundraising.

CLASS FUNDRAISING

- Class 10s traditionally sell food on Wednesdays to raise funds for their class.
- In 2008 College gave a dispensation to allow classes to raise funds on a Friday or Tuesday. They may sell second-hand goods, crafts and the food for sale is restricted to savoury home-made foods.
- Only one class at a time may raise funds this way, and must be cleared by the relevant faculty and then booked with the Admin Group (Genevieve holds the roster).

Policy on Extended Holidays for students

Michael Oak recognises that there may be special occasions where an educative break from school could be of special value to a child. Requests for such extended holidays (anything above three days) need to be requested and formally approved by the school - by law. It will always be disruptive to the learning experience at school and the discretion remains with the College of Teachers in weighing up the advantages.

Where there is conflict between the College of Teachers and the family, the child will need to formally leave the school and reapply for admission if the time is taken without the approval of the College of Teachers.

Michael Oak will normally grant such permission once in the primary school and once in the high school if it is considered to be in the child's good interests.

Safety

The following are potentially dangerous:

- Leaning or throwing things out of upstairs windows or over the balcony. No ball throwing on balconies.
- Riding bicycles anywhere within the school grounds.
- Riding skate boards on the path behind the hall.
- Knives, BB guns, cigarette lighters, matches, fireworks or any other dangerous instruments or weapons. We therefore understand that they are forbidden at school or any school- related activity or event.

Before school:

- Learners must stay inside the school grounds after arrival at school.
- A staff member will be present half an hour before school begins.

After School:

- Teachers in the Kindergarten and Classes 1, 2 and 3 will remain in the classroom up to 15 minutes after school if necessary to be with uncollected children.
- Children from Class 4 upwards may stay at school unattended for up to 30 minutes after class while waiting to be collected. Children will not be supervised during this time.
- That afternoon sports coaches are not responsible for children who have not been collected on time.

Please ensure that your children know for certain that if they have not been collected they must report to AFTERCARE, not the office or anywhere else.

- The child is to remain in Aftercare until collected.
- If the parents are going to be more than 15 minutes late they should contact Aftercare. Aftercare will try and contact the parents were parents default.
- In the event of an emergency there will be no Aftercare charge.
- Children being collected late must excuse themselves formally from the adult in charge.

Leaving the school grounds:

- Learners must wait for lifts inside the school gates after school.
- Children up to and including Class 3 may only leave the school grounds accompanied by an adult they know.
- Children from Class 4 onwards may leave the property after school if this is with the knowledge of the parents and/or teacher.

(The Nursery garden and the Class 1 & 2 & 3 garden are reserved for the use of those people and Aftercare only. The halls are out of bounds. The area around the Eurythmy/Movement Room is out of bounds except for lessons).

Primary school dress code

Michael Oak does not have a uniform, but it has become clear that some form of dress code in the school is necessary. For this reason, all primary school children need to 'conform' to the following guidelines.

1. Students are to come to school in clothes which are neat, in good repair, clean and comfortable for both the wearer and the beholder. *All clothing should be clearly marked.*
2. Clothing with "loud", offensive or distasteful slogans, images, characterisations or advertisements is not allowed.
3. Clothing should cover the back, midriff and belly button and should fit properly and be neither too tight nor too baggy.
4. As far as possible, for comfort and health, clothing should be of natural fibers.
5. Skirts and shorts must reach at least half way down the thigh. Tops must reach the hips, and any top worn over tight fitting leggings, jeggings or tights must reach half way down the thigh.
6. Spaghetti straps or low cut tops or dresses are not allowed. Sleeves and covered shoulders are required for all Eurythmy lessons.
7. Trousers or jeans should be worn so as not to reveal underwear.
8. Hair must be tidy and clean, with long hair tied back and off the face. Hair may not be dyed any unnatural colour, and shaved head patterns are not permitted.
9. Shoes must be worn to and from school, on outings, to assembly and all festivals.
10. Shoes must be practical and no slip slops or thongs are allowed.
11. Closed shoes must always be worn when working in the woodwork room.
12. Hats are to be worn during the 1st and 4th terms. *Do note* that caps and hats must be removed during indoor lessons and assemblies.
13. Excessive and ornate jewellery may not be worn. Discreet studs or sleepers may be worn in ears.
14. Make-up and nail polish is not permitted.

The Teachers cannot enforce this dress code without full parent co-operation. If there continues to be dress code transgressions, consequences will be instituted.

Sports Uniform

This consists of:

- Official Michael Oak blue or white T-shirt.
- Navy or white shorts **OR** blue, black or grey tracksuit pants **OR** leggings.
- Takkies or suitable sports shoes. No boots or bare feet.
- When it is cold a long sleeve t-shirt may be worn under the Michael Oak sports T-shirt (preferably white, black, blue or dark green).

BULLYING POLICY – AUGUST 2014

PREAMBLE

1. It is our Constitutional responsibility to uphold the rights of our children and to respect them.
2. Michael Oak's ideal is to nurture each learner to become a healthy and socially responsible member of his/her community. To facilitate this progress, we have the following expectations:
 - that we are respectful of the dignity and self-worth of others;
 - that we behave courteously, honestly and with integrity; and
 - that we behave responsibly towards each other and the learning process.
3. We aim to develop awareness in our community of what the consequences of our words and actions are, both positive and negative.
4. We believe that behaviour is imitated and learned both at home and in society at large. Our teachers strive to be role models of appropriate behaviour for the learners.
5. Skills that support the learners in their learning process and that enhance their feelings of self-worth and confidence should be practiced in each class community and lesson.
6. We acknowledge that conflict can have potential as a valuable learning tool.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is any deliberate abuse of power, whether physical, verbal, psychological or threatening in tone or gesture, intended to threaten, frighten, injure, hurt or be disrespectful to another person.

GUIDING FRAMEWORK AND AIMS

1. We acknowledge that bullying does happen in our school but it will not be tolerated.
2. We aim to make our learners feel safe enough to share their concerns, fears and experiences.
3. We are committed to dealing with every reported incident of bullying as quickly as possible.
4. We aim to be constructive and consistent, in our approach to bullying.
5. We aim to be guided by individual situations and age appropriateness.
6. We believe that bullying can be resolved in a constructive way when all parties acknowledge their role in a conflict and its resolution.
7. We judge the behaviour, not the learner; avoiding blaming or shaming of any parties involved, while still acknowledging that they must be held accountable for their actions. We aim to offer appropriate support to all parties involved.
8. Parents are expected to follow the procedure of the school and not to take matters into their own hands.

PROCEDURE

Each section of the school has committed itself to responding to bullying in an age-appropriate way.

NURSERY SCHOOL

Nursery children are not bullies. Their behaviour is part of a process of social and physical learning. Each situation is different and is a way of establishing identity. The children do not have a mature enough sense of self to try to dominate with malicious intent.

We therefore approach hurtful incidents through the following:

1. If someone says 'stop', you must.
2. We point out that certain remarks and language can be hurtful.
3. We strive to pre-empt a hurtful situation.
4. Where hurt has occurred, we point out what has happened, in order to make children more conscious of how their behaviour impacts on others.
5. Children who are hurting each other are separated.
6. We use stories and drawings to manage the healing of specific incidents.

LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL

In this area of the school we use the following:

1. We share remedial stories
2. We talk to the parties involved as soon as possible. In our discussions we do not allow any child to interrupt another.
3. We will call in the parents when necessary

UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL

1. Any observed or experienced incident is reported preferably to the Class Teacher or Guardian, failing that to a teacher.
2. Both parties are spoken to as soon as possible.
4. Possible solutions are shared (either together or separately). An agreement is reached and accepted by both parties together.
5. Parents will receive a brief report of the process from the responsible teacher.
6. If the above process proves to be unsuccessful, the School's Formal Disciplinary Procedure will follow. This could include the requirement of professional counselling.

Summary of High School Rules

Safety:

- Learners need to stay inside school grounds from the time of arrival to time of departure and not leave the property without the class guardian's permission.
- The station gate must be kept locked at all times.
- During the school day or while waiting for lifts, ice-creams may not be bought from the street vendor.
- Unless using the area for lesson purposes as indicated by the teacher, learners are to stay away from areas which are out-of-bounds i.e. the Nursery garden, the Class 1, 2 and 3 garden, the teachers' stoep area, the hall, the area around the Eurythmy/Movement Room (beyond the big jungle gym), the upstairs Primary School block and the area at the Marlow Road side of the class 10 classroom.
- There is to be no skateboarding on path behind the New Hall or the Basket ball court – only on the surrounding brick surfaces. No skateboarding between lessons except during breaks (10am to 10.15 am and 12.30 to 1.00 pm). No ramping onto the steps or walls.
- Bicycles may not be ridden within the school grounds.
- Cigarette lighters, knives, matches, fireworks or any other dangerous objects may not be brought to school.
- Michael Oak is a gun-free zone and therefore firearms and toy guns are strictly forbidden.
- To keep valuables on our person at all times or locked in our lockers. The school accepts no responsibility for damage to or theft of valuables or money brought to school.
- Lockers are provided in the classrooms and can be secured with a padlock.

Behaviour:

- Learners must be punctual.
- That electronic devices e.g. Cell phones, ipods, mp3 players, radios, tape recorders, noisy calculators and watches, electronic games, etc. are not to be used during school hours.
- To keep our desks, lockers, classrooms and the school grounds litter- and graffiti-free.
- That during lessons there is to be no eating or chewing of gum.
- That smoking is forbidden at school and in the school vicinity. The boundaries are: Blackheath, Sheerness, Marlow and Gibson Roads and includes the railway platform at Kenilworth Station.
- That possession, use and sale and purchase of illegal drugs and alcohol is strictly forbidden on the school grounds, in the surrounding areas of the school or on school outings.
- That food and drink restricted by the Primary School rules may not be consumed in a Primary School area.
- That hats or caps must be worn at break-time when present in a Primary School area.
- Not to write or draw on chalkboards without permission,
- Trees along the railway line may not be climbed.
- Not to play the pianos in classrooms or the hall, unless with a teacher's permission.
- To ask permission to enter the office or staffroom and to knock and wait for permission from the teacher before entering any classroom when lessons are in session.
- Former Michael Oak learners and other friends of learners may be invited into a lesson only after the High School Meeting has agreed. Friends of learners may not be on the school property at any time without the permission of the class guardian.
- To avoid using the main house as a passageway.
- Water fights are not allowed and learners may not spray water.

Dress code:

The following are inappropriate and may not be worn at school:

- Damaged, frayed or unclean clothes.
- Clothes with distasteful or offensive slogans or accoutrements.
- Trousers that reveal underwear.
- Any tops that do not properly cover the bust or midriff.
- High heels and platform shoes are not permitted.
- Excessive jewellery. This includes hanging earrings and any nose rings. The only permitted body-piercing jewellery allowed is one discreet nose stud and one discreet earring in each ear. Jewellery depicting the dagga leaf is not permitted.
- Make-up of any description or un-naturally coloured nail polish.
- Visible tattoos
- Hair cut into patterns or dyed in bright un-natural colours. Hair must be groomed. Long hair should be tied back or clipped out of the learner's face. No beards or moustaches.

Absences:

- Parents are required to notify either the office or Class Guardian before 8.30 a.m. on EACH CONSECUTIVE DAY that their child is away from school.
- A note to the guardian must accompany the learner on her/his return.
- Any absence from lessons because of illness developing during the school day must first be approved by the class guardian. PLEASE NOTE: not the lesson teacher. A form must be fetched from the office, filled in and signed by the guardian and taken back to the office.
- Special requests for absence from lessons during the day must be arranged in advance by the parent/guardian with the class guardian. A note for the relevant teacher must accompany the learner on the day.
- PLEASE NOTE: Attendance at Shakespeare play practices (including Sundays in the 3rd term) and attendance at festivals is compulsory unless special arrangements are made with the class guardian well before the time.

Letters of warning and suspensions:

- Any learner seen to either detract from the code of conduct or to be disrespectful of the school rules and regulations, will be liable to receive a letter of warning.
- Letters of warning are to be signed by the parents/guardians and returned to the class guardian the next day.
- A learner may be suspended if three High School teachers agree that the behaviour warrants this.
- Expulsions can only implemented by the College of Teachers.

Sabbatical Funding

Background

The original concept of a sabbatical is that someone leaves their normal position in an organisation to work for a limited period in another organisation with similar objectives or that they devote themselves to a specialised field of study in a sister organization. It was seen as an exchange and an enrichment exercise for the employee and for both organisations involved. This concept has been highly modified and at many schools it is now considered simply to be long leave.

Waldorf schools have no particular principles or guiding ideals behind paid long leave. There are three basic approaches to paid long leave;

1. no paid long leave
2. a term paid leave
3. two terms paid leave

The arrangements are dependent on the school's circumstances and priorities. In the past State teachers were automatically provided with extra leave for every year's service. This amounted to one term's long leave every seven years. Michael Oak tried to remain on par with state teachers on such matters. In the meantime the state no longer makes such a provision. Unpaid long leave may also come into the picture but that is a separate issue

Arranging leave for one or two terms presents unique logistical challenges in a Waldorf school. Not all Waldorf schools offer it. Michael Oak has found that in practice one term provides the least disruption but, more important, our experience indicates that one term's leave provides sufficient rest or break.

Funding Long Leave

Michael Oak currently makes provision for three months long leave for every staff member who carries the full responsibility for a class ie. class teacher or class guardian. We believe that their responsibilities are significantly more demanding than the normal tasks and duties of full time teachers.

College does not condone parents contributing regularly to any special group savings for the class teacher or guardian's sabbatical. Parents are free to make "once-off" gifts at any point. Free gifts need to be just that – free of obligation and expectation. College actively discourages accumulated, group funding by parents for teachers. What the school provides is considered to be quite adequate. Experience has shown that managing extended, accumulated group savings for sabbatical leave is a complex matter with potentially very troubled dynamics. It can also be seen as unfair on those teachers who do not receive a sabbatical at all.

On another level altogether there are new tax implications and fund registration requirements that now make it more difficult to manage legally.

The Buddy System

The buddy system is a volunteer system, whereby a current family in the school takes a new family coming into the school into their care for a short period of time (a term). By care we mean introducing them and guiding them into the Michael Oak Community.

Arriving at a new school can be very daunting and there is a lot to learn and take in, but if you have a connection with someone who knows the ropes it can make it a lot easier.

Here are a few guide lines of what you can do to help your family:

1. Make contact before the first day of school.
 - Phone, introduce yourself and explain that you will be there to meet them on the first day.
 - Find out if they understand where they are to go and at what time.
 - Have they received the school handbook that explains the dress code and food policy? (If not please briefly explain and get a copy from Lesley in the office to give to them)
 - Explain our one way parking system.
2. Over the next few weeks check in on your family. Find a way to do this either by phone, email or when you see them at pickup or drop off time.
3. The way Michael Oak is run is quite unique. It would be very useful if you could explain how the school structures (in terms of college, trustees and the links) work. There is a good description in the front of the school directory and in the Links Handbook. We also have a school administrator, Richard Cox, who is available by appointment between 10h15 and 12h30 most days.
4. If you can manage, a walk around the school would be wonderful. Show them the layout including the office, toilets, the tuck shop and the big and small halls. Introduce them to Lesley, Faiza, Jane, Claudia and Genevieve.
5. Fundraising and community building is a very important part of the school so you could let them know how the Big Walk and our wonderful Fair works.
6. Our festivals and pancake evenings are also another unusual and a lovely insight into our school, so let them know when these events take place and a little background to each.
7. Introduce the new families to as many of the parents in your class, including the links.
8. The Parent Introduction Evening in the first term gives a very good outline of the school. All the teachers are introduced and the therapy's that our school offers are also explained.
9. Give them a Welcome Pack, which can be collected from Genevieve. It will include a class list with the names and telephone numbers, a copy of the useful directory information, the Communications Protocol & Grievance Procedure and MySchool application forms.

The purpose of this system is to really help support new parents and introduce them to the school, so they can feel part of our wonderful community and follow the correct procedures should they have any problems, misunderstandings or suggestions.



Catering events for 2017

EVENT	ROSTER	2016
Pancake evening	All parents	Tuesday 28 February
Open Day: Catering and serving	Classes 3 & 4 parents	Saturday 25 February
High School Information Evening: Catering	Class 1 & 2 parents	Monday 27 February
Big Walk: Co-ordinating and Catering	Class 5 parents	Saturday 20 May
High school hack	High School parents	Date not set
AGM: Catering and Serving	Class 7 parents	Wednesday 2 August
Introductory talks: For new and prospective parents	Two parents needed for each session to answer practical questions. Class 10 pupils doing President's Award hours	As needed
Valentine's dance: Organizing Catering	Class 10 Class 10	
Shakespeare Play: Catering and serving supper Catering and serving tea	Class 10 parents Class 9 parents	September
Michael Oak Fair: Co-ordinating Catering and serving	Class 6 parents All other classes	Saturday 28 October