

The Role of a Home Room Parent (2022/23)

The Home Room Parent is a volunteer parent who agrees to support the teacher and GISPA throughout the year. They provide the link between parents, teachers, GISPA and administration, with the overall goal of improving communication and support for students and families. They are an integral part of our community and the glue that keeps the class community together.

They have two important roles:

- As a facilitator of parental involvement and general support for the teacher in the class
- As a channel for communication between the school (including GISPA) and the parents of the children in the class.

Your responsibilities as homeroom parent(s) are as follows:

1. Assisting the Teacher

Assist the teacher to enlist help needed for field trips, class projects or celebrations. As a homeroom parent, you do not always need to be present yourself. You can arrange for other parents, with children in the same class, to help out or support in your absence. Your child's teacher will call upon you when help is needed. You then organize the other parents as and when needed.

2. Parents' Class List

Many parents value a class list with contact details and emails so that they can easily contact each other for play-dates, carpooling etc. It is important for parents to understand that the information they provide for the class list is going to be shared among the class and therefore is different from the emergency phone numbers that are collected by the teacher. This is optional for parents to be a part of.

3. Classroom Parties, Teacher's gifts etc.

Please discuss with all the parents in your class whether they wish to recognize any celebrations or events as a class.

If you do choose to give the teacher (and/or the assistant) a gift from the entire class for any special occasion, please ensure all parents understand it is optional to take part and set a year's limit to the amount of money spent for all gifts. The school is not involved in parent gifts to teachers/TA's and LSA's, however there is a GEMS policy that staff must abide by. Any gifts above the value of \$100 USD (from an individual) or \$300 USD (from a group), must be reported and approved by a line manager. As a guideline, most home room parents in the past have collected a once off donation of 100AED per child at the start of the first term and this was sufficient for the whole year for parties, decorations and any small gifts. This is not mandated by the school. Any gifts accepted by teachers/staff must follow GEMS policies.

Classroom parties traditionally take place toward the end of the first semester (in December) and at the end of the last term in June. The school agrees on a time, usually the last hour of the school day, to ensure learning is not disrupted and security is aware of parents parking and on site. Parents sometimes bring in food to share with the class. Updates to health and safety in regards to covid will be communicated. Sometimes the teacher and home room parents organise a game, craft or other activity but this is not mandatory.

4. Welcoming new families to GIS

We live in a very transient expatriate community which means that at the beginning of the school year (and throughout) there will be a number of new families and children arriving to your class.

Ask your teacher to keep you updated on students leaving or new students arriving in the class so you can welcome the new students and parents.

5. Organization of Coffee Mornings

These past few years have brought forth opportunities to really think creatively on how to connect socially within our community. Virtual opportunities for socialization as well as off campus or small gatherings when permitted on campus (following government regulations) have been successful in the recent past. Room Parents are asked to collaborate with GISPA to create opportunities for community collaboration throughout the year.

A coffee morning is a great opportunity for the parents of your class to get together and get to know each other. The Head of Primary will organize occasional coffee mornings for just the room parents.

6. Information

Information about special events will be sent directly to the community via the newsletter or email. Class specific information or reminders may be sent to the Home Room Parents from the Parent Relation Executive (PRE) to be disseminated to your parent community.

Positive class culture: Firstly on how the teacher views the roles. At the beginning of the year, discuss with your teacher how you will be able to best help and work together. The most successful partnerships happen when the teacher and Room Parent work together to maintain a positive class culture working toward the common goal of student wellbeing and learning. How to honour celebrations and special events should be considered this year together with the homeroom teacher. Ideally, you will be able to assist and coordinate assistance from other parents as needed.

Communication: Keeping the communication open with your HR teacher will make it easy to share ideas and gain or show support. Email is a quick and easy way to communicate with your teacher as they check email frequently throughout the day for staff notices. Ensure you have your teacher's email at the beginning of the year and be sure to pass on yours to them as well. Please understand they may not be able to reply during the day when they are with the students.

Communication with families in your class can take a variety of channels. Some classes find WhatsApp great for communication, others also use email or SMS. A WhatsApp group will be set up for each class, this is optional for parents to join, however all parents and new parents should be invited.

Any official information from the school will be sent via the newsletter/class pages, email or official SMS. GISPA will request support in sharing information for parents and encouraging involvement.

7. What your role does not involve:

Organizing or using collected funds for private events for children or families such as birthday parties, baby showers or individual celebrations

Spending your own funds or supplementing collected funds for class activities or celebrations

Dealing with individual issues that individual parents or children have with teachers, parents or other children. A message should be sent to such parents, requesting they follow up directly with the teacher or persons involved.

Organizing off site parties or celebrations for the class

Fundraising activities at the request of parents. The school generally hosts a fundraising action each year and in this case you and the other parents may be asked to support it but you are under no obligation to do anything in addition to this

A note on WhatsApp:

Class WhatsApp groups should be named in the following format: Grade number, Class Letter, Parent Group (ex: 3A Parent Group). All parents and new parents are invited to this group, although it is not mandatory to join. The GIS Parent Relation Executive (PRE) is also part of the group. If the Homeroom Parent requires support with communication to the group they can reach out to the PRE. WhatsApp groups can be useful to support one another and share resources or reminders including where to find information about the school program and events. Links to official source is preferred over screenshots as information may be missed.

As an IB world school we want to model the IB learner profile in all aspects of communication. A simple and easy rule for posting is to THINK before you post. Class WhatsApp groups are still public forums and it is essential that agreements are in place: We suggest that the following acronym be posted as a first post to your homeroom group:

You are a volunteer and we appreciate the great effort you are making to help make our school a better place. People may have different experiences and expectations of the HPR role but we know there are limits to the time and resources you can devote to being a home room parent so please feel free to ask for help and support if you need it.



Parent WhatsApp Groups - Essential Agreements

1. Be mindful of your audience/group and respect their sensibilities.
2. Refrain from "chatting" with one or two people in a group (private conversations should take place away from the WhatsApp group).
3. Stick to school related topics. No soliciting of business.
4. Evaluate the usefulness of your messages to others – *"does everyone really need to know this?"*
5. Be a role model in your use of social media - keep it respectful at all times!
6. Keep your posts short and to the point.
7. Use the official school channels to seek support with individual issues