



A GUIDE TO BE AN INVOLVED PARENT AT MICHAEL OAK WALDORF SCHOOL

A lot happens at our school!

Parent engagement in the social and organisational life of the school has always been important in Waldorf schools, and this is certainly the case at Michael Oak. Throughout the structure of the school, parents, teachers and the administration are encouraged to work together. In this way, you can think of Michael Oak as a community school, relying on volunteers to strengthen our community, model active civic engagement for our children and also help to keep our costs down.

These volunteer efforts range from simple tasks such as baking a cake or providing a lift, to far more involved commitments, such as organising the School Fair or serving on the Board of Trustees.

In this document, we provide some more information about the various opportunities available to give to and benefit from our school community. We have tried to be as clear as possible about each of the roles so that you are able to plan where and when you are able to participate.

Required Duties vs Volunteer Roles

Required Duties: These are the various tasks that need to be taken care of over the course of the year, mostly in support of your class, or to assist in an activity for which your class is responsible. They are “required” in that parents in the class are asked to step forward to assist the class or school as a whole – but not every task is expected of every parent – there are opportunities to share the load so that everyone benefits.

Volunteer (Optional) Roles: These roles require a more consistent time commitment and come with an expectation of a certain level of effort and output in order to achieve a specific goal. To lighten the load, we recommend that some roles be taken on in a shared capacity, or rotate during the course of the year.

Ad hoc: In addition to the above, there are also various ad hoc tasks that come up during the course of the year, such as a request for a cake or to organise a gift of flowers for an unscheduled event. These kinds of tasks are usually last minute requests that are quickly organised via the class Social WhatsApp group.

Two important notes on participation:

- As a school we encourage both fathers and mothers to actively participate in the life of the school. Historically, it has often been the mother who has taken on most roles at school, yet we find that the more fathers are involved, the better it is for everyone, including the children.
- We, of course, recognise that for some families, volunteering can be a challenge because of other family or work requirements. If for some reason your family is unable to take on any of these duties, please speak to your class teacher or Guardian (HS) so that we can see if there are other ways for you to be involved and support the class.





Required Duties

These are **examples of the type of tasks** that we ask parents to help with:

- For Events (general): setup, food, decor, cleanup and childminding or chaperoning. The school has a catering roster and various classes are responsible for the food served at particular events.
- For Plays: costumes, makeup, props and stage setup
- For Outings: lifts and chaperones
- For Sports Matches: lifts
- For the Annual Fair or KG Market Day: providing a food item or piece of equipment, work a shift, setup and cleanup
- For Pancake Evening: each family is to bring a certain number of pancakes and toppings to share.

While it is hard to quantify exactly how much **time or effort** is required, we estimate the following:

- Each family to bring/contribute an item of food for school occasions - once or twice per term
- Each family to provide one lift and/or chaperone a school outing or sports event per year
- Each family will be required to assist with setup or cleanup of one event per year
- In Primary School and Kindergarten, each family will be required to be a childminder or safety marshal once per year
- Each parent/guardian to work a one-hour shift at the Annual Fair or the KG Market Day
- In Primary School, each family to attend at least 2 Craft Days. While we encourage all parents to give crafting a try, regardless of experience or perceived skill (it is easier than it seems!) there are other required duties besides making crafts that you can sign up for, such as bringing and serving food, childminding and cleanup. Besides – it is an excellent playdate for your child(ren)!

Volunteer Roles - Class Links and Parent Forum Representative

Class Links and Parent Forum Representatives are required from each class to help support the smooth running of the class. The Kindergarten, Primary School and High School classes have different requirements and your class teacher or class guardian will explain what is needed – typically at the first parent meeting of the year.

	<u>Communications Link</u>	<u>Craft Link</u>	<u>Food Link</u>
Tasks	This person is the email and (WhatsApp) messaging centre for the class and administers the class WhatsApp groups. Anyone who has information to be circulated to the parent body - including the class teacher, class guardian, other parents, and the school administration - sends it to this link, who then sends it on to all the parents and guardians in the class. This link may also be tasked with gathering information from the parents and guardians to assist me or the school administration.	Leads the craft making for the class in preparation for the annual Fair. This includes helping the class decide on which craft projects will be made, communicating with Fair Craft Coordinator to get craft projects approved, source materials and manage other logistics, organising Craft Days and keeping control of stock and expenses.	Coordinates food for class and school events, such as Pancake Evening and the Annual Fair, as well as other events where the class is required to provide food/refreshments, for example, Parent Evenings or the Class Play. Catering for school and class events also needs to be in line with guidelines outlined in the Michael Oak Food Policy (see Parent Handbook), as well as take any personal or cultural dietary needs into consideration.





	Communications Link	Craft Link	Food Link
Skills needed	This is a good job for someone who is organised and methodical, who checks their in-box and messages often and can manage a master mailing list.	Good at organising, communicating and delegating. An interest in crafting is preferred, but not a requirement.	Good at organising, communicating and delegating. An interest in making food is preferred, but not a requirement.
Time Period	January to December	January to October	January to December
Time commitment	1-2 hours per week	Craft Day: 2 to 4 hours Prep: 2 to 4 hours per month	1-2 hours per week

Some classes also choose to have a [social link](#) who facilitates social events within the class community. This includes working with the class teacher in sorting out lifts for the outings, arranging fun activities with the families, drawing up a roster of when parents will bring fresh flowers for the classroom, etc.

If you are not able to do so this year, it would be wonderful if during the course of your family’s time at Michael Oak, you would take on one of these roles for a period of one year, as this both helps spread the responsibility but also gives you a good insight into the workings of the school and greater support and for your child’s education. The work involved is engaging, enriching and rewarding - and sometimes even fun!

[Parent Forum Representative](#)

There are two Parent Forums, one for the High School and one for the Kindergarten and Primary School. The purpose of the Forum is to create a constructive working relationship between the faculties and parents, with a focus on both resolving concerns as well as collaborating on events, activities and fundraising. Each class elects a “Class Forum Representative” who will attend the termly meetings on behalf of the class and report back afterwards. This role allows for an ‘inside view’ of the workings of the school and is an opportunity to get to know the teachers and other parents who attend the meetings in representation of other classes. The Terms of Reference for the Parent Forum are available on the school’s website.

- Tasks
 - Class Forum Representatives send out a call for agenda items at the beginning of each term. Parents are requested to send any queries, concerns, requests, ideas or feedback (positive or negative) that pertain to the school as a whole. Items for consideration by the Forum should not be individual concerns but rather have the broader school collective in mind.
 - Attend termly meetings
 - Review and send meeting minutes to the class
- Skills Needed:
 - Good at communicating and being an active and constructive partner in the termly meetings.
- Time Period:
 - January to December
- Time Commitment:
 - Forum Meetings: 2 hours per term
 - Prep: 3 hours per meeting (per term)

Feel free to speak with your class teacher if you have any questions about these Roles.

[Fundraising Activities and Donation Requests](#)

As a non-profit organisation without any state support, Michael Oak School relies on fundraising to help finance the operational costs of running the school. We therefore organise various fundraising activities throughout the year. The profits from the major events helps support the school Bursary Fund, specific Physical (Capital) Projects as well as donations to a sister Waldorf school in need, and sometimes, external





non-profit organisations. In addition, there are also numerous requests for donations, both for school activities (such as used pots for making plantings or costumes for a play) as well as part of our various outreach initiatives in support of local community organisations. And lastly, there are also fundraising activities to support various class camps.

We recognise that not every family is able to offer direct financial support for these activities and want to make it clear that except for selling of raffle tickets for the Big Walk (Primary School) and the Polar Bear Challenge (High School), all participation is voluntary, but gratefully accepted.

Here are some of the activities in which you can expect a *request for help*.

Harvest Festival

- Families are requested to donate food, both non-perishables and fresh vegetables, which will be given to an organisation in and around Cape Town that helps feed our communities in need.

High School Outreach Projects

- Lunchtime sandwiches for a school in need.
- Help the Rural Child – clothing and book donations

Santa Shoebox

- A national initiative where a donor family provides a personal gift box to a child in need. Since 2006 Santa's Shoebox has delivered over 1 million shoeboxes, and Michael Oak families contribute approximately 100 shoeboxes each year. More information is shared beginning in September each year.

My School Card

- Each month Michael Oak receives on average R3000 via the MySchool Card programme. This is an easy way to contribute to our fundraising efforts as it costs you nothing. You simply swipe your card when making purchases at Woolworths, Engen QuickShops, and other local partners. If you need to apply for a MySchool card or add Michael Oak as a beneficiary, go to www.myschool.co.za.

School Fair

- In preparation for the annual Fair, the following items are often requested as donations: empty jars for the deli stand, used toys for the prizes, and books for the book sale.
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Volunteer (Optional) Roles - in the School Community

Caring for the Campus

In addition to the activities centred around the class, all parents and guardians are also welcome to support our Caring for the Campus initiative, especially the Garden Working Group, who organise occasional garden work parties.

- Please do consider joining one session per annum, to help keep our school grounds beautiful, fun and safe. Information about these activities will be advertised in the Leaflet.

The Board of Trustees and Trustee Committees

- The Board of Trustees have fiduciary, financial and legal responsibility, and take the lead on strategic planning. The Trustees is made up of 12 individuals, 8 parents and 4 teachers, elected on an annual basis at the school's Annual General Meeting (AGM). A call for nominations goes out a few months in advance of the meeting, with details on the roles and responsibilities of a Trustee.
 - Trustees meet approximately twice a term and their work is supported by several committees. Most Trustees serve on (or lead) at least one committee. In addition, there are a number of joint sessions together with the College and Administration for visioning, planning and budgeting.
 - For those of you interested in getting involved with the work of the Trustees, they are always open to parents who have the right skills, motivation and interest to join their various committees - and can assist with sharing the workload. In addition, joining a committee is the best avenue for eventually joining the Trustees.
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- The committees meet once a term, except for Fincom, which meets twice a term. Terms of Reference for each committee are available on request to the School Administrator (administrator@michaeloak.org.za).
- The Trustee committees are as follows:

Buildcom:

- Buildings and Grounds - skills needed include building and construction, planning, architecture, landscaping and facilities management

Fincom:

- Finance - skills needed include financial management and reporting, accounting, auditing

Remcom:

- Personnel and Remuneration - skills needed include human resources, remuneration strategies and statutory regulations

Riskcom:

- Risk and Quality Assurance - skills needed include law, insurance, risk management, quality assurance and policy development

Transcom:

- Transformation - skills needed include experience with diversity, equity and inclusion, employment equity, anti-racism, gender equality, group facilitation and conflict resolution/restorative justice.
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- In addition one parent representing the Primary School and one representing the High School will be asked to join the Nominations Committee to help select the next slate of candidates for the Board of Trustees. This is a relatively easy and short-term engagement (from September to November), which is also quite interesting as the discussions and process brings insight into the functioning of the Trustees at Michael Oak. A call for participation is sent out in September.
- Please contact Fiona Grant, School Administrator (administrator@michaeloak.org.za), if you have any questions or are interested in getting involved.

Communication channels

And finally, a word about our communication channels.

We are well aware that our parents and guardians, like most of us nowadays, are probably victims of information-overload. We therefore try to keep information from the school to a minimum, and ensure that it is as clear and concise as possible. But we are a busy school, and a lot does happen.

Please try to scan all communication so that you are able to keep abreast of what is happening at the school. Of course, we hope that you will read about last week's basketball tournament, or the achievements of our Matrics in the weekly Leaflet – but if you do not have time – then at least scan and pick out the practical items, such as the new term's sports programme, or the plans for Pancake Evening, or the announcement about the AGM.

Our communication channels are usually kept to the following:

WhatsApp groups

- WhatsApp groups are not a formal form of school communication but most classes have them. Often there is one for Announcements, administered by the Class Communication Link and one for social sharing amongst the parents and guardians. If your class uses an Announcements WhatsApp group, we suggest that you make sure that you are signed up for it. Social groups are voluntary but provide a useful platform where you can ask quick questions and get information regarding practical issues such as homework, lifts and other logistics for class activities.





Leaflet (School Newsletter)

- The Leaflet is the school's weekly newsletter, sent out by email at the end of every week during the school term. It contains practical information about the school calendar and upcoming events, notices from the school administration, College of Teachers and Board of Trustees, information from faculties and about various fundraising activities, and more.
- At the end of term there is a longer edition with interesting articles and photos about the academic, cultural, sports and social aspects of our school community. Please make sure to give it a read when it comes out as it will help you both keep up-to-date with what is happening at school and also give you insight into our pedagogical methods and cultural ethos.

Email / SMS from the school

- The school sends out occasional emails (always from the address: communications@michaeloak.org.za) with important time critical information, such as indemnity forms for class outings and sport competitions, sign-up forms for health screenings and other activities, as well as important notices from the school administration, College of Teachers and Board of Trustees. Please make sure to read these.
- The school also sends out occasional SMS messages (always starting with the text "MO"), about time critical information such as changes in the extramural schedule, safety issues, etc.
- It is important that your email address and cell phone numbers are therefore always kept up-to-date with the school office. Please send any changes to: reception@michaeloak.org.za

Social Media and our website

- Our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages are used mainly to highlight some of our recent activities, to advertise events that are open to the general public, and to provide information about our curriculum. Please like and follow these pages, both to assist in marketing the school, but also to stay up-to-date on what has been happening at the school (highlighted by fun photos).
- Our [website](#) has lots of information about the curriculum, the school calendar, links to various policies, and an online application form.

We hope the information in this document has been of use. We welcome any feedback and suggestions to administrator@michaeloak.org.za.

WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOL!

