



Christ Church Ware

Jesus led, Spirit empowered, Grace based.

## **Social media and engaging with young people.**

The purpose of this guide is to direct staff and volunteers in their practice with regards to communicating with young people through social media, email and mobile phone. Young people communicate in these ways and it is essential for our ministry that we engage with them effectively and safely. Social media is continually changing and this guide will be reviewed and updated annually, but the principles embodied in this document will continue to be applied. This guide is designed to provide a framework to protect children, young people, staff and volunteers.

### **Scope**

'Young people' are defined as those in school years 7 to 13 or equivalent. Where a young person reaches the age of 18 before leaving our youth work provision it is good practice to adhere to this policy. Children in year 6 and below should not normally be communicated with using social media or mobile phones.

### **Annual Consent Forms**

Parents and guardians will be given the option to consent to the following:

- Photos to be taken by a designated photographer at youth event and then used in official Christ Church publications, our Facebook Page, the church website and displays.
- Young people may have email contact with staff and volunteers in accordance with this guide.
- Young people may make and receive calls and texts to and from staff and volunteers in accordance with this guide.
- Young people may connect to their group's Facebook page.

### **For all forms of communication**

- Communication should not usually take place with young people before 7.30 am after 9.30pm or on staff members' days off. Note this doesn't mean staff and volunteers have to be available to young people at all other times.
- Young people should be advised that, whilst staff and volunteers will exercise appropriate discretion in dealing with the substance of communication, they cannot promise confidentiality.

## **Guidelines**

### **Emails**

1. Once permission is given, staff and some volunteers (small group leaders, mentors and group leaders) may hold email addresses for young people in their groups.
2. Emails should be short and usually be a one-off communication to arrange a meeting or remind young people to attend an event.
3. Emails should be kept on file, so that they can be traced if necessary in accordance with Christ Church Ware's guidance on record keeping in parishes.
4. Conversations should not be by email. Staff and volunteers should arrange to meet one-to-one with a young person if the young person would like to talk.
5. If an email raises any child protection concerns, the line manager and/or Safeguarding Officer should be informed as soon as possible.
6. When a volunteer leaves the youth work team, the young people's email addresses should be removed from their personal address book.
7. Staff should only email using their work account and not personal email accounts.

### **Phone calls, Texting, instant messaging, Whats App, etc.**

1. Once permission is given, staff and some volunteers (small group leaders, mentors and group leaders) may hold mobile phone numbers of the young people in their groups.
2. Text communication should be short and usually be a one off communication to arrange a meeting or remind young people to attend an event.
3. Staff and volunteers should use an appropriate tone; friendly but not over-familiar or personal. While communications should be warm and friendly, they should not suggest or offer a special relationship.
4. Staff and volunteers should only give personal contact details that are within the public domain of Christ Church, including their mobile phone number. All staff working with young people should only use their work phone. Volunteers should only text from private phones as an exception.
5. Conversations should not be had over texts. Staff and volunteers should arrange to meet one-to-one with a young person if the young person would like to talk.
6. Staff and volunteers may have phone calls with young people, but these should be short.
7. If a disclosure is made that raises a safeguarding concern, verbatim notes should be made as soon as possible. This information should be reported to the line manager and/or Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible and the records kept on file for a term in accordance with the Christ Church Ware guidance on record keeping in parishes.
8. When a member of staff or volunteer leaves the youth work team, young people's numbers should be removed from private phones and any other digital or written record, and work phones should be returned to Christ Church for secure storage.

## **Social Media**

### **Facebook**

Schools and secular youth work policies recommend that an adult should not be friends with an under 18 on Facebook. Christ Church accepts this recommendation. Private messaging is not permitted.

- 1) Volunteers and staff should not be friends on Facebook with an under 18 where their contact has been established through their role as a staff member or volunteer.
  - Once a young person has left our youth work provision at 18 it is then the volunteer or staff member's choice whether to be a Facebook friend with them.
- 2) Each group may have a Facebook group. They should follow the policy on the group page.
  - a) The group must be closed.
  - b) The group must be monitored by at least two staff/volunteers who have admin rights.
  - c) Young people, staff and volunteers can become a member of this group.
  - d) Communications can occur openly through comments and posts on the page.
  - e) Events can be posted on the page.
  - f) Once permission is given, photos of events and young people can be posted on the page.
  - g) Privacy settings on photographs should be set to ensure that only members of the group see them.

### **Twitter**

- 1) Young people can follow staff and volunteers on Twitter. Leaders should be aware as they tweet that they are a role model to young people.
- 2) Direct private messages should not be sent or responded to as these are a hidden form of communication.
- 3) Staff and volunteers must not follow young people on Twitter.

### **Snapchat, Instagram or similar apps**

- 1) Staff and volunteers should not connect with young people on Snapchat
- 2) Staff and volunteers should not befriend/follow/message/or post photos of young people on Instagram or similar apps.

### **YouTube or similar**

- 1) Staff and volunteers should not subscribe to any young person's YouTube channel.
- 2) The group may have its own YouTube channel which should be a closed group site.
- 3) The site can be used to post suitable material to encourage the young people in their journey of faith.