

Diocese of Sheffield

ONLINE SAFETY and SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Parish Policy Statement on Online Safety and Social Media

This statement was adopted by **St Peter's Church, Conisbrough** at a Parochial Church Council meeting held on **Monday 12th June 2023**. This policy will be reviewed each year. Next review: **May/June 2024**.

Parish of **St Peter's Conisbrough and Clifton**

NOTE

- the terms 'child' or 'children' apply to anyone under the age of 18
- the term 'parent' applies to anyone with guardianship or caring and parental responsibility for the child
- the term 'staff' applies to members of staff and volunteers who serve in the church

Our online safety statement

This policy provides guidance on how our church uses the internet and social media, and the procedures for doing so. It also outlines how we expect all our staff, and the children who are part of our church and church groups, to behave online. As a church, we commit to implementing this policy and addressing any concerns quickly and within these guidelines.

Aims

The aims of our online safety policy are:

1. to protect all children involved in our church and who make use of technology (such as mobiles phones, games consoles and the internet) while in our care
2. to provide all staff with policy and procedure information regarding online safety and inform them how to respond to incidents
3. to ensure our church is operating in line with our values and within the law regarding how we behave online

Understanding the online world

As part of using the internet and social media, we will:

1. assess and manage the safety aspects – including what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for staff and children when using websites, social media including Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Twitter or Snapchat, apps and video conferencing platforms including Zoom or Skype
2. be aware of how staff in our church and the children they work with use social media both inside and outside of our setting
3. ensure that we adhere to relevant legislation and good practice guidelines¹ when using social media or video conferencing platforms
4. provide training¹ for the staff responsible for managing our church's online presence
5. regularly review existing safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that online safeguarding issues are fully integrated, including: making sure concerns of abuse or disclosures that take place online are written into our reporting procedures and incorporating online bullying ('cyberbullying') in our anti-bullying policy

Managing our online presence

Our online presence through our website or social media platforms will adhere to the following guidelines:

1. all social media accounts will be password-protected, and at least 2 members of staff will have access to each account and password
2. the account will be monitored by at least two designated members of staff in order to provide transparency, who will have been appointed by the PCC

¹ The NSPCC provide an e-learning product called **Keeping Children Safe Online** for professionals - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/get-expert-training/child-protection-sport-online-course/>

3. the designated staff managing our online presence will seek advice from our designated safeguarding officer to advise on safeguarding requirements
4. designated staff will remove inappropriate posts by children or staff, explaining why, and informing anyone who may be affected (as well as the parents of any children involved)
5. we'll make sure children are aware of who manages our social media accounts and who to contact if they have any concerns about something that's happened online
6. our account, page and event settings will be set to 'private' so that only invited members can see their content
7. identifying details such as a child's home address, school name or telephone number shouldn't be posted on social media platforms
8. any posts or correspondence will be consistent with our aims and tone as a church
9. parents will be asked to give their approval for us to communicate with their children through social media, via video conferencing platforms or by any other means of communication
10. parents will need to give permission for photographs or videos of their child to be posted on social media
11. video conferencing sessions will be password protected in order to maintain children's privacy and prevent exposure to inappropriate or harmful content by third parties

What we expect of our staff

1. staff should be aware of this policy and behave in accordance with it
2. staff should seek the advice of the safeguarding officer if they have any concerns about the use of the internet or social media
3. staff should communicate any messages they wish to send out to children to the designated staff responsible for the organisation's online presence
4. staff should not communicate with children via personal accounts
5. staff should not 'friend' or 'follow' children from personal accounts on social media and maintain the same professional boundaries online as they would in person when using church accounts
6. staff should make sure any content posted on public personal accounts is accurate and appropriate, as children may 'follow' them on social media
7. rather than communicating with parents through personal social media accounts, staff should choose a more formal means of communication, such as face-to-face, in an email or in writing, or use a church account or website
8. staff should avoid communicating with children via email or church social media outside of normal office hours
9. emails or messages should maintain the church's tone and be written in a professional manner, e.g. in the same way you would communicate with fellow professionals, avoiding kisses (X's) or using slang or inappropriate language
10. staff should not delete any messages or communications sent to or from church accounts
11. staff should undertake all online safety training offered and gain a basic knowledge of the platforms children use and how to report or remove inappropriate content online
12. any concerns reported through social media should be dealt with in the same way as a face-to-face disclosure, according to our reporting procedures
13. at least one parent must be present during the delivery of any activities via video conferencing platforms at home
14. any delivery of activities to children via video conferencing platforms will be supported by an additional member of staff (even if they're not actively delivering) to ensure transparency
15. staff and children must not engage in 'sexting' or send pictures to anyone that are obscene

What we expect of children

1. children should be aware of this online safety policy and agree to its terms
2. we expect children's behaviour online to be consistent with the guidelines set out in our acceptable use statement
3. children should follow the guidelines set out in our acceptable use statement⁵ on all digital devices, including smart phones, tablets and consoles

What we expect of parents

1. parents should be aware of this online safety policy and agree to its terms
2. parents should protect all children's privacy online and think carefully about what content they share about our sport online, where they share it and who they're sharing it with
3. we expect parents' behaviour online to be consistent with the guidelines set out in our acceptable use statement and in our codes of conduct for parents and spectators

Using mobile phones or other digital technology to communicate

When using mobile phones (or other devices) to communicate by voice, video or text (including texting, email and instant messaging such as WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger), we'll take the following precautions to ensure children's safety:

1. staff will avoid having children's personal mobile numbers and will instead seek contact through a parent
2. we'll seek parental permission on each occasion we need to contact children directly; the purpose for each contact will be clearly identified and agreed upon
3. a method of accountability will be arranged, such as copies of texts, messages or emails also being sent to another member of staff or to parents
4. smartphone users should respect the private lives of others and not take or distribute pictures of other people if it could invade their privacy
5. staff should have a separate phone from their personal one for any contact with parents or children
6. texts, emails or messages will be used for communicating information – such as reminding children or young people about upcoming events – and not to engage in conversation
7. if a child misinterprets such communication and tries to engage a staff member in conversation, the member of staff will take the following steps:
 - a. end the conversation or stop replying
 - b. suggest discussing the subject further at the next practice or event
 - c. inform the safeguarding officer in the interest of transparency
 - d. if concerned about the child, provide contact details for the safeguarding officer or appropriate agencies and report any concerns using the church's reporting procedures

Using mobile phones during groups/activities

So that all children can enjoy and actively take part in our groups and activities, we discourage the use of mobile phones during such groups/activities. As part of this policy, we will:

1. make children aware of how and who to contact if there is an emergency or a change to previously agreed arrangements with the church
2. inform parents of appropriate times they can contact children who are away at camps or away trips and discourage them from attempting contact outside of these times
3. advise parents that it may not be possible to contact children during groups/activities and provide a contact within the church who will be reachable should there be an emergency
4. explain to children how using mobile phones during groups/activities has an impact on their safe awareness of their environment, and their level of participation and achievement

Important contacts

Our website or social media lead

Name: Revd Martijn Mugge Tel: 01709 259531 / 07595 613832 Email: vicar@stpetersconisbrough.org

Our designated Safeguarding Officer

Name: Carry Simon Tel: 07986 871541 Email: carrysimon@hotmail.co.uk