



13. Social Media and On-line Communications Policy

This policy should be read alongside All Saints' Church, Dedworth's and Photography and Filming Policy, as well as our Safeguarding Code of Conduct and other policies detailed in this Safeguarding Handbook concerning Child Protection, Safeguarding vulnerable adults

Social Media includes maintaining a profile page on a networking site such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat etc, writing or commenting on a blog, whether it is your own or the blog of another person and taking part in discussions on web forums or message boards. Most young people now use social media in some way and many adults, including older adults, do so also. All Saints' Church, Dedworth works with children and families as part of its mission. These include weekly Church services, Sunday school classes, parent and toddler sessions, church hosted events and trips away. Communication with the community about these events is vital. Social media provides an important platform of communication for the church to relate to the community, to share the Gospel and interact with people it might not otherwise connect with.

Our church currently has an Internet café open to the community and a strong presence on Facebook, therefore its leaders and congregation must understand the risks and need for cyber safety and the responsible use of electronic communication. Social media is interactive, conversational and open-ended and happens in a public space. Care must be taken when using it. The same principles that guide our offline conversations should apply to those that take place online. Interacting through social media does not change our understanding of confidentiality, responsibility and Christian witness.

The Purpose of this Policy

This policy aims to ensure that workers and volunteers at All Saints 'Church, Dedworth are protected when they are using the internet, social media or mobile devices and feel empowered to contribute to wider online activity when it supports their role within the church. Virtual relationships should not take place in isolation, but be an extension of real, face to face interaction. This policy is intended to ensure that, as an organisation, our church operates in line with our values and the law. It aims to protect users from the risks of

- Forming inappropriate relationships.
- Saying things that should not be said, such as offensive, sexual or suggestive comment.
- Blurring the boundaries between public work/ministry and private life.
- Grooming and impersonation.
- Bullying and harassment.

Scope

The policy statement applies to all workers, volunteers, children and young people and anyone else involved in the activities of All Saints' Church Dedworth. Children for this purpose are defined as those under 11 years of age. Young people are those between 11 and 16. Where a young person reaches the age of 18, but remains in youth work provision,



it is good practice to continue to adhere to this policy. Children under 11 years should not normally be communicated with by the church using social media or mobile phones.

Privacy and Permanence.

The lines between public and private can become blurred when using social media. Workers, volunteers and members of the congregation at All Saints' Dedworth who use social media are reminded that numerous laws around libel, slander, copyright, Freedom of Information and data protection surround their communications. They should consider everything written when using social media is permanent and public and can be viewed by anyone, at any time. They should be aware that all messages can be traced back to an individual, as well as to colleagues and the church. Deleted online comments, may already have been seen by other people and/or re-published on other, unconnected sites. They should avoid making personal comments or using the media for private conversations.

Use of Language

Language used on all forms of social media should be clear, concise and unambiguous to reduce the risk of misinterpretation, for example, avoiding inappropriate terms such as 'love' when ending an email. Church workers and volunteers must be aware of the informal style that can characterize email communication and ensure that their responses do not convey an inappropriate tone.

Forms of Social Media in use at All Saints' Dedworth.

Website: We have a lively web site <https://allsaintschurchededworth.com/> This is maintained by our web master, John Sturgeon, who is responsible for the content appearing on it. The web has a messaging facility.

Facebook: We have a Facebook Site, access to which is controlled by our Social Media Safety

Co-ordinator, Rev. Nigel Richards, who monitors access and vets posts before they are published.

Email: The Vicar's email account for church business is dedworthvicar@oulook.com Church workers and volunteers are advised to set up their own email accounts specifically for church business in order to separate their public and private life.

Telephone: We have a 24hr response line 0175384170

The church is not in a position to issue 'work' phones to its workers or volunteers, who are advised to use the landline phones in church for official and/or sensitive communications.

Advice and Good Practice Guidelines

Email

For church purposes,

- email communication should be limited to sharing generic information, for example, to remind young people about meetings.
- workers should ensure that they are accountable by copying each message to a designated email address.



- If anyone receives an inappropriate email from any source, they should report it to a member of the Safeguarding Team.

Instant Messaging (e.g. Snapchat, Whatsapp, Instagram and Facebook Messenger)

Currently the only social media platform our church is using is Facebook.

Church related communications should not be carried out on other platforms.

Church workers and volunteers must ensure that their social media accounts do not contain:

- Libelous, defamatory, bullying or harassing statements
- Breaches of copyright and data protection
- Material of an illegal nature
- Offensive sexual references
- Inappropriate language which may bring the church into disrepute or compromise its reputation.
- Church workers and volunteers should have an account that is used solely for children's / youth work communications and is totally separate from their own personal account. This is to ensure that all communication with children and young people is kept within public domains.
- Church workers and volunteers should not send private messages to children on social networks. They should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.
- Church workers and volunteers should not accept 'friend' or 'following' requests from children on their personal social media accounts, nor seek to be 'friends' or a 'follower' of any child known to them in a church context.
- Church workers and volunteers should not use unregulated chat rooms for children and should be aware that it is impossible to determine the age of any participant in these environments.
- Display only appropriate and necessary information about yourself.
- Ensure personal telephone numbers and email contacts are not visible on public display or on social media;
- Only use instant messaging to further the aims of your church role and not for personal reasons.
- Do not delete any messages/ threads through social networking sites, so that you can provide evidence of your exchange should the necessity arise.
- Download to hard copy any inappropriate material received by electronic means and show to a member of the Safeguarding Team.
- Carefully consider what apps display on your online activity.
- Be discerning about making public comments/rebuke and liking a post.
- Do not comment on photos or posts, unless appropriate to your church role.
- Never add a young person or adult at risk as a friend, unless they request this. It is at your discretion as to whether the request is accepted. Consider carefully the potential vulnerability of that person before accepting them as a friend, especially if the accompanied relationship is not strong or well established.



- Do not accept friend requests out of social network terms (i.e. under 13 years of age for Facebook).
- Maintain the upmost integrity – remember that your profile only supplements the real person and is not an alter-ego.
- On Facebook, only allow friends to post on your timeline.
- Review all posts and tags before making public to friends.
- It may be appropriate to restrict the viewing of your tagged photos.
- Do not Facebook stalk (i.e. dig through people’s Facebook pages to find out about them).
- Use passwords and log off promptly after use to ensure that nobody else can use social media pretending to be you.

Mobile Phones

When using a mobile phone to communicate with young people:

- communication should primarily be for the purposes of information sharing.
- a log of significant conversations/texts should be kept.
- Texts or conversations that raise concerns should be saved and passed on to the On-line Safety Co-ordinator, the Parish Safeguarding Officer or any member of the Safeguarding Team.
- Language used should be clear and should not use abbreviations like ‘lol’ which could mean ‘laugh out loud’ or ‘lots of love’.

No one should take photos of children, young people or adults at risk unless permission is sought in advance and no one should store such photos on their personal phones.

Use of internet Café at All Saints’ Dedworth

The computers will have suitable parental controls and blocks installed. Although not failsafe, this will make using the computers for inappropriate behaviour more difficult, whilst also protecting any vulnerable users. The charter below will be displayed and it will be understood that users agree to abide by the conditions outlined.

Parents and guardians will be asked to consent to

- Young people connecting to the Church’s Facebook page
- Young people to have email contact with workers and volunteers
- Young people to make and receive calls and texts to and from workers and volunteers

This policy was last reviewed on 02/08/19 by M and K Kilner
15/10/19 by J Wiggins



Internet Café Conditions of Use

Users of the computers are expected to abide by the following:

- I will be responsible for my behaviour when using the internet. This includes the resources I access and the language I use.
- I will not deliberately browse, download or upload material that could be considered offensive or illegal. If I accidentally come across any such material, I will report it immediately to the group leader/Church safeguarding leader/Church Vicar.
- I will not send anyone material that could be considered threatening, bullying, offensive or illegal.
- I will not give out any personal information online, such as my name, phone number or address.
- I will not reveal my passwords to anyone.
- I will not arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone I meet online unless I have discussed this with my parents and am accompanied by them.