

Guidelines for Use of Electronic Communication

We acknowledge that the use of electronic media for communication is part of everyday life, however, we need to be mindful of the position of trust and power we have been entrusted with as leaders.

General principles:

- As far as it is practical, interact electronically with children and young people as a team, not as individuals, e.g. group emails or SMS's.
- Seek parental permission before communicating with a child/young person electronically.
- Leaders must not transmit, retrieve, or store any communication that is: discriminatory or harassing, derogatory, obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic, defamatory, threatening, for any purpose that is illegal or contrary to our code of conduct.
- Do not send any electronic communication that attempts to hide your identity or represent the sender as someone else.

Telephones

- Inform parents/guardians of the phone call, whenever possible.
- When contacting a child/young person by phone, call on their home phone if possible.
- Mobile phone use kept to a minimum, not use for long calls.
- If a child/young person initiates a mobile phone call which will require a long conversation arrange to have the conversation at the program that coming week.

Email

- All emails to children/young people should have the organisations email address cc'd into them.
- Consider setting up a purpose-built email address for communication to your participants.
- Use purpose-only emails e.g. "Meet at this place, at this time" or general conversations e.g. "How was the excursion today?" Deeper conversations regarding more personal issues should be held face-to-face.
- As far as possible, save all emails to and from children/young people in a folder.

SMS

- SMS communication should generally be restricted to purpose-only communication.
- If a longer SMS conversation begins, suggest a conversation at the program.

- Avoid language that conveys emotional content, such as “I love the way”, “You are loved...”

Social Networks (e.g. Facebook etc)

- Internal mail should be restricted to purpose-only messages (as above).
- Writing on ‘walls’ /public places should be kept to a minimum and should only be general in nature e.g.” Hey, hope you’re having a good week, cya Sunday” or other light conversations.
- Do not give out any details of children/young people on ‘walls’ e.g. name of school, email address, home address, phone numbers, etc.
- Leaders should not enter into a closed one-on-one conversation with a child/young person. If a child/young person invites you into a conversation, you should bring in a third party.
- Leaders should use discernment and wisdom when having a multi-person conversation. Your conversations should be above reproach.

Skype and video phone

- Leaders should not enter into conversations of this nature with children/young people.

Photography (including on phones)

- Photos should be taken by an appointed Leader, with parental consent.
- Do not photograph any child/young person who has asked not to be photographed
- Photography should focus on the activity and not on a particular child/young person.
- Do not identify in writing the person/s in the photograph.
- All children/young people must be appropriately dressed when photographed.
- Never post photos of children/young people on the internet without parental permission.
- If you do find a photo of a youth/children’s activity posted on the internet by a young person, gently ask them if they have parental permission from everyone in the photo to post it. If they don’t, then advise them to either seek permission or remove it from the internet.
- Do not allow children/young people to take a photo of Leaders with their mobile phones
- Avoid using mobile phones for photography.

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