

St Mary Bredin Church, Canterbury: E-Safety Guidelines



St Mary Bredin takes very seriously the role of safeguarding our children, young people, and adult church members. In light of the Diocese E-safety guidelines* issued in May 2012, SMB acknowledges the need to put guidelines in place to safeguard both our children and young people and volunteers specifically in relation to communicating and building relationships with them that involve technology/online interaction. As a church we want to embrace technology and understand that it is a normal part of a young person's world of communication. These guidelines are in place to try and enable us to be realistic and practical in needing to communicate, whilst ensuring safety on both sides. Below are our guidelines based on the Diocesan guidelines that are simplified, more explicit and specific to SMB.

General points when communicating especially with a young person via technology:

- Do not delete anything that is sent – both from you, or to you
- It is advised that there is a curfew on communicating after 11pm
- To encourage accountability and reduce the potential for any concerns to be raised in respect to secretive activity, be aware that church leadership could ask to check messages at any time

Texting:

- Although texting is very useful for being able to contact someone urgently, texting is also much harder to trace and therefore should be avoided as a primary means of contact
- Any texts that are sent out should have another adult leader copied in to them, including in any subsequent replies in that conversation
- Due to the lack of traceability, texting should be used for the purpose of communicating about a specific activity, and not for general conversation which can be done by other means – however, when used, making a back-up copy for future reference is advised (eg. emailing a copy/screenshot of the text to yourself, setting up the phone to automatically back-up copies of texts on the computer)

Emails:

- Emails are easier to trace and therefore a useful way for us to communicate, particularly if contacting a whole group at a time
- Any emails that are sent out should have another adult leader copied in to them, including in any subsequent replies in that conversation

Social Media including Facebook:

- The rules of Facebook mean that organisations (e.g. SMB) should operate as a 'page' to communicate broadly with a large audience, whilst a common-interest group (eg CYFA, Students) should operate as a 'group' to communicate in a space that doesn't have to be public (for anyone on Facebook to see)
- We must be aware that Facebook says that a person must be over 13 years old to have an account – we therefore cannot encourage any young people under 13 years old to have an account. This means we shall not operate a 'group' for Ignite so as not to isolate those too young to join in online. CYFA has a 'group', and this works better as a place for interaction, discussion and comments than a public 'page'
- For young people to be in a group, they either have to be 'friends' with the Admin of the group, or with someone else in the group who can invite them to join – the Admin still needs to give them permission to join. A leader may become friends with a young person on Facebook, but should set their personal privacy settings appropriately. There should be no private messages sent out to young people from both individual leaders they are 'friends' with, or a leader as a 'group' Admin representative – if a young person contacts a leader via a private message, the leader should tell Mim Taylor or Luke Bristowe. They should then reply explaining they need to invite another adult to the

conversation/suggest to email and include another adult/suggest to talk on Friday at CYFA or Sunday at church

- Please check with Mim Taylor or Luke Bristowe that any under 18's have consent from parents for any photos or videos to be posted online (both for the SMB website and social media pages)

Cyber bullying:

- Online bullying is becoming more common amongst young people, and can be very distressing as there is potential for it to be constant – with the advances in technology, bullying now goes beyond the school gates and can follow a young person home
- If there are any concerns of someone (both young person or adult) being bullied or bullying in this way, please speak to someone on the Safeguarding Group

Action we have in place:

- We recognise social networking and online communication is important for young people, and we welcome it as a form of communicating and engaging with them, so we have in place appropriate guidelines to help ensure the safety of both young people and adults
- From September 2013 parents of youth involved in Youth Band (a regular mid-week activity) are asked for consent to allow their child to communicate with leaders via email and text (when necessary)
- From September 2013 Ignite and CYFA registration forms include asking consent from parents to allow their child's image to be posted on the SMB website and on any SMB affiliated Facebook pages/groups and twitter accounts
- There is tighter monitoring of the Facebook groups - only leaders of groups will be 'Admins' (along with an appropriate church leader) in any SMB affiliated Facebook group, and they have responsibility for regulating what is posted in the group. Group security should be set appropriately and should be set so that an Admin must approve all group posts made by a group member before they are published. Any concerns should be raised with one of the Safeguarding Group
- We are happy to advertise under 18s events and activities through social media (SMB and SMB Children Facebook pages and twitter accounts, CYFA Facebook group, SMB Youth twitter account) as long as there is no more information given than what is on the SMB website, and they are regulated by 'Admins' which includes an appropriate church leader (e.g. Vicar, Children's Worker, Ministry Support Worker)

Future action we are taking:

- From September 2014 Ignite and CYFA registration forms will include asking consent from parents to allow their child to communicate with leaders on Facebook (age appropriate), and via texting (when necessary) and emailing

These guidelines will be reviewed annually (next review September 2014)

Produced by the SMB Safeguarding Group (Barney de Berry, Lizzie Worthen, Sheila Rooke, Philip Lewis, Liz Lewis, Mim Taylor and Luke Bristowe)

*for the full Diocese E-safety guidelines, please refer to <http://www.canterburydiocese.org/childprotection/eSafety%20Guidelines%20May%202012.pdf> or speak to Mim Taylor for a copy