



## St Andrew's Church Youth Communications and Social Media Policy Reviewed March 2017

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy 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 are continually changing and this policy will be reviewed and updated annually, but the principles embodied in this document will continue to be applied. This policy is designed to provide a framework to protect children, young people, staff and volunteers. It also serves to help children and young people understand appropriate use of social media and modern technology. It should be read alongside the St Andrews' safeguarding policy, which can be found on the church website.

### **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 still good practice to adhere to this policy. Children in year 6 and below should not be communicated with using social media or mobile phones.

### **Consent Forms**

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

- Photos to be taken at youth events and then used in official St Andrew's Church/Cotteslowe Community Association publications, our Facebook group and Instagram account, the church website and displays.
- Young people to have email contact with staff and volunteers in accordance with this policy.
- Young people to make and receive calls and texts to and from staff and volunteers in accordance with this policy.
- Young people to connect to their group's Facebook page and Instagram account.

### **Note for all forms of communication**

Communication should not take place with young people after 9.30pm or on staff members' days off, unless in an emergency. Note this does not mean staff and volunteers have to be available to young people at all other times. Young people should also note that, whilst staff and volunteers will exercise appropriate discretion in dealing with the substance of communication, they cannot promise confidentiality.



## St Andrew's Church Youth Communications and Social Media Policy Reviewed March 2017

### **Guidelines**

#### **Emails**

1. Once permission is given via the annual consent form, staff and volunteers (small group leaders, mentors, coaches and children's group leaders) can hold email addresses for young people in their care.
2. Emails should be short and should 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 on the church server, so that they can be traced if necessary for a term in accordance with the Oxford Diocesan guidance on record keeping in parishes.
4. Conversations should not be had over 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.
6. When a volunteer leaves the youth work team, 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**

1. Once permission is given via the annual consent form, staff and volunteers (small group leaders, mentors, coaches and group leaders) can hold mobile phone numbers of the young people in their care.
2. Text communication should be short and should 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 St Andrew's, 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 can 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



## St Andrew's Church Youth Communications and Social Media Policy Reviewed March 2017

Safeguarding Officer and the records kept on file for a term in accordance with the Oxford Diocesan 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 St Andrew's for secure storage.

### **Social Media**

This policy does not list every social media site, but the principle for all of them is that staff and volunteers should not befriend, follow or be followed by young people. All those using social media sites should set their privacy settings accordingly and check them periodically.

### **Facebook**

Schools and secular youth work policies state that an adult cannot be friends with an under 18 on Facebook. This is also St Andrew's policy. Private messaging is not permitted. If a young person messages a staff member or volunteer's personal account, they should not respond.

1. Volunteers and staff cannot be friends on Facebook with an under 18 where their contact has been established through their role as a staff member or volunteer.
  - a. 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 Facebook friends with them.
2. Each group (e.g. Saygo, Pathfinders, JAM) can have a Facebook group. They should follow this 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, provided they are 13 or over.
  - d. Communication 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. Young people can post photos but the settings should be such that all posts must be approved by an administrator before they appear on the page.
  - g. Privacy settings on photographs should be set to ensure that only members of the group see them.

### **Instagram**

1. Volunteers and staff cannot follow an under 18 on Instagram where their contact has been established through their role as a staff member or volunteer.
  - a. Once a young person has left our youth work provision at 18 it is then the volunteer or staff member's choice whether to follow them.
2. Staff and volunteers should make their personal accounts private so that young people cannot follow them.
3. Staff, volunteers and young people can all follow the official 'standrews\_youth' Instagram account, provided they are 13 or over. Young people should not be followed by the standrews\_youth account.



**St Andrew's Church**  
**Youth Communications and Social Media Policy**  
**Reviewed March 2017**

- a. The account should be a private account
- b. It should be monitored by at least two staff/volunteers who have admin rights.
- c. The administrators can post pictures and comments but only on our own posts.
- d. Notice of events can be posted on the account.
- e. Administrators should not initiate conversation by private message but if a young person sends a private message a very short reply can be sent.
- e. Pictures of young people and events can be posted by the administrator provided parents have given permission on the consent form

**Snapchat,**

1. Staff and volunteers should not connect with young people on Snapchat.

**YouTube or similar**

1. Staff and volunteers should not subscribe to any young person's YouTube channel or comment on their uploads.