



*This protocol outlines the Archdiocese's expectations of Parish Priests and Parish workers regarding use of technology and social media to communicate with children.*

# PROTOCOL: USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA WITH CHILDREN

## Key obligation

It is important to be respectful, transparent and responsible when using technology and social media to communicate with children.

## 1 Types of communication to which this protocol applies

### 1.1 Social media

- a) Social media refers to web-based external, commercial or media websites and applications used to connect with other people and maintain relationships and communities.
- b) There are many types of social media platforms. Examples include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, WhatsApp, Tumblr, SnapChat.

### 1.2 Technology

- a) Children/young people use technology to communicate in various ways including the use of email, internet browsing, text messaging, online chats, video conferencing, phone, mobile phone and on a variety of devices.
- b) This protocol applies to all those forms of technology.

## 2 Archdiocesan policy and procedure

### 2.1 General responsibilities of employees, volunteers and religious appointees when using technology to communicate with children

#### a) In the parish context, all Parish workers **must**:

- i) be respectful, polite, and considerate in all communications with children.
- ii) communicate in a manner that is consistent with their role and responsibility within or in relation to the parish.
- iii) be transparent and identify themselves by using their real name.
- iv) ensure communication channels are transparent e.g. are able to be supervised by parents.
- v) respect the privacy of others and ensure that information is not transmitted or published that should not be made public.

#### b) Parish workers **must not**:

- i) invite or accept 'friend' invitations from a child they have met through the Archdiocese on their personal social media sites e.g. Facebook, Instagram.
- ii) interact with a child they have met through the Archdiocese through personal social media sites.
- iii) communicate with a child on a one-to-one basis by phone (including mobile phone and text messages) or email, unless their Parish Priest has obtained the express, written consent of the child's parent or guardian and there is a distinct professional need for the communication.
- iv) use inappropriate language or images e.g. material that is harassing, defamatory, bullying, threatening, sexually explicit, obscene, profane, illegal or otherwise offensive.



### 2.2 Reporting of inappropriate comments or images

- a) All employees, volunteers and religious appointees must immediately notify their Parish Priest and/or the Institute of Professional Standards and Safeguarding (IPSS) if:
- i) any inappropriate comments or images are directed to them by child
  - ii) they become aware of inappropriate comments or images being exchanged between children
  - iii) they become aware that another employee, volunteer or religious appointee has acted in breach of the obligations listed in 2.1
  - iv) they become aware of any conduct via digital communication that is otherwise reportable to the NSW or ACT Police, NSW or ACT Ombudsman or the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) NSW or Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS) ACT.
- b) The Parish Priest and the Manager of IPSS will determine whether the matter is required to be reported to the NSW or ACT Police, NSW or ACT Ombudsman or the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) NSW or Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS) ACT or dealt with otherwise.