

## Grace Church Sydenham Online Safety Policy

**Online safety** is the collective term for safeguarding involving the use of electronic devices and applications to communicate and access the Internet; often referred to as Information and Communications Technology. An online safety policy should be adopted and adapted to reflect all communications between church/organisation's workers and children (those under 18 years of age).

### Policy guidelines for Church Workers/Volunteers

- Generally, maintain good and open relationships with parents and carers regarding communication with them and their children.
- Use an appropriate tone: friendly, but not over-familiar or personal.
- Be warm and friendly, but do not suggest or offer a special relationship.
- Be clear and explicit about information that you need to share; don't abbreviate or short-cut your communications.
- Be circumspect in your communications with children to avoid any possible misinterpretation of your motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming.
- Do not share any personal information with children, or request or respond to any personal information from a child other than that which might be appropriate as part of your role.
- Only give personal contact details to children that are within the public domain of the church / organisation, including your mobile telephone number.
- If children want you to have their mobile phone numbers, e-mail addresses or similar, and communicate with them this way, make sure that their parents know and have agreed.
- Only make contact with children for reasons related to the work of the church/organisation and maintain a log of all electronic contact with individuals or groups including messaging and texting.
- Where possible only use equipment provided by the church/organisation to communicate with children.
- Respect a child's right to confidentiality unless abuse/harm is suspected or disclosed.
- Ensure your church/organisation domain name/logo appears with every Internet post made by a church computer user. Any user may thus be viewed as a representative of your church/organisation while conducting business on the Internet.
- Email should only be used to communicate specific information. (e.g. times and dates of events). It should not be used as a relationship building tool.
- Email History should be kept and dated.
- When using email/internet for communication with children, it is advised that it should take place between the hours of 9am-5pm. Where working with children outside normal office hours workers should seek advice from their leader but there should be no email communication after 9pm.
- Workers should refrain from using such methods on a one to one basis as they cannot

be recorded. (It can be used for conference calls and is considered appropriate if a project or group uses a web camera/Skype in a group environment for project purposes, and has clear aims and objectives for its use).

### **Social Media Policy**

- All social media interaction between workers, paid or voluntary, and children under 18 shall be limited to monitored/administrated groups.
- Text and any other media posted shall be subject to the acceptable use policy
- All interaction on social media groups shall be recorded for safeguarding purposes
- Any private messages shall be recorded for safeguarding purposes
- Any safeguarding concerns/allegations arising from social media shall be referred onto the safeguarding co-ordinator.
- All users of social media must be above the minimum age limit i.e. 13 for Facebook
- Workers should ensure their privacy setting ensure the highest levels of security in order to restrict children being able to see any more than what is relevant to communication within the group
- All social media groups should provide links to statutory authorities such as CEOP, to enable children to report online abuse.

### **Consent for photographic images and videos online**

- Photographs that include children will be selected carefully and will endeavour to prevent children from being easily identified.
- Children's full names will not be used on the website in association with their photographs.
- Permission will be sought before any images are taken or displayed and images will only be used for the specific purpose for which permission was sought for and how the image will be stored if not destroyed. If the intention is to use an image on the internet this must be clearly stated and further permission must be acquired if an image is to be used in a way not originally stated.
- Use of images will reflect diversity of age, ethnicity and gender of the activity.
- Live streaming of events must be clearly advertised in advance and where children are involved permission should be sought in line with the photographic guidelines.

### **Meetings/Activities online**

- As a result of COVID 19 some Ignite and/or Youth Club meetings/activities take place online (usually via Zoom).
- If a call is recorded, prior parental consent should be obtained for children, and the young person's consent obtained (if 18 or over)
- Keep a note of who has attended and email the person in charge of registers within 24 hours of the meeting

- Ensure you are appropriately dressed and have an appropriate background. Try to avoid it, but if you have to conduct the meeting in a bedroom do not show anything in the background that makes this obvious

### **One to one phone or video calls**

- Whilst we normally require that two safely recruited and DBS checked workers should be online, this does not prevent agreed one to one online meetings taking place
- Be sensitive but do not promise confidentiality. For example, say “You can tell me anything you like and I will keep it to myself unless I am concerned that you or anyone else may be at risk” Then ask them to confirm that they understand and are happy to proceed
- Inform the overall children’s leader or youth leader that this conversation will take place or has taken place
- With the child or young person’s permission, written notes should be made following any meeting which provokes concern
- Such notes should be stored securely and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the child or young person should be informed that they can ask to see those notes
- Decisions to involve external agencies or parents should not be taken lightly and advice should be sought firstly from the overall children’s leader or youth leader and from thirtyone: eight if necessary
- If a child is under 16, it is extremely likely that parents will be informed of meetings that provoke concern. Advice should be sought firstly from the overall children’s leader or youth leader and from thirtyone: eight if necessary.

### **Acceptable Use Policy**

- Where access to the internet is provided on our organisation devices or devices owned by an individual via WiFi, we will exercise our right to monitor usage which includes access to websites, interception and deletion of inappropriate or criminal material or unlawfully copied text, video, images or sound.
- Social media groups must be used in compliance with Grace Church Sydenham’s policy on social media.

### **Children and Workers should not:**

- Search for or download pornographic, racist or hate motivated content.
- Illegally copy or play copyrighted content where permission has not been given.
- Send, request or display offensive messages or pictures.
- Harass, insult or bully others.
- Access the internet using another person’s login details.
- Access, download, send or receive any data (including images), which Grace Church Sydenham considers offensive in any way, including sexually explicit, discriminatory,

defamatory or libellous material.

**Sanctions for violating the acceptable use policy in the opinion of Grace Church Sydenham may result in:**

- A temporary or permanent ban on church online activities
- Additional disciplinary action in line with existing practice on inappropriate language or behaviour.
- Where applicable, police or local authorities may be involved.

**Parent Carer Agreement**

As the parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ I declare that I have read and understood the Online Safety acceptable use policy for Grace Church Sydenham and that my child will be held accountable for their own actions. I understand that it is my responsibility to set standards for my child when selecting, sharing and exploring online information and media.

**Child/YP Agreement**

I understand the importance of safety online and the church guidelines on acceptable use.

I will share any concerns, where I or another person may be at risk of harm with the safeguarding coordinator or a trusted adult.

<b>Child Name</b> (Please print)	<b>Child Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Parent/Guardian</b> (Please print)	<b>Parent/Guardian Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>

**Adoption of the policy**

This policy was agreed by the Leadership and will be reviewed annually:

Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: Elder

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Date: March 2021