



Guidelines for Safe Use of Technology, Internet and Social Media

These guidelines on the safe use of technology, internet and social media apply to all church personnel. There may be occasions when more in-depth guidance needs to be developed to address a particular area of concern or a specific activity with children that involves internet/social media access.

Information Sharing and Consent

Parents/guardians and children must be given adequate information on the use of IT equipment in order to give informed consent prior to engaging in any activity that involves the use of IT equipment, such as mobile phones, computers, taking photographs/videos, webcams.

Use of the Internet

The following are deemed unacceptable behaviours:

- Visiting internet sites that contain offensive, obscene, pornographic or illegal material.
- Using a computer to perpetrate any form of fraud or piracy.
- Using the internet or email systems to send offensive and harassing material to others.
- Using obscene or racist language in computer-assisted communications.
- Publishing defamatory or otherwise false material generated by oneself or by others through social networking
- Introducing any form of malicious software into the used network.
- Intentionally damaging any information communication technology equipment.
- Using another user's password or giving that password to a third party.

Use of social and digital media

All church personnel must observe appropriate professional boundaries in relation to the use of IT, mobile phones and social media.

Church personnel using social media must:

- Respect the privacy of others.
- Consider the implications of any posts.
- Report inappropriate material to An Garda Síochána.
- Have privacy settings on their personal social media accounts, so that children and young people cannot follow them and thus maintain healthy boundaries and privacy.

Church personnel must not:

- Gather or retain a child's mobile phone number or email address other than for purposes of the event or activity.
- Provide a child with his or her own personal mobile phone number or email address.
- Access the internet with a child unless authorised to do so as part of their work.
- Befriend a young person on a social media website. This includes Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube (this list is not exhaustive).
- Take photographs of children other than for purposes associated with the event or activity, and only then with their permission and that of their parent/guardian.

Use of Texting and Email

All communication and arrangements must be made directly with parents/guardians. It is permissible to send text or email messages to older adolescents (16 and 17 year olds), under certain conditions (bulk messaging as outlined below). One-to-one texting or emailing is not allowed and should only occur in exceptional circumstances, for example, if a young person is lost. All individual contact made with a child must be followed up with a telephone call to the parent/guardian to make them aware of the situation and message content.

Using bulk (or bundled) text and email messaging

This is where the same text or email message is sent to several young people involved with a particular activity or group.

The following guidance must be followed to minimise risk:

1. Consent must be obtained from young people and their parents/guardians prior to sending young people text or email messages. Parents/guardians should be copied on texts and emails that are sent to their child.
2. The mobile phone numbers or email addresses for young people and their parents should be stored safely and securely, with access only available to the specific identified members of church personnel. The numbers and details must not be visible to other members of the group, must not be shared with anyone else and must only be used for the purposes of the text and email messaging system regarding the church activity.
3. All text and email messages must be sent via a bundle to a group of young people, that is, the same standard text message is sent to every member of the group.
4. The text or email messaging system must NEVER be used to send a text or email to an individual.
5. All text and email messages must make it clear to the young people receiving them who has sent the message.
6. Text or email messages must only be sent at appropriate times, that is during the day between 9am - 8pm.
7. Young people should not be given the opportunity to text or email back to the system. It should only be used as a one-way communication channel.
8. The text and email messages that are sent must never contain any offensive, abusive or inappropriate language.
9. All text and email messages sent should include a link to unsubscribe from receiving further text and email messages.

Use of Photography/Video

- The Carmelite Order has responsibility for taking and the use of photography/videos only if they plan to use the photographs/videos for church purposes.
- Photographs taken at events organised by family and schools such as First Communion, Weddings or Confirmations do not fall under the responsibility of the church, unless they are being taken for church purposes.
- If a Carmelite parish wishes to use a photograph from a Communion or Confirmation, consent will be sought from the parent/guardian and child, via the school.

Consent

When seeking consent for the taking and the use of images or videos for church purposes, the following should be considered:

- Children must only be photographed/videoed with the consent of those who hold parental responsibility, ie. a parent/guardian. This consent should be in writing using the appropriate Consent Form.
- Children and young people's consent should also be sought, giving due consideration to their age and stage of development.
- Written permission must also be sought from children, young people and their parents if photographs are to be published in any form.
- The issue of consent for photography/videoing for Carmelite purposes should be addressed with parents/guardians and children prior to the sacramental day, and the policy should be explained to all families who will be attending.
- If parents/guardians and parishioners are intending to photograph or video at an organised event, they should also be made aware of what is permitted and what is not. Children and families should be reminded about the rights to privacy and data protection of other children, their families and the wider community.
- Those organising a Carmelite event, and who are seeking consent to take and use photographs/videos, should be sensitive to the fact that many parents/guardians are reluctant to allow the general viewing of their children, or of children in their care, on sites such as YouTube, Facebook, etc.

How to minimise risks

- The permission of parents/guardians and children should always be sought to take and use an image of a child. This must be recorded on a Joint Consent Form for the taking and use of images of children.
- The leaders of the activity should provide guidance on use of photography/videos.
- Images of children should never be taken that capture them in what are commonly understood as 'non-public' activities.
- Establish the type of images that appropriately represent the activity, and think carefully about any images showing children and young people on the church website or publication.
- Children should be fully and appropriately dressed and related images should always be about the activity and not focused on any individual child.
- The name of the child should not be used. Images should not allow the identification of a child through their whereabouts, for example, a school uniform that identifies the school.

- Particular caution must be exercised in relation to children in vulnerable circumstances for example, those in care or victims of any type of abuse.
- If using an external photographer/videographer ensure that they have been vetted, have identification, they do not have any unsupervised access to children or one-to-one photo sessions at events, and seek confirmation about any publications that will be made by them after the event.

Responding to concerns

Children and parents/guardians should be informed that if they have any concerns regarding inappropriate or intrusive photography, these should be reported to the DLP, the local prior or the Prior Provincial to ensure that these concerns are dealt with in the same way as any other child protection or child safeguarding issue.

Use of CCTV and Webcams

In relation to the use of webcams, web broadcasting and use of CCTV, the following guidance must be adhered to:

- Recording people via a web camera, and the subsequent displaying of such images over the internet, is regarded as the processing of personal data. It is imperative that it must be done with the knowledge and consent of the individual. Obligations under the Data Protection Act must be adhered to.
- Web cameras should only be switched on for the duration of Mass or other Liturgy and switched off at the end. There should be no live streaming of churches when there is no Mass or Liturgy taking place.
- Camera shots (images) of the congregation should be wide shots, minimising the possibility of easily identifying individuals with close-up images.
- Signs should be placed at all entrances to the church and in other prominent locations, informing those attending ceremonies or visiting the church that web cameras/CCTV are in operation.
- Parish workers and members of the clergy should sign forms consenting to their image being used for web broadcasting in the course of their regular duties. Copies of consent forms should be kept on parish records.
- If the Church activity being recorded involves children (for example, as altar servers, ministers of the Word, choirs, etc.) then their written consent and that of their parents/guardians is required using the Joint Consent Form.
- Service providers should be able to give regular and accurate information regarding the number of people who actually log in online to view. This information is important for future planning and assessing the value of web broadcasting.
- It is imperative that live broadcasts can be terminated to stop transmission. This should be done by accessing the control panel of the system. If this is not accessible by the priest from the altar, someone should be delegated to break transmission if required.

Note: This area continues to develop and change and, often, young people are going to be more advanced than adults. The Carmelite Order will make all efforts to ensure that this guidance is comprehensive and up to date, however given the evolving nature and extent of this area there are limitations as to what can be covered.