



## Protocol: Use of technology and social media to communicate with children

*This protocol outlines the Archdiocese's expectations of employees, volunteers and religious appointees in relation to the use of social media and technology to communicate with and engage 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, Bebo, Myspace and Xt3.

### 1.2 Technology

- a) Children 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 Archdiocese policy and procedure

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

- a) In the parish and agency context, employees, volunteers and religious appointees **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 or agency;
  - iii) be transparent and identify themselves by using their real name;
  - iv) ensure communication channels are transparent, eg 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) Employees, volunteers and religious appointees **must not**:

- i) invite or accept invitations from children they have met through the Archdiocese as “friends” on their personal social media site, eg their Facebook profile;
- ii) interact with children they have met through the Archdiocese on their personal social media site;
- iii) communicate with a child on a one-to-one basis by phone (including mobile phone and text messages) or email, unless the relevant Parish Priest or agency head has obtained the express, written consent of the child’s parent or guardian;
- iv) use inappropriate language or images, eg 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 the relevant Parish Priest (or administrator) or agency head if:
  - i) any inappropriate comments or images (see paragraph 2.1(b)(iv) above) are directed to them by child;
  - ii) they become aware of inappropriate comments or images (see paragraph 2.1(b)(iv) above) being exchanged between children;
  - iii) they become aware that another employee, volunteer or religious appointee has acted in breach of the obligations listed in paragraph a); or
  - iv) they become aware of any conduct via social media that is otherwise reportable to the NSW Police, NSW Ombudsman or the Department of Family and Community Services (**FaCS**).
- b) The Parish Priest (or administrator) or agency head must immediately notify the Vicar General, and the Vicar General will determine whether the matter is required to be reported to the NSW Police, NSW Ombudsman or FaCS, or otherwise dealt with.