

# CHINESE GOSPEL CHURCH OF DUBLIN TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Taking photographs of activities, using web sites to publicise Chinese Gospel Church of Dublin and its activities, contacting parents and guardians about activities, the use of Facebook and other social media networks, in addition to the use of electronic devices as part of the programmes with children have become normal activities within Chinese Gospel Church of Dublin.

The Child Safeguarding Policy and the Technology Policy does not seek in any way to eliminate or curtail these activities but proposes certain safeguards so as to ensure that they are used in a responsible manner and that we minimise the risk or threats to our children and staff and leaders when utilising these social and digital media.

In an increasingly complex world the opportunities for child abuse are growing. Those who care for children need to be aware of the opportunities for abuse through the misuse of the internet, text messaging, video and other media. While good use of such media can be beneficial we must be vigilant and alert to the possibilities of misuse and the consequent harm to children that can result.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC / RECORDED IMAGE GUIDELINES

Traditionally, people reading school newsletters, parish or diocesan magazines, local newspapers have been delighted to see pictures of children, especially those known to them, taking part in sports or drama, receiving a prize etc. Indeed such publication has been a matter of pride not only for parents but godparents, grandparents and the family circle.

Regrettably in recent years it has become clear that the identification of children in such pictures has a negative and indeed dangerous aspect. It has become increasingly clear that the publication of named children may be a child safeguarding issue leading to their endangerment by creating opportunities for recognition. Individuals may use the identifying of the child and the link to a particular location as an opportunity to identify and meet the child for inappropriate purposes.

A child may be easily misled by an adult who knows his or her name and something about them and claims an acquaintance.

It should be noted that having photographic and recorded image guidelines is not about preventing anyone from taking images but rather to ensure that it is done in a responsible manner. These safeguards should:

- Still permit and facilitate the recording of relevant and suitable materials;
- Allow the enjoyment gained by participating in our activities to be recorded;
- Enable staff and leaders to use recording as a learning and development tool;
- Enable the Church to promote their activities in a safe and non-threatening manner.

However, it is necessary for Chinese Gospel Church of Dublin to use these images responsibly in order to protect the child, the Church and the use of the images. This is true of photographs/images in their own right and in published form (electronic or otherwise).

The key concerns regarding the use of images and photographs of children relate to:

- The possible identification of children when a photograph/image is accompanied by personal information;
- The inappropriate use, adaptation or copying of images for use on child pornography websites and/or for grooming purposes;

- The taking of inappropriate photographs/images of children;
- The inappropriate distribution of photographs/images of children via mobile phone, email or other electronic media.

Leaders should encourage children to be sensible when taking photos or videoing each other, especially if they are to be posted on the internet. Children should be encouraged to let their friends know if their intention is to post photographs online, giving them the opportunity to object. Children may need to be reminded that once photographs are on the internet they have no control over where they end up. Church leaders may want to include this issue in their code of conduct.

### **Guidelines for Recording Images**

- Ask for parental permission to take and use the image of the child. This can be included in the Parental Consent form completed by parents/guardians for each child;
- **Permission (verbal or written) should be obtained of all the people (children and adults) who will appear in a photograph, video or webcam image before the photograph is taken or footage recorded**
- **It should be made clear why that person's image is being used, what use you will make of it, and who might want to look at the pictures**
- All children featured in recordings must be fully dressed with outer clothing garments covering their torso;
- Children in swimwear should not be photographed;
- The photograph/image should ideally focus on the activity. Where possible images of children should be recorded in small groups rather than individuals;
- Appropriate photographs/images should be used at all times;
- **Carefully consider location and pose**
- **Do not insist that a child participates**
- Staff and leaders should still be allowed to use photographic and digital equipment (including mobile phones) as a training tool. However, children and their parents/guardians should be aware and give consent for this is part of the work programme. Care should be taken in storing such photographs/images.

### **Guidelines for Publishing/Reproducing Images**

- Children's name should never be attached or captioned to photographs/images. It is acceptable to publish the name of the company;
- Personal details of children such as email address, home address and telephone numbers should never be revealed;
- Do not provide additional information that can assist someone in locating a child or which could be used as grooming tools (hobbies/interests, likes/dislikes, etc.);
- When using external/professional photographers ensure that the Church has the complete contact details of any photographer that is used. Clearly outline to professional photographers that all images taken will remain the property of the Church, and cannot be used or sold for any other purpose. Clearly outline that all negatives / proofs etc. need to be given to the Church;
- Separate parental consent should be sought from parents/guardians if companies wish to post videos of Church activities on YouTube or other such sites. Parent's and children's wishes must be respected at all time. Remember to comply with all copyright law in relation to music and that material uploaded to such sites as YouTube can be viewed by millions of people around the world and can be downloaded by others for their own purposes.

## **WEB USAGE GUIDELINES**

The world of social and digital media is an enjoyable and engaging place and is in itself a useful tool in promoting our Church and our activities at company level within the membership and to a wider audience. As a vibrant Church we should never shy away from using all forms of social media. But, we must be aware that while these communication tools can be used to our advantage vigilance is also required to ensure that our use of such communication methods must at all time be appropriate.

A number of basic guidelines should be in place in relation to the Church web sites and social network sites e.g. Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn etc. These guidelines should be adhered to at all times.

#### **General Web Usage Guidance:**

- The Church website or social networking site must comply with Chinese Gospel Church of Dublin's Child Safeguarding Policy;
- The Church should appoint a number of administrators for the Church website and social networking sites who are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the website and social networking site(s);
- Agree to review the overall maintenance and upkeep of the web site and social networking site(s) at regular intervals;
- Decide the purpose your web site or social network page(s) serves and include this in your content policy;
- All decisions on the appropriate use of photographic images and other similar content should be in accordance with the Guidelines for Photographic/Recorded Images (see above);
- The web site or social network pages should at all times reflect the ethos of Chinese Gospel Church of Dublin. Neither are platforms for personal opinion. They are a public representation of our Church and should at all times be factual and follow the parameters of good behaviour;
- Any complaints or concerns that may be raised about the content of your web site or social network page should be dealt with using Chinese Gospel Church of Dublin Complaints Policy.

#### **Web Contents Guidance:**

- The Church Website and its administrators must make all reasonable attempts to insure that web pages are in keeping with the ethos of Chinese Gospel Church of Dublin and do not contain any links to questionable material. Links to external websites are meant for convenience purposes only. No endorsement of any third party products or services should be expressed or implied by any information, material or content referred to or included on, or linked from the Church website;
- Think carefully about the content. Write short snappy text that will grab the reader's attention. Remember you are promoting a Church. Our vision is to value, nurture and equip our members for life. Keep it simple – the use of flash and other technical features is tempting but can make a site difficult to navigate, slow to load and side-track the users too much;
- Content published on web site or social network page should at all times be factual and follow the parameters of good behaviour;
- All decisions on the appropriate use of photographic images and other similar content should be in accordance with the Guidelines for Photographic/Recorded Images (see above);
- Respect the privacy of your staff and leaders – get permission before publishing personal contact information. Where possible utilise alias emails e.g. [youthpastor@chinesegospelchurch.ie](mailto:youthpastor@chinesegospelchurch.ie) rather than individual personal emails. Use the Bcc (blind carbon copy) box when emailing a group of people. This will ensure you don't share anyone's contact details without their permission and protect everyone against spam;

- Text, images, sound, or other presentations not suitable for people of all ages, or links to or other promotion of businesses whose products or services are not suitable for people of all ages should not be used;
- Content that may be considered not to maintain the dignity and decorum appropriate for Chinese Gospel Church of Dublin should not be used.

### Video Ministry

Many churches now film services for home ministry purposes. Children can be recorded in a group setting, for example, a wide view taken at the children's talk but they should not be identified. The congregation should be given prior notice at least two weeks in advance, either from the pulpit or printed on the announcement sheet and the videos should not be used for any reason other than its primary purpose.

### **SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE GUIDELINES**

Working with children often requires a balancing act between being part of the world in which they live, in order to reach them, and yet maintaining a leadership role. In order to understand children, it is important to live in their culture and at the same time be a role model to them. No place is this balancing act more difficult to get right than in the area of technology, namely the internet and, in particular, social networking sites such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram etc; blogs, micro-blogs and other public domain publishing methods.

If used well, methods of communication via the internet can be effective tools in youth ministry. For example, social networking sites have a group facility which allows online groups to meet in a virtual space where all information and comments are seen by everyone in that group but no-one else.

It is worth noting that everything posted on the internet – comments, opinions and photos – can potentially be seen and copied by anyone else using the internet. Social networking sites have privacy settings for this reason and these limit what any other person, whom you have not accepted as a friend, can view.

#### Guidelines for staff/leaders personal profile

- Don't use your personal Facebook profile/page to communicate with children.
- Staff and leaders should be free to have their own personal profile on Facebook. However, they should not accept friend requests from children in the group they work with or the Church on these profiles.
- Staff and leaders should not post any content on their personal or work profiles which it would be professionally inappropriate for children to know or see. In the case of personal non-work profile they should use the privacy setting of Facebook to ensure that this content is not accessible to children.
- Ensure that the GPS locator on your personal profile/page is turned off so that children cannot locate you outside of groups activities.

#### Guidelines for group usage

- Know your Church's policy on using Facebook and comply.
- Use a separate, designated Facebook account for the purposes of the Church
- Use the Church page or a group set up on Church's page to communicate with children but ensure you have written parental consent to use this form of communication beforehand and should only be used for age appropriate groups.
- Have a number of people designated as administrators of the Facebook page and monitor daily. Choose appropriate posting settings so that inappropriate content cannot be placed on the site. Provide an email address for users to contact the administrator(s).

- Do not use this account during school hours or after a set time at night to maintain safe boundaries.
- Only put members aged 13+ onto groups on the groups page in line with Facebook's own terms and conditions. Do not encourage members under 13 to join Facebook.
- Do not provide personal details about children on social networking sites.
- Always ensure that you have parental permission to use any photos of children on the Facebook page. Only use appropriate photos, the sort you would be happy to put on a public notice board.

#### General Guidelines

- The use of instant chat on Facebook by staff and leaders is inadvisable as it is effectively the same as going into a private room with a child and closing the door, there is no record of the conversation. Children should be reminded that this facility should not be used to make arrangements to meet up as they do not know who else can see the content of their messages.
- Conduct yourself in an appropriate way, as you would face to face – be aware of what you say and how you say it.
- It is advisable to not use abbreviations when communicating with children as these can often be misinterpreted by parents.
- Comments made on the internet should be considered the same as if they were made in a public place. If a child discloses something to a leader via a social networking site, a chat room or any other public domain publishing method, then the disclosure must be dealt with by following the normal reporting process. If a leader is concerned about something that a child communicates to him or her via the internet, he or she should encourage the child to talk to a suitable adult about it or arrange to meet with the child (within the usual child safeguarding parameters).
- It would be wise for leaders not to get involved in lengthy or intense engagements online, setting boundaries is encouraged. While communication via the internet can be highly effective, all such communication with children should, as far as possible, be within an open forum, in order to protect both children and leaders.

#### MOBILE PHONE GUIDELINES

Those who work with children need to be aware of the opportunities for abuse through the misuse of mobile phone and text messaging. While good use of such media can be beneficial we must be vigilant and alert to the possibilities of misuse and consequent harm that can result to children. Leaders must also take care to protect themselves and the church. The Governing Body should take an active role to ensure that good practice is followed.

Leaders involved in youth and children's work should only have children's mobile numbers if the nature of their involvement requires them to phone or text children. Such leaders might include those running a group for older teenagers, or an employed youth staff or a leader involved in co-ordinating youth work within the congregation. The Governing Body should be informed which leaders need to contact children for their specific roles .

- Parental permission should be sought if the leader in this role will be contacting children via mobile phone
- A method of accountability should be arranged e.g. copies of texts could also be sent to the ministry leader or to parents
- If a leader has a child's phone number it should only be used for the purposes it has been given i.e. the leader should not share this information with other church members
- It is recommended that an employed youth staff has a separate phone for work purposes rather than using their personal phone for contacting children

- Texts should be used for the purposes of reminding children about events which are forthcoming
- Texts can also be used as a means to encourage children if it is appropriate e.g. “hope exam goes ok”
- If it turns into a conversation, communications should be ended. A leader can suggest discussing the subject further at the next event or, if they are concerned about the child arrange to meet up to talk further (within the usual child safeguarding parameters)

## **ACCESS TO ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

In order to ensure children’s cyber safety it is necessary to have in place rules in relation to children’s access to electronic devices during activities. This includes the access children have to their own mobile phones and electronic devices as well as staff and leaders devices and in relation to any electronic devices that are being used as part of the youth ministry programmes.

As most children from 5<sup>th</sup> class upwards now seem to have mobile phones, it is good practice to have a rule within each group for this age bracket in relation to the use of mobile phones/electronic devices during activities. Staff and leaders should determine whether to allow children to bring their mobile phones/electronic devices to activities and whether it is appropriate for them to have them during activities or whether to place them all in a box until going home time. This allows children to focus on the activity being undertake, it avoids the problem of children showing each other inappropriate content, it avoids a situation where cyberbullying can take place at activities and where a child is suffering from cyberbullying it provides them a break from their device and the bullying.

Staff and leaders should also be conscious of their mobile phones/electronic devices during activities and provide the children with a good example by not using or checking their mobile phones during activities. Staff and leaders should ensure that their mobile phones/electronic devices are password protected so that children cannot use them if they are left lying around.

In the technological world that we now live it, staff and leaders may from time to time wish to utilise electronic devices as part of their youth ministry programmes to engage the children where they are at. It is essential that where children will have access to electronic devices as part of the youth ministry programme that a number of additional safety measures will be undertaken:

- The leaders could agree on a contract which would be given to and possibly signed by all children, parents and leaders.
- Leaders need to be agreed upon the primary purpose of using computers as part of their programme. For example, is it primarily used for the purposes of research in a homework club or recreational games as part of the youth club?
- Leaders need to agree which websites are suitable and which websites are unsuitable for the age group of children that they are working with.
- Parental permission be sought to allow the children access to electronic devices and/or access to websites dependent on what is involved in the youth ministry activity.
- Clear boundaries be laid down to the children being given access to the electronic devices as to what they can be used for and access limitations and the consequences for not abiding by these boundaries.
- Church electronic devices will be utilised rather than staff/leaders personal electronic devices.
- The electronic devices should have appropriate Parental Control Software installed to ensure that children do not gain access to inappropriate sites.

- Staff and leaders should supervise the access to the electronic devices closely to ensure that they are not inappropriately used.
- Staff and leaders should ensure that whatever activity is planned using electronic devices will not, even inadvertently, expose children to inappropriate material.

Whilst the development of the internet has revolutionised communication systems throughout the world and appropriately used is an excellent resource, care in its application needs to be exercised so that the safety of a child is not compromised. Children need to be aware of online safety in the same way they are taught road safety. As well as the prevalence of online grooming, children can often be the victims of cyber bullying. Bullying through the use of social media can be more intense and more difficult to escape than bullying children experience within the playground or school.