

DIOCESE OF MEATH

Safeguarding Sunday 2019



Children and digital media in our parish

Children join the Church through the Sacrament of Baptism and participate in Church life through a variety of ministries including altar serving, children's liturgy, sacraments, prayer services, gospel teachings, and a range of youth activities. Ministry with children can be a living, joyful experience for all involved. All children are welcome and encouraged to participate in our parish life.

With many children using smart phones and social media on a frequent basis, it is important for members of the Church to become aware of the risks involved in children using digital media. We want to take steps to communicate with children in ways that they understand. Digital media can be a great asset for providing children with information about God's teaching and parish life. Whether this relates to sharing information or arranging meetings, the use of technology needs to be safe. It is not acceptable to behave or communicate in ways which might suggest that you are trying to develop a personal relationship with a child.

Examples of good practice

The National Board recommends that if digital media is being used in the course of ministry with children, child safety will be enhanced by:

- ✔ Installing appropriate software to improve security.
- ✔ Becoming aware of the statement in the consent form for children and their parents about the use of technology, text messaging and use of language and imaging.
- ✔ Having a web camera use procedure.
- ✔ Having user names, logins and passwords so that log on access is controlled.
- ✔ Not communicating with children through a personal e-mail address or sending personal messages to a child, or using personal social networks to engage with a child.
- ✔ It is not appropriate to accept a child as a friend on a personal page.
- ✔ Ensuring that all forms of abuse online, including bullying, grooming etc. are reported.
- ✔ Ensuring that all material posted online is appropriate (both age-appropriate and content appropriate).
- ✔ Protecting personal information by not allowing public access to e-mail addresses, mobile numbers.
- ✔ Ensuring photographs and images are only used for defined purposes and having appropriate consents.
- ✔ Examining and assessing risks of electronic communication, particularly when starting a new venture or with the introduction of new technology.

What to do if you are worried or have concerns

As a user of digital media, you may become concerned about something you see or read. It is important that you share your concerns and report anything which you believe is inappropriate or abusive towards children. In line with "Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland" (2016), all allegations, suspicions and concerns must be reported to the Gardai and the statutory child protection services.

If in doubt, you should consult with the DLP for the Diocese of Meath:

Marie O'Sullivan 📞 (083) 317 5742 ✉️ dlp@dioceseofmeath.ie