

## Safe behaviour – electronic communication.

*Ruddington Baptist Church recognises the value of electronic communication as a legitimate means of communicating with children and young people **as long as strict protocols are followed.***

Many young people today use electronic devices as a preferred means of communication. It is therefore reasonable for youth leaders and young people to be able to contact each other in this way. However,

- Misunderstandings can arise because words are an incomplete form of communication, and if the person you are speaking with is not present, neither of you can use body language or facial expressions to clarify your meaning.
- Private conversations mean that other people are not present to provide a context.
- Informal language means that it is easy to cross appropriate boundaries of communication between adults and young people.

### Consent

- ✓ It is important that both parents and young person give consent for contact via electronic communication.
- ✓ Parents will be asked at the beginning of each cell year (autumn) whether they consent to their child being contacted directly by RBC youth leaders using electronic communication.
- ✓ If a young person gives their details to a youth leader, this is regarded as consent. We will always check that parental consent has also been given.
- ✓ Where consent is withheld, either by parent or young person, we will respect this. We will take care to ensure that we communicate information using other methods, so that the young person and their parents are given relevant information.

As the scope of electronic communication widens, it isn't possible to issue guidance that covers all eventualities!

However, some general principles can help to ensure that RBC's overriding concern is for the well-being of children and young people.

### Our Principles

- ✓ The only kind of electronic communication we encourage between adults and young people is factual information, giving information about events and activities.
- ✓ We will keep all our communication transparent and open to scrutiny.
- ✓ To help avoid miscommunication, we will write in full and avoid the use of abbreviations.
- ✓ We will save and keep significant conversations as a text file, with a note of the dates and times.
- ✓ We will avoid using any form of communication where a record of the conversation cannot be saved.
- ✗ We will not share personal information, nor request or respond to any personal information from the child or young person other than that which is necessary as part of our role.
- ✓ We will only communicate between the hours of 8am and 10pm.
- ✗ When using services (e.g. Skype, some instant messaging programmes) where it is possible for one or both users to display a live image of themselves via a webcam, we will not use this facility, either to display a live image of ourselves, or to view a young person.

## Using the internet during Youth sessions

*Every young person will be required to abide by the following RBC internet usage agreement when using a computer/electronic device to access the internet during RBC youth sessions.*

-  I will respect and take care to look after any computer/electronic device which does not belong to me.
-  I will tell a leader straight away if something goes wrong while I am using a computer.
-  I will seek permission from a leader before
  -  I access any files or software already on the computer
  -  I add any files, software or hardware.
  -  I download anything from the internet.
-  I will not copy anything created by other people and claim it as my own work.
-  I will be polite and kind to other users on the internet.
-  I will not post or send any personal details about myself or others online.
-  I will not create, view, upload, download, post or send anything which contains obscene, discriminatory, hateful, pornographic or otherwise illegal material.
-  I will tell a leader straight away if I see anything which is unpleasant, offensive, illegal or asks me to do something that could get me into trouble.
-  I understand that I may be banned either temporarily or permanently from using a computer in Youth sessions if I break these rules.

## Social Networking Sites

-  We will use a separate profile for communicating with young people, with at least two leaders & the Designated Person having administrative rights.
  -  The main purpose of this is for leaders to post information about events, although young people may also post comments and ask questions.
  -  Membership will be reviewed regularly so that it comprises adults and young people who are currently involved in RBC.
-  At least one named leader will take responsibility for monitoring and editing all content, including uploads.
-  We will comply with the current lower age limit of any social networking site.
-  It will usually be inappropriate to have children and young people as “friends” on our personal sites.
-  We will keep use of instant messaging and other real-time electronic communication to a minimum.

## Mobile phones

-  We will keep texts short, and avoid any text abbreviations which could be misunderstood.
-  We will use the phone camera in accordance with RBC’s policy on photos and videos.
-  We will not retain images of children and young people on our mobile phones.