



St Aidan's Catholic Academy

'We believe that God has created each person to celebrate life to the full'



St Aidan's Catholic Academy

Online Safety Policy

January 2026



The purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy statement is to:

- ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people when adults, young people or children are using the internet, social media or mobile devices
- provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to online safety
- ensure that, as an organisation, we operate in line with our values and within the law in terms of how we use online devices.

The policy statement applies to all staff, volunteers, children and young people and anyone involved in the activities of St Aidan's Catholic Academy.

We believe that our pupils:

- should be able to use the internet for education and personal development, but safeguards need to be in place to ensure they are kept safe at all times.
- should never experience abuse of any kind.

We recognise that:

- the online world provides everyone with many opportunities; however it can also present risks and challenges
- we have a duty to ensure that the young people and adults involved in our organisation are protected from potential harm online
- we have a responsibility to help keep pupils safe online, whether or not they are using our network and devices
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare and in helping young people to be responsible in their approach to online safety.

How we work together to keep everyone safe:

The Online Safety Coordinator will:

- provide clear and specific directions to staff and volunteers on how to behave online through our behaviour code for adults
- provide support, information and encouragement for parents and carers to do what they can to keep their children safe online
- develop an online safety agreement for use with young people and their parents/carers
- provide annual assemblies for each year group to maintain the high profile of positive approaches to online safety and update awareness of issues that can arise when living and learning online
- provide supervision, support and training for staff and volunteers about online safety
- develop clear and robust procedures to enable us to respond appropriately to any incidents of inappropriate online behaviour, whether by an adult or a child/young person.

ICT Support Staff will:

- maintain a keyword-based active monitoring system to identify possible issues
- review and update the security of our information systems regularly
- perform weekly checks of the active monitoring system logs and record any concerns
- identify when major issues are developing and report them to the head of safeguarding
- ensure devices connected to the school network utilise a filtered connection (SENSO) that blocks access to inappropriate content and logs attempts to access it



- ensure personal information about the adults and children who are involved in our organisation is held securely and shared only as appropriate

Teaching Staff will:

- ensure that usernames, logins, email accounts and passwords are used effectively
- ensure that images of children, young people and families are used only after their written permission has been obtained, and only for the purpose for which consent has been given
- examining and risk assessing any social media platforms and new technologies before they are used within the organisation
- support and encourage young people to use the internet, social media and mobile phones in a way that keeps them safe and shows respect for others.

If online abuse occurs, we will respond to it by:

- Invoking our safeguarding procedures to provide an immediate response to abuse (including online abuse)
- providing support and training for all staff and volunteers on dealing with all forms of abuse, including bullying/cyberbullying, emotional abuse, sexting, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation
- making sure our response takes the needs of the person experiencing abuse, any bystanders and our organisation as a whole into account
- reviewing the plan developed to address online abuse at regular intervals, in order to ensure that any problems have been resolved in the long term.

Related policies and procedures:

This policy statement should be read alongside our organisational policies and procedures, including:

- Child protection.
- Procedures for responding to concerns about a child or young person's wellbeing.
- Dealing with allegations of abuse made against a child or young person.
- Managing allegations against staff and volunteers.
- Code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Anti-bullying policy and procedures.
- Photography and image sharing guidance.

Contact details

Online safety co-ordinator

Name: Mrs Gemma Hogg
Phone/email: 0191 5200333

Senior lead for safeguarding and child protection

Name: Mrs Gemma Hogg
Phone/email: 0191 5200333

ICT support staff with responsibility for online safety

Phone/email: 0191 5200333



Pupil Acceptable Use Agreement

I will maintain my privacy by:

1. Keeping my passwords private
2. Check my privacy settings are set appropriately
3. Not sharing personal information
4. Keeping my passwords safe and private to protect my privacy, schoolwork and safety

I will keep myself safe by:

1. Making sure that my internet use is safe and legal, and I am aware that online actions have offline consequences
2. Complying with the academy's acceptable use policy as I know that my use of computers, devices and internet access will be monitored to check that I do

I will demonstrate I am responsible by:

1. Not accessing or changing other people files, accounts or information
2. Only uploading appropriate pictures or videos of others online when I have permission
3. Keeping personal devices turned off and out of sight during lessons
4. Treating the academy's systems and equipment with respect
5. Only using academy devices and internet access to help me with my learning. If I'm not sure if something is allowed, I will ask a member of staff
6. Writing emails and online messages carefully and politely
7. Only changing the settings on devices provided by the academy if a teacher/technician has said I can
8. Making no attempt to bypass internet filters. They are there to protect me.
9. Never using the academy's systems for personal financial gain, gambling, political purposes or advertising

I will demonstrate I am kind by:

1. Never engaging in bullying behaviour in any form (on and offline)
2. Not sharing any images, video, sounds or text that could upset, threaten the safety of or offend any member of the academy's community.

I will demonstrate I am reliable by

1. Always checking that any information I find online is reliable and accurate.
2. Reporting anyone trying to misuse technology to a member of staff.
3. Speaking to an adult I trust if something happens to either myself or another pupil which makes me feel worried, scared or uncomfortable.
4. Keeping up to date with issues I may face online I will visit www.thinkuknow.co.uk, www.childnet.com and www.childline.org.uk to find out more about keeping safe online.

Agreement

1. I know it can be a criminal offence to hack accounts or systems or send threatening and offensive messages.



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2. I will respect other people's information and copyright by giving a reference and asking permission before using images or text from online sources.
3. I understand that it may be a criminal offence or breach of the academy's policy to download or share inappropriate pictures, videos or other material online.
4. I know that If the teachers or ICT support staff suspect that I am behaving inappropriately with technology, then enhanced monitoring and procedures may be used, such as checking and/or confiscating personal technologies such as mobile phones and other devices.
5. I know that if I do not follow this agreement then I will be subject to sanctions.
6. I have read and talked about these rules with my parents/carers.

I have read, understood and agreed to comply with St Aidan's Catholic Academy Pupil Acceptable Use of Technology Policy when using the internet and other associated technologies, both on and off site.

Name of pupil:

Signed:

Date (DDMMYY):



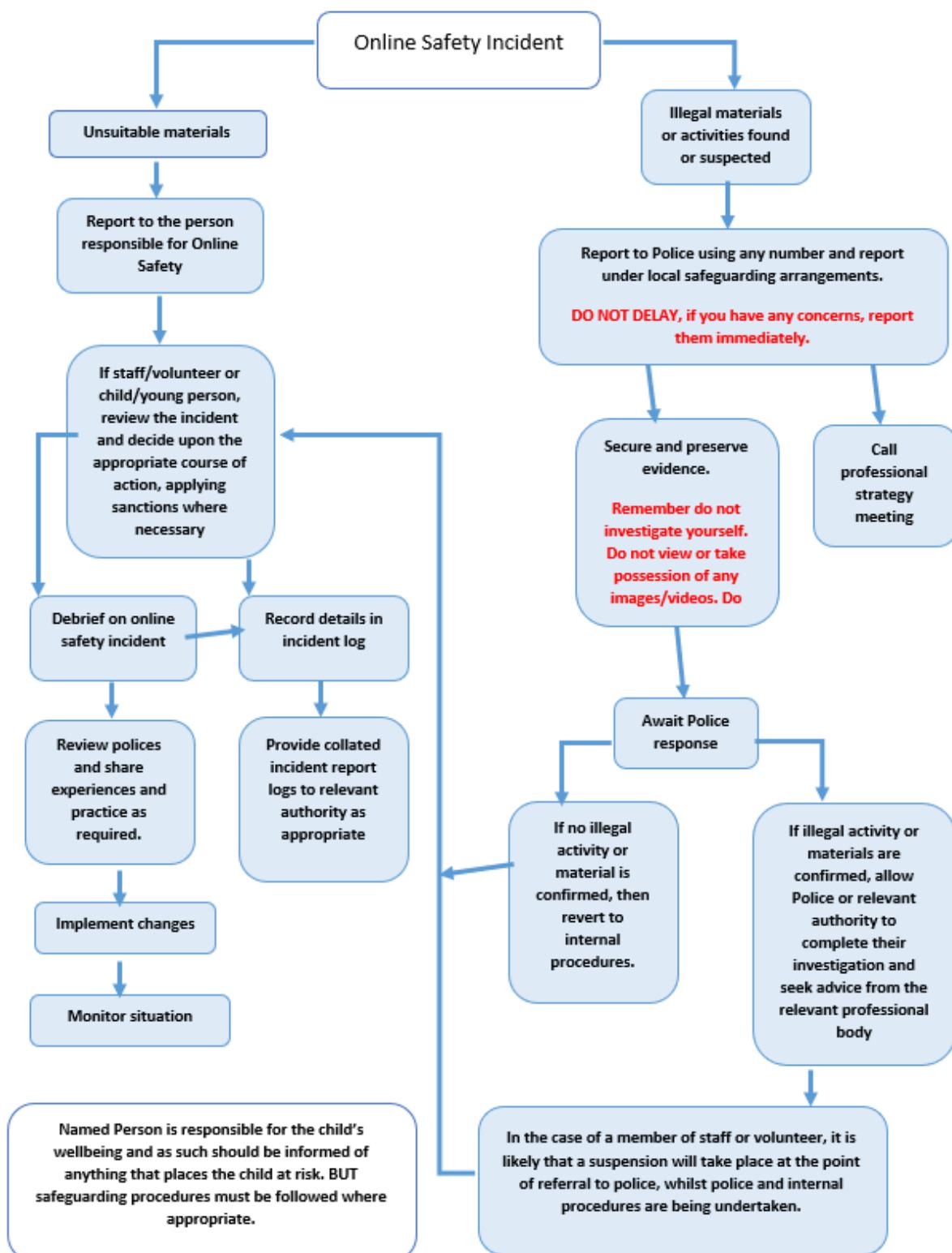
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Incident Response Procedure

If there is any suspicion that the web site(s) concerned may contain child abuse images, or if there is any other suspected illegal activity, refer to the right-hand side of the Flowchart (below and appendix) for responding to online safety incidents and report immediately to the police.





Social Media Policy

Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other.

The academy recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. Staff, parents/carers and pupils are actively encouraged to find creative ways to use social media. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal reputation. This policy aims to encourage the safe use of social media by the academy, its staff, parents, carers and children.

Scope

This policy is subject to the academy's codes of conduct and acceptable use agreements. This policy:

- Applies to all staff and to all online communications which directly or indirectly, represent the academy.
- Applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere.
- Encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education
- *Defines the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to the academy*

The academy respects privacy and understands that staff and pupils may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the academy's reputation are within the scope of this policy.

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a school account or using the academy name. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications are those made via a personal social media accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with, or impacts on, the academy, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the academy with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the academy are outside the scope of this policy.

Digital communications with pupils are also considered. *Staff may use social media to communicate with pupils via an academy social media account for teaching and learning purposes but must consider whether this is appropriate and consider the potential implications.*

Roles & Responsibilities

SLT will:

- Facilitate training and guidance on Social Media use
- Develop and implement the Social Media policy
- Taking a lead role in investigating any reported incidents
- Make an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required
- Approve account creation



Administrators/Moderators of SM accounts will:

- Create the account following SLT approval
- Store account details, including passwords securely
- Be involved in monitoring and contributing to the account
- Control the process for managing an account after the lead staff member has left the organisation (closing or transferring)

Teaching Staff will:

- Know the contents of and ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies
- Attending appropriate training
- Regularly monitoring, updating and managing content he/she has posted via academy accounts
- Adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the academy

Process for creating new accounts

The academy have whole school and department Twitter and Instagram accounts. No other accounts should be created. If a member of staff feel that another accounts is necessary they should present a business case to the Leadership Team which covers the following points:

- The aim of the account
- The intended audience
- How the account will be promoted
- Who will run the account (at least two staff members should be named)
- Will the account be open or private/closed

Following consideration by the SLT an application will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the SLT must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of the academy has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the academy, including volunteers or parents.

Monitoring

Academy accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently (preferably 7 days a week, including during holidays). Any comments, queries or complaints made through those accounts must be responded to within 24 hours (or on the next working day if received at a weekend) even if the response is only to acknowledge receipt. Regular monitoring and intervention is essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on an academy social media account.

Behaviour

- **The academy requires that all users using social media adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this policy and other relevant policies.**
- **Digital communications by staff must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy.** Staff will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgments about staff. Academy social media accounts must not be used for personal gain. Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they leave the employment of the academy.



- Users must declare who they are in social media posts or accounts. Anonymous posts are discouraged in relation to school activity.
- If a journalist makes contact about posts made using social media staff must refer this straight to SLT.
- Unacceptable conduct, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the academy and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff, and escalated where appropriate.
- The use of social media by staff while at work may be monitored, in line with academy policies. *The academy permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites. However, where excessive use is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken*
- The academy will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the academy will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the academy will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies, and may take action according to the disciplinary policy.

Legal considerations

- Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
- Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

Handling abuse

- When acting on behalf of the academy, handle offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.
- If a conversation turns and becomes offensive or unacceptable, academy users should block, report or delete other users or their comments/posts and should inform the audience exactly why the action was taken
- If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse by colleagues through use of a social networking site, then this action must be reported using the agreed academy protocols.

Tone

- The tone of content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards. Key words to consider when composing messages are:
- Engaging
- Conversational
- Informative
- Friendly (on certain platforms, e.g. Facebook)

Use of images

The academy recognises that sharing of images can have a positive impact on raising its profile online and celebrating its successes with parents and the wider community. The use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to.

- **Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought in line with the academy's digital and video images policy.** If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected.



- **Under no circumstances should staff share or upload pupil pictures online other than via academy owned social media accounts**
- Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on academy social media accounts. Pupils should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any academy list of children whose images must not be published.
- If a member of staff inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately.

Personal use

By Pupils

- Staff are not permitted to follow or engage with current or prior pupils of the academy on any personal social media network account
- The academy's education programme seeks to enable the pupils to be safe and responsible users of social media
- Pupils are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the academy. Any offensive or inappropriate comments will be resolved by the use of the /academy's behaviour policy.

By Parents/Carers

- If parents/carers have access to a school learning platform where posting or commenting is enabled, parents/carers will be informed about acceptable use.
- The academy has an active parent/carer education programme which supports the safe and positive use of social media. This includes information on the website and regular sessions to update parents on how best to support their children.
- Parents/Carers are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the academy. In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made, the academy will ask the parent/carer to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, refer parents to the school's/academy's complaints procedures.

Monitoring posts about the school

As part of active social media engagement, it is considered good practice to pro-actively monitor the Internet for public postings about the academy. The academy should effectively respond to social media comments and reviews made by others according to a defined policy or process.

- Managing your personal use of Social Media and keep yourself safe by:
Adopting the adage that "Nothing" on social media is ever truly private
- Not using the academy logo and/or branding on personal accounts
- Not allowing social media to blur the lines between your professional and private life
- Checking your settings regularly and test your privacy
- Keeping an eye on your developing digital footprint
- Keeping your personal information private
- Regularly reviewing your connections – keep them to those you want to be connected to
- Always considering the; Scale, Audience and Permanency of what you post
- Always being polite even if you need to be critical
- Taking control of your images – do you want to be tagged in an image? What would children or parents say about you if they could see your images?
- Knowing how to report a problem



Managing academy social media accounts

Anyone given access to manage academy accounts should:

- Check with a senior leader before publishing content that may have controversial implications for the school
- Use a disclaimer when expressing personal views
- Make it clear who is posting content
- Use an appropriate and professional tone
- Be respectful to all parties
- Ensure you have permission to 'share' other peoples' materials and acknowledge the author
- Express opinions but do so in a balanced and measured manner
- Think before responding to comments and, when in doubt, get a second opinion
- Seek advice and report any mistakes using the school's reporting process
- Consider turning off tagging people in images where possible
- Consider the appropriateness of content for any audience of academy accounts

They shouldn't:

- Make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring the academy into disrepute
- Publish confidential or commercially sensitive material
- Breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation
- Link to, embed or add potentially inappropriate content
- Post derogatory, defamatory, offensive, harassing or discriminatory content
- Use social media to air internal grievances

This policy document will be reviewed in January 2027.

Signed by:

Dr C Emmerson
January 2026
Chair of Governors