

Almost everyone is using social network sites these days – even the Pope has a Facebook account! These kind of sites are great for staying in touch and up-to date with friends – plus, it is a free and easy way of communicating! However, did you know that there is often limited control on who, and what people can see? And you know those adverts you spot? They can get into your profile too!

Once you post any information and/or photos, not only do all your ‘friends’ see it almost immediately, but once they are there, it is also often very difficult, if not impossible to completely remove.

We know you’ll use social network sites every day; it’s fun and often harmless. But, because there are a few risks out there, we want you to be safe when using social networking sites, so here are a few guidelines that might be helpful to you...

o Assume that everything is public.

What information is there about you on your profiles? Full name? Birthday? Where you live? Do know who can see this information? Opting for private doesn’t always mean that *only* your friends can see your profile. Check your privacy settings, so you know which parts of your profile others can access – you can alter your settings so your ‘friends’ can see things someone doing a general search can’t. Try and keep your details hidden from anyone who doesn’t yet know you.

o Be careful of posting photos

Uploading digital photos is so quick and easy – but they can be easily copied, altered or even distorted by anyone who can see them. Make sure your settings are such that only people you know and trust can see them... and do not post any photos that you wouldn’t want *everyone* you know to see.

o Be responsible in making comments on another person’s (including adult friends) status or writing on any walls

More often than not, people other than your friends can see what you’re typing on about! Make sure your comments/posts are not inappropriate, too personal nor could cause any form of offence or insult anyone. It is easy to misread someone’s rants on a bad day!

o Don’t reply to inbox messages from people you don’t know.

Don’t feel obliged to reply to messages from strangers. You do not need to reply. Instead, tell an adult and block that person from contacting you again. In the same way, ***never meet up with someone you have only met through social networking*** – it is unsafe and irresponsible. If you want to meet a person, talk to your parents and friends about it – never arrange a meeting in secret.

o Trust your instincts

If you feel uncomfortable with any social networking within the Parish, or with any person’s possible misuse of the site, tell someone immediately! You can either inform your parents/ guardians or someone in a position of Parish authority. Our parish safeguarding representative **Cath White** is always available to help you, or talk through any concerns with you. You can contact her at the Presbytery on **01727 853585** – or speak to Joanna French and she’ll put you in touch. You will not cause offence sharing your worries!

If for any reason you are worried or concerned about something or someone on Facebook or any other site, or if you are being contacted by someone you are uncomfortable with, tell someone!

Please note:

There shouldn’t be any ‘group pages’ for Parish Youth Events or Groups on any network sites. If you know of one, please let Joanna French know (email: Joanna.french@sasyouth.com).

Social Networking: Guidelines & advice for Young People of the Parish

Ss. Alban & Stephen Parish
March 2011

Please note: In no way is the Parish responsible for any personal use of social networking sites. This leaflet is offered to provide guidelines so to ensure the safety and awareness of all parishioners. In no way is it to be held as an official document of the Archdiocese of Westminster.