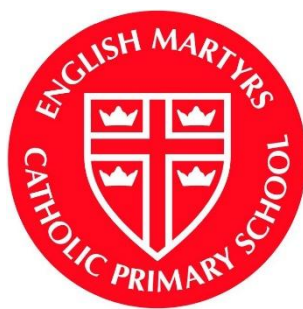




ENGLISH MARTYRS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Date of Approval	July 2026
Date of Next Review	July 2028
Review led by	Headteacher
Approved by	FGB
This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents	Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Online Safety Policy, Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Family Code of Conduct, Complaints Policy, Data Protection Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Acceptable Use Policies
Notes	This policy reflects the school's safeguarding responsibilities and commitment to promoting healthy, age-appropriate use of technology.



School Mission Statement

Our Mission statement demonstrates our commitment to inclusion at English Martyrs school:

To accept each individual as they are and to enable them to develop their full potential within a Christ-centred, worshipping community in a spirit of love, happiness and understanding

'A Learning Community in Christ'

Catholic Ethos and School Values

At English Martyrs Catholic Primary School, we believe that our faith should influence not only how we behave within school but also how we interact with one another in the wider world and within digital spaces. The principles within this policy reflect our commitment to treating all members of our school community with dignity, compassion and respect, both offline and online.

As a Catholic school, we recognise that every person is created in the image and likeness of God and therefore deserves to be treated with dignity, compassion and respect. This belief underpins our approach to social media, online communication and the use of technology. We expect all members of our school community to uphold these principles whether communicating face-to-face, through messaging platforms or on social media.

Our school values of Community, Inspire, Respect and Belief provide the foundation for this policy.

Community

We understand that online spaces form part of modern communities. We therefore expect all members of our school community to use technology and social media in ways that strengthen relationships, support one another and contribute positively to school life. Communication should seek to build understanding and partnership rather than division or conflict.

Inspire

Technology and social media provide opportunities to celebrate success, share learning and encourage one another. We believe that online communication should inspire confidence, kindness and hope. We encourage members of our community to use digital platforms to support, encourage and celebrate others.

Respect

Respect is at the heart of all positive relationships. We expect all members of the school community to communicate courteously and thoughtfully, even when opinions differ. Respect includes considering the impact that words, images and online activity may have on children, families, staff and the wider community.

Belief

Our Catholic faith reminds us of the inherent worth and dignity of every individual. We therefore reject behaviours that seek to humiliate, intimidate, bully or undermine others, whether in person or online. We encourage all members of our community to act with integrity, honesty and compassion in their digital interactions and to take responsibility for the impact of their behaviour on others.

In applying this policy, the school seeks to promote a culture in which technology is used responsibly, relationships are protected and the wellbeing of all members of the community is valued and respected.

1. Introduction

Social media, mobile technology and online communication are now an established part of everyday life. They offer many opportunities for communication, learning, creativity and connection. They also play an increasingly important role in the lives of children and families.

While technology can provide significant benefits, it can also expose children and adults to risks including online bullying, harassment, harmful content, misinformation, social conflict, reputational damage and safeguarding concerns.

At English Martyrs Catholic Primary School, we believe that the values we promote within school should extend beyond the school gates and into the digital world. The same standards of behaviour, courtesy, honesty and respect are expected whether individuals interact face-to-face, through messaging platforms or on social media.

Online communication can have a significant impact upon children's wellbeing, relationships, learning and sense of belonging. It can also affect staff welfare, parental confidence and the wider culture of the school community. For this reason, we regard responsible online behaviour as an important part of safeguarding and community responsibility.

This policy aims to provide a clear framework for the safe, respectful and responsible use of social media, mobile technology and online communication. It supports the school's wider commitment to safeguarding, positive relationships and healthy childhood development while recognising the important role that parents and carers play in guiding children's use of technology outside school.

As technology continues to evolve, the school will continue to promote approaches that support children's wellbeing, encourage age-appropriate use of digital platforms and help young people develop healthy and positive relationships with technology.

This policy is not intended to prevent individuals from expressing opinions or engaging in lawful discussion. Rather, it seeks to ensure that communication takes place respectfully, responsibly and in a manner that does not place others at risk of harm.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Promote safe and respectful use of social media and online communication.
- Protect children, staff and families from online harm.
- Support positive home-school relationships.
- Clarify expectations regarding online conduct.
- Promote healthy and age-appropriate use of technology.
- Reduce the likelihood of online bullying and conflict.
- Protect the wellbeing and reputation of members of the school community.

- Provide clear procedures for dealing with concerns relating to social media and online communication.
- Support the school's wider safeguarding responsibilities.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Pupils.
- Parents and carers.
- Staff.
- Governors.
- Volunteers.
- Visitors.
- Contractors.
- Any individual communicating on behalf of the school.

It relates to:

- School-managed social media accounts.
- Social media activity involving members of the school community.
- Online activity that impacts upon pupils, staff or the wider school community.
- Online behaviour occurring outside school where there may be consequences for safeguarding, wellbeing, relationships or the orderly running of the school.

The school recognises that many online interactions take place outside school hours. However, where those interactions impact upon the welfare of children or members of the school community, the school may become involved as part of its safeguarding responsibilities.

4. Our Approach to Children, Technology and Digital Wellbeing

As a primary school, we recognise that technology is an important part of modern life and that children need to develop the knowledge and skills required to navigate the digital world safely.

However, we also recognise growing concerns regarding the impact of unrestricted access to smartphones, social media platforms and online communication services on children's wellbeing, social development, relationships, concentration and mental health.

The school strongly supports an approach to technology that is:

- Age-appropriate.
- Gradual and developmentally appropriate.
- Supervised by trusted adults.
- Balanced with offline experiences.
- Focused on wellbeing as well as safety.

The school encourages families to carefully consider when children are provided with smartphones, access to social media accounts and unrestricted internet access.

We strongly encourage parents and carers to follow minimum age requirements established by social media platforms, apps and communication services.

The school recognises that many online incidents involving primary-aged children arise when children access platforms designed for significantly older users. While the school will always support children affected by online incidents, parents and carers remain responsible for decisions relating to access to technology and social media outside school.

When incidents arise from age-inappropriate social media use, the school will consider all relevant circumstances, including the extent to which age restrictions, parental controls and appropriate supervision were in place.

The school will continue to review emerging evidence regarding children's use of technology and may adapt its approach over time in order to promote healthy childhood development and digital wellbeing.

5. Official School Social Media Accounts

The school uses social media primarily to:

- Celebrate pupil achievements.
- Share information.
- Promote school events.
- Strengthen communication with the wider community.
- Highlight learning experiences and successes.

Only authorised staff members may publish content on behalf of the school.

All content published through school accounts will:

- Reflect the school's ethos and values.
- Promote positive messages.
- Comply with safeguarding requirements.
- Comply with data protection legislation.
- Respect parental consent regarding the use of images.
- Protect the dignity and privacy of pupils and families.

The Headteacher retains overall responsibility for the management and monitoring of the school's social media presence.

6. Expectations for the Whole School Community

Members of the school community are expected to engage respectfully online in exactly the same way that they would be expected to engage during face-to-face interactions.

Everyone associated with the school is expected to contribute positively to the culture of the school community.

The following are examples of unacceptable online behaviour:

- Bullying or harassment.
- Threatening or intimidating language.
- Discriminatory comments.
- Personal attacks on individuals.
- Deliberately provocative behaviour.
- Publication of confidential information.
- Publication of unverified allegations.
- Attempts to encourage hostility towards individuals or groups.
- Behaviour intended to damage reputations.
- Behaviour likely to cause unnecessary distress to others.

These expectations apply equally to:

- Social networking sites.
- Discussion forums.
- Review platforms.
- Private messaging groups.
- Community chat groups.
- Peer-to-peer messaging services.

The school recognises that online behaviour can have a significant impact upon the wellbeing of children and adults and therefore expects the highest standards of conduct at all times.

7. Parents, Carers and Online Conduct

The school greatly values the positive relationships that exist between home and school and recognises the important role that parents and carers play in supporting children.

Parents and carers have the right to express views and opinions regarding their child's education. However, concerns are most effectively resolved through direct communication with the school.

Where concerns arise, parents and carers are encouraged to:

- Seek clarification from the school before reaching conclusions.
- Discuss concerns directly with the appropriate member of staff.
- Follow the school's Complaints Policy where concerns remain unresolved.
- Avoid discussing concerns publicly before they have been investigated.

The publication of allegations, speculation or accusations online can:

- Cause distress to children.
- Damage professional reputations.
- Undermine investigations.
- Escalate conflict.

- Increase safeguarding risks.
- Impact the wider school community.

The school therefore expects concerns to be raised through appropriate channels wherever possible.

Constructive discussion and respectful challenge are welcomed. Personal attacks, intimidation or online campaigns against individuals are not.

8. WhatsApp Groups and Private Messaging Services

The school recognises that many parents and carers communicate through private messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, Signal, Messenger and similar services.

The school does not monitor private communications and recognises the right of parents and carers to communicate privately with one another.

However, private status does not remove responsibility for the content of communications.

Where messages, recordings, screenshots, images or other content are brought to the attention of the school and raise concerns relating to:

- Safeguarding.
- Bullying.
- Harassment.
- Discrimination.
- Threats.
- Staff welfare.
- Pupil welfare.
- Misinformation.
- The orderly running of the school.

the school may consider and respond to that information as part of its safeguarding and leadership responsibilities.

The focus of any response will not be how the information came to the school's attention, but whether the content raises concerns that require investigation or action.

9. Filming, Photography and Publication of Content

The school recognises that most mobile phones and devices can easily record audio, photographs and video.

Parents, carers, visitors and members of the public must not:

- Secretly record conversations involving school staff.
- Secretly record pupils.
- Publish recordings without appropriate permission.
- Share recordings in a manner that compromises safeguarding.

- Use recordings to harass, intimidate, threaten, target or undermine individuals.

The school recognises that there may occasionally be legitimate reasons for filming school events where permission has been provided. However, the publication of recordings involving other children or staff requires careful consideration of privacy, consent and safeguarding implications.

Where material is published in a way that creates concern, the school may request its removal and seek further support from external agencies where appropriate.

10. Staff Use of Social Media

Staff have a professional responsibility to maintain public confidence in both the school and the teaching profession.

Staff must:

- Comply with the Staff Code of Conduct.
- Maintain professional boundaries.
- Use appropriate privacy settings.
- Avoid discussion of pupils, parents, colleagues or governors.
- Conduct themselves in a manner consistent with professional expectations.

Staff must not:

- Communicate with pupils through personal social media accounts.
- Accept current pupils as social media contacts.
- Share confidential information.
- Publish content that may bring the school or profession into disrepute.

Staff should not create, record or publish content for personal social media accounts while on school premises and / or during the school day unless authorised by the Headteacher. Staff should recognise that content created on school premises, even where no pupils are present and the school is not explicitly identified, may still reasonably be associated with the school by pupils, families and members of the wider community. As a result, content created within school settings may influence public perceptions of the school, the profession and the wider school community. Staff are therefore expected to exercise professional judgement when creating content for personal social media accounts and to ensure that any material published reflects the standards of conduct expected of members of the teaching profession and the values of the English Martyrs community. This expectation is not intended to prevent staff from maintaining personal interests, hobbies or a life outside school. Rather, it recognises that when personal content is created within a school environment, the distinction between personal and professional identities can become blurred. Staff should take reasonable steps to ensure that content created or shared online does not undermine safeguarding, compromise professional boundaries, create reputational risk or negatively impact relationships within the school community.

Staff are reminded that online activity may become public and therefore professional standards apply both within and beyond the workplace.

11. Online Bullying and Safeguarding Concerns

Online bullying will be treated in the same way as any other form of bullying.

The school may become involved in incidents occurring outside school where those incidents:

- Affect children's wellbeing.
- Affect relationships within school.
- Create safeguarding concerns.
- Impact upon the welfare of members of the school community.

All concerns involving online bullying, abuse or harassment should be reported to the school as soon as possible.

Incidents will be addressed in accordance with:

- The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- The Online Safety Policy.
- The Anti-Bullying Policy.
- The Behaviour Policy.

The school's response will seek to protect all children involved while promoting accountability, education and restoration of positive relationships wherever possible.

12. Information Sharing, Privacy and Safeguarding

The school may receive information relating to online concerns from a variety of sources including:

- Pupils.
- Parents and carers.
- Staff.
- Members of the public.
- Partner agencies.

Where safeguarding concerns arise, the school may consider and share information in accordance with safeguarding duties and legal obligations.

The school recognises that concerns are sometimes raised regarding privacy when information from online platforms is shared with school leaders.

However, safeguarding responsibilities require schools to consider information that may indicate risks to children or members of the school community.

The school will not routinely disclose the identity of individuals who share concerns where doing so may compromise safeguarding processes, confidentiality obligations or the welfare of those involved.

13. Responding to Inappropriate Online Behaviour

Where inappropriate online behaviour comes to the attention of the school, the school may:

- Seek clarification from those involved.
- Request removal of content.
- Facilitate discussion to resolve concerns.
- Apply relevant school policies.
- Seek support from the Local Authority.
- Report content to social media providers.
- Seek legal advice.
- Involve external agencies.
- Contact the police where appropriate.

Any response will be proportionate to the circumstances and will focus upon safeguarding, wellbeing and maintaining positive relationships.

In order to ensure consistency and fairness, the school and Governing Body may use standard correspondence templates when responding to concerns regarding online conduct. A model letter is included as Appendix A of this policy.

In some circumstances, the school or Governing Body may seek advice from the Local Authority, professional associations, social media platforms, safeguarding agencies, legal advisers or the police.

This may be appropriate where online content:

- contains serious allegations;
- appears defamatory;
- compromises safeguarding;
- threatens, intimidates or harasses members of the school community;
- involves repeated breaches of this policy;
- risks significant harm to individuals or the wider school community.

Any decision to seek external or legal advice will be proportionate to the circumstances and informed by the school's safeguarding responsibilities and duty of care.

14. Partnership with Families

The school believes that the most effective approach to online safety is one based upon partnership between school and home.

We encourage parents and carers to:

- Take an active interest in their child's online life.
- Delay access to social media until children are old enough to use it responsibly.
- Use parental controls where appropriate.

- Establish clear family expectations regarding technology use.
- Promote healthy balances between online and offline activities.
- Model respectful online behaviour.

Children learn not only from what adults tell them, but also from what they see adults doing. The school therefore asks all members of the community to model the positive online behaviour that we seek to develop in our children.

15. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner where changes in legislation, safeguarding guidance or emerging technologies make this necessary.

The Governing Body will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy through its wider safeguarding and behaviour oversight responsibilities.

Appendix A – Model Letter Regarding Online Conduct

Private and Confidential

Dear [Parent/Carer],

I am writing regarding content which has been brought to the attention of the school and/or Governing Body and which appears to relate to the school, members of staff, pupils or the wider school community.

As outlined in the school's Social Media, Mobile Technology and Online Communication Policy, we ask all members of the English Martyrs community to communicate in a manner that reflects our shared values of Community, Inspire, Respect and Belief. We recognise that parents and carers may hold differing views, raise concerns and seek clarification regarding matters connected with the school. However, we ask that concerns are raised through the appropriate channels so that they can be properly considered and addressed.

The school's policy explains that online communication should not be used in ways that may:

- cause distress to members of the school community;
- undermine safeguarding;
- publish allegations or speculation;
- damage professional relationships;
- negatively affect the wellbeing of children, families or staff.

We are therefore asking that you review the content in question and consider whether it is consistent with the expectations set out within the school's policies.

Where appropriate, we respectfully request that content which may cause harm, distress or misunderstanding is removed and that any ongoing concerns are raised directly with the school through the appropriate procedures.

We remain committed to working in partnership with parents and carers and would welcome the opportunity to discuss any concerns in a constructive and respectful manner.

Thank you for your support and understanding.

Yours sincerely,

[Headteacher / Chair of Governors]

English Martyrs Catholic Primary School