**Guidelines for Online Ministry with Children**

The Archdiocese of Tuam is committed to safe ministry with children/young people and is aware that over the past year, engagement with children has been almost impossible to carry out safely.

Bearing this in mind and aware of the potential of online communication in encouraging young people in their faith, the Archdiocese has drawn up guidelines for the protection of children, their families and of the adults who engage with them online.

It is important to note that the Church’s Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures apply to online ministry as they do with face to face engagement.

**Guidelines for safe use of Zoom in Youth Ministry**

* Subscription for Zoom should be taken out by the Church body engaged in youth ministry and should be managed by someone appointed by that body. (Free version should not be used as security settings are not robust enough)
* All elements of the Safeguarding Policy of the Archdiocese of Tuam relevant to working with young people also apply to Zoom sessions. Parents should be informed of how they can access this Policy.
* A Hazard Assessment must be drawn up to include risk of contact between unauthorised adults and children/young people in the group.
* Children under thirteen years of age must be accompanied by their parent/guardian on an online session
* Leaders should never be on their own in a breakout room with a young person.
* Any allegation, suspicion, concern or knowledge of child abuse must be reported in line with the reporting procedures of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Contact details of DLPs, Tusla and Gardaí should be made available.
* All leaders, including the Tech Host, must be trained in use of Zoom
* The Tech Hostis responsible for scheduling meetings, emailing the link to parents, admitting people individually into the meeting, muting participants’ microphones on entry, helping participants if struggling with the technology, locking the meeting once all invited participants are in attendance and setting up and controlling breakout rooms.
* Parents / Guardians should be encouraged to review Zoom’s Privacy terms and conditions, discuss online safety with their child/ young person and then complete Zoom consent forms which are stored securely by the Leader.
* Young people should access the parish/archdiocesan zoom meeting using only their parents email address. They should never be contacted on private zoom accounts.
* A specific Code of Conduct for Zoom meetings, devised by the children/young people and read and signed by them and their parents must be in place. This should be displayed at the beginning of each meeting. Respect, kindness, confidentiality, appropriate dress and surroundings must form part of this code for children/young people bearing in mind that safeguarding is always paramount.
* The Leader must conduct the online session in a safe respectful way, records attendance and any breach of conduct. Any concern/allegation/suspicion must be brought to the appropriate persons/agencies.
* Meetings on Zoom with young people are never to be recorded either by the young people or by the leaders. Participants may not save the chat or engage with each other in private chats during an online session.
* Participants should have their cameras on, and their Christian names only displayed
* Participants should mute their microphone when not speaking.
* Age appropriate activities only should be undertaken and parents should be informed in advance of such activities
* A code of behaviour for adults must be drawn up and signed by each leader and by the Tech Host.
* All Leaders should remain in the meeting until all participants have left.
* The chat text should be reviewed before the meeting ends and each session should be reviewed on completion.
* Children and parents must be made aware of to whom concerns may be brought.
* If a meeting is infiltrated by outsiders, it should be immediately terminated and safeguarding policy/procedures and Data Protection Policy of the Archdiocese should be followed. Parents / Guardians must be informed, so that they can decide if they want their child/young person to continue using the platform.

**Zoom meetings with school**

* Content for the Zoom Meeting will be discussed and agreed with the designated teacher.
* Children / young people, along with their Parents / Guardians who will be part of the Zoom meeting must have given written consent to the activity.
* Teacher will be sent the link and password for the Zoom meeting.
* He/she will log in, with only the teacher visible, unless Parents / Guardians have given written consent allowing the students to be visible.
* Church personnel must adhere to the policies of the schools within which they are ministering.