



Diocese of Westminster

Diocese of Westminster Social Media Policy

As use of the internet and social media proliferates, it is appropriate to formulate a policy regarding its use by diocesan personnel. In this document, 'diocesan personnel' includes diocesan employees or those who provide ministry or service for the diocese on a voluntary basis.

1. Social media include all forms of online media that can be accessed by a wide audience from anywhere. They include but are not limited to such sites as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Issuu, Flickr, Vimeo, Youtube, and Instagram, for instance. They also include websites, messaging boards, discussion forums, and blogs. In other words, any form of online media and communication that can be accessed by the general public is included in this definition.
2. The internet is essentially a public sphere, even if social media sites might give the impression of a degree of privacy. Diocesan personnel are advised to remember that control of images and text is lost once a post is made. This may mean that, even if you delete a social media post, it can still be seen in future in certain circumstances, for example, if it is reposted by someone else, shared or published.
3. Diocesan personnel must abide at all times by the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS) Policy and procedures. CSAS Guidelines regarding Social Networking with Children, Young People and vulnerable adults are to be observed by all diocesan employees and those who provide ministry or service for the diocese on a voluntary basis.
4. Use of the internet and social media in your official role should be treated in exactly the same way as any interaction with the mass media. In other words, treat all content as you would a press release or a public statement, taking particular care to refrain from posting i. confidential information ii. anything which breaches Data Protection regulations iii .any intellectual property or copyright material without express permission of the owner iv. derogatory or hostile responses to others' posts v. anything which could bring the diocese into disrepute. Anything which is broadcast or published in your diocesan capacity must be accessible to the Diocesan Communications Office and the individual's line manager.
5. The diocese respects the right of diocesan personnel to express views on their personal social media sites. However, online activity which negatively impacts on an individual's ability to carry out their role in the diocese or which could bring the diocese into disrepute may result in their being required to cease voluntary ministry or service and/or, in a serious case involving a paid employee, may lead to disciplinary action in line with the diocesan disciplinary policy and procedure. Breach of diocesan or CSAS policy on safeguarding, bullying and harassment or discipline could lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

6. Diocesan personnel who are Catholics are reminded that their canonical responsibility 1. to recognise the integrity of the Church's teaching on faith and morals, 2. to respect the dignity of persons, 3. to acknowledge the special role of their Pastors in faith and 4. to promote the common good of the Church applies always and everywhere including on personal media and internet sites.
7. Diocesan personnel who proffer opinions on any topics related to Church teaching on their personal media should specifically state that their views are entirely their own. Personal sites may not carry diocesan logos and diocesan job titles may not be used as primary headings or in profile descriptions on personal sites. Where, in the judgement of the Archbishop or his delegate, the content of a personal social media site is deemed to be in danger of causing reputational damage to the Church or the diocese, the individual may be required to remove any indication of their diocesan connection on their personal social media and may be requested to remove the content.
8. Diocesan personnel are asked to remember the security climate at this time, and avoid posting any images, video or information which could compromise the safety or security of diocesan personnel or any part of a parish or other diocesan building, the cathedral and cathedral complex. Please be especially mindful of not recording or publishing any video footage that might compromise security entry codes or safe combinations.
9. The Diocese actively monitors social media and internet activity and reserves the right to monitor employees' internet usage. The Diocese may access email files and folders and line managers have the right to access diocesan email accounts and business communications of their staff for business purposes. Staff may be asked to access diocesan email accounts and business communication of colleagues for business purposes.
10. Access to particular social media websites may be withdrawn in any case of misuse.
11. Diocesan personnel are advised to reflect carefully on Pope Francis' guidance on the use of social media. In particular, the Holy Father has noted: 'The speed with which information is communicated exceeds our capacity for reflection and judgment, and this does not make for more balanced and proper forms of expression. ... We need, for example, to recover a certain sense of deliberateness and calm. This calls for time and the ability to be silent and to listen.'

I confirm that I have read the above policies and agree with them and I will therefore adhere to all requirements contained in this agreement or as may be otherwise directed to me in writing by my line manager.

Name		Signed		Date	

If you have any questions or would like guidance with regard to the use of social media, please contact the Diocesan Communications Officer: communications@rcdow.org.uk, 020 7798 9031