

Parent Newsletter: Teaching respectful online socialising in a Catholic school community

Dear Parents and Carers,

As parents raising children in a digital age, we have a shared responsibility to guide them in using technology with kindness, integrity, and respect. In Catholic education, we strive to nurture not only academic excellence but also moral character. This includes helping our children become respectful and responsible “Cyber Citizens.”

Children begin forming their values and attitudes toward online behaviour long before they create their first social media account. They learn by watching us. That’s why **modelling respectful online interactions** is one of the most powerful ways to teach them.

Core Principles of Respectful Online Behaviour

1. Treat others as you would like to be treated

This timeless principle is central to Catholic teaching and applies just as much online as it does in person. Remind your child that behind every screen is a real person with real feelings.

2. Think before you post

Words and images shared online can last forever. Unlike spoken words, digital posts can be saved, shared, and revisited. Encourage your child to pause and reflect before posting, especially when emotions are high.

3. Be mindful with photos

Posting photos online gives others the ability to reuse or manipulate them. Teach your child to ask permission before sharing images of others and to think carefully about what they share of themselves.

4. Post when calm

Emotion-driven posts often lead to regret. Help your child understand the value of waiting until they feel calm before responding to conflict or posting about sensitive topics.

5. Two wrongs don’t make a right

Even when faced with disrespect or negativity online, responding with kindness and self-control reflects our Catholic values. Encourage your child to be a peacemaker, not a participant in online drama.

Tips for Parents: Modelling respectful online use

- **Be a role model:** Speak kindly online, avoid gossip, and show restraint in emotional posts.
- **Talk openly:** Share your own experiences and challenges with online communication.
- **Set boundaries:** Create family rules around screen time and social media use.

- **Pray together:** Include intentions for kindness and wisdom in digital spaces during family prayer.

Faith in Action: Digital citizenship as a Catholic value

Respecting others online is not just about etiquette—it's about living our faith. Jesus taught us to love our neighbours, forgive others, and act with compassion. These teachings apply to every part of life, including the digital world.

Encourage your child to ask:

- *"Would I say this face-to-face?"*
- *"Does this reflect the values I believe in?"*
- *"Am I lifting others up or tearing them down?"*

Helpful resources for Families

- [eSafety Commissioner – Online Safety for Families](#)
- [ThinkUKnow – Online Safety Education](#)
- [Kids Helpline – Support for Young People](#)
- [Australian Catholic Bishops Conference – Social Justice Resources](#)

Let's work together to raise children who are not only tech-savvy but also compassionate, respectful, and faithful in their online interactions. By modelling good behaviour, setting clear expectations, and grounding our guidance in Catholic values, we help our children become digital citizens who reflect Christ's love in all they do.

Warm regards,

Manager Child Safeguarding

Reference List

1. **eSafety Commissioner (Australia)**
Official government resource for online safety education, reporting tools, and support.
Website: <https://www.esafety.gov.au>
2. **ThinkUKnow Australia**
A national online safety education program led by the Australian Federal Police, focused on preventing child exploitation.
Website: <https://www.thinkuknow.org.au>
3. **Kids Helpline**
A free, confidential 24/7 counselling service for children and young people aged 5–25.
Website: <https://kidshelpline.com.au>
4. **Australian Catholic Bishops Conference – Office for Justice, Ecology and Peace**
Provides annual Social Justice Statements and resources reflecting Catholic social teaching.
Website: <https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au>