

Diocese of Manchester
Policy for Online Meetings with Minors in Parishes

Now more than ever, some parishes may wish to use online platforms for meetings with children, teens, and their families. When conducting online meetings with minors, ensuring their safety and privacy is of the utmost concern. In addition to the policies below, all adults must adhere to the diocesan [Code of Conduct](#) and must be particularly cognizant of adhering to appropriate adult-minor boundaries.

Keep in mind that virtual engagement activities cannot be required as some families will wish to opt out.

Preplanning:

1. The Director of Faith Formation/Youth Minister/Program Leader must first obtain the pastor's permission to provide virtual lessons or instruction;
2. Follow these age requirements regarding using online meeting platforms such as Zoom:
 - a. Grades 6-up: allowed with parental permission. Parents are welcome to join.
 - b. Grades 4-5: allowed with a parent present/nearby and available, but frequency should be limited. Family meetings are preferred for this age group.
 - c. Grades K-3: allowed **ONLY** with a parent present and visible; frequency should be very limited. Family meetings should be the norm.
3. In all cases, parents must be informed and must provide their written permission allowing their minor student to participate in any online instruction or activity;
4. There must be at least 2 adults who have completed safe environment requirements on any live, virtual meetings with minors. If breakout sessions take place, at least 2 adults who have completed safe environment requirements must be present with each group.

When setting up a meeting through an online platform:

1. Communicate directly to parents regarding meeting times and links. Minors age 14-up may be copied with parental permission;
2. Select from the list of allowed platforms (see below);
3. Communicate to the group via approved messaging apps or official parish accounts- no personal accounts!
4. For privacy purposes, we do not recommend recording meetings. If for some reason there is a legitimate need to record a meeting, parental permission is required if minors are to be recorded;
5. Use of webcams must be optional;
6. Private chatting between adults and minors is prohibited;
7. Ensure that the location from where you are recording yourself and your manner of dress are professional in nature.

When recording an instructional video:

1. If using YouTube, use a kid-friendly channel;
2. Post the video to the parish website or Facebook page or provide it to parents via email;
3. Ensure that the location from where you are recording yourself and your manner of dress are professional in nature.

Approved Online Platforms for Providing Faith Formation Instruction to Minors

If the platform or app you want to use is not on this list, you must request permission from John Ashworth-King, jashworth-king@rcbm.org. We will add to this list as new platforms are approved.

Meetings

Zoom
Google Classroom and related apps
Edmodo.com
Cisco WebEx
Microsoft Teams
Skype MeetNow

Video Hosting

YouTube (use kid-friendly channels or parish owned channel)

Messaging Apps

FlockNote
Remind