Elm Court School
E-safety Policy

1.0   Rationale

1.1 We welcome the development of new technologies for communicating and will use them wherever they are appropriate to enhance our work with young people.

1.2 We recognise our responsibility to take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to young people's welfare are minimised; and, where there are concerns about young people's welfare, to take appropriate actions to address those concerns.

1.3 We recognise the need to protect staff and volunteers from inappropriate conduct from young people in their personal lives and from situations that may make them vulnerable to allegations of wrongful conduct.

1.4 We acknowledge that working for "schools project" requires appropriate conduct in public spaces outside our work and in our personal lives and that this includes electronic communication.

2.0   Definition

2.1 Electronic communication includes using mobile phones, computers and other devices for email, text, instant messaging and social networking.

3.0   Compliance with Safeguarding Children Agenda

3.1 We will ensure that our staff and volunteers follow the requirements of all relevant legislation as the policies and procedures of the local Safeguarding Children Board.

3.2 We will train our staff and volunteers to follow this policy and we will regularly monitor its implementation. In addition, we will carry out a full review of this policy annually.

4.0   Reasons for contacting a young person using electronic communication

4.1 It is not appropriate to have private non-work related contact with young people with whom "schools work project" is working using electronic communication.

4.2 We recognise that there will be times when it is necessary and important to use electronic communication: for example, sometimes it is easier for a young person to express a concern, thought or question using a text message or email rather than in person.

4.3 We will only use electronic communication for genuine reasons relating to work with a young person, not for general socialising or unnecessary contact.

4.4 Genuine reasons could include responding to a question or comment from a young person, contacting them to reassure them of support or confirming arrangements for a meeting or activity.

4.5 Unnecessary contact could include sharing personal issues or anything that might burden a young person. Excessive contact will also be inappropriate.

4.6 Staff and volunteers should make their line manager or team leader aware when they are using electronic communication with a young person.

5.0   Parental awareness and consent

5.1 We recognise that electronic communication is difficult for parents and carers to monitor. We will explain our policies and practice to parents and carers and seek to ensure they are aware that we use electronic communication as part of our work with young people.

5.2 Unless a young person is at risk or there are extenuating circumstances, we will observe a parent or carers wish that we do not use electronic communication to contact a young person.

6.0   Mobile phones and texting

6.1 Staff and volunteers should not give their mobile phone number to young people with whom "schools work project" is working unless they have agreed with their line manager or team leader that it is appropriate to do so.

6.2 Staff and volunteers should not initiate or respond to contact with a young person between 9pm and 8am unless the young person is at risk and there is no alternative means of communication.

6.3 Staff and volunteers should take great care not to use language that might give the wrong impression or create misunderstanding when communicating with a young person, especially when using the informal language and shorthand often used in texts. Staff and volunteers should seek advice from a line manager or team leader whenever there is doubt or concern over the content or context of electronic communication.

6.4 Where it is possible, a record of texts sent and received should be kept backed up electronically for reference and made available to a line manager or team leader if required.

7.0   Email

7.1 Staff and volunteers should only use an agreed email account for email contact with young people with whom "schools work project" is working, which will normally be an account set up specifically for this purpose. Staff and volunteers must not use their personal email accounts for contact with young people.

7.2 Staff and volunteers should observe the same care in language used as detailed in 6.3.

7.3 A record of emails sent and received should be backed up electronically for reference and made available to a line manager or team leader if required.

8.0   Social networking and instant messaging

8.1 Unlike email or texting, social networking and instant messaging involves the possibility of contact with the friends of the young person or of the staff member or volunteer. This raises particular concerns for safeguarding young people.

8.2 Staff and volunteers should only use an agreed social networking or instant messaging account for contact with young people with whom "schools work project" is working, which will normally be an account set up specifically for this purpose on behalf of a group rather than an individual.

8.3 Staff and volunteers must not use their personal social networking or instant messaging accounts for contact with young people. It is appropriate to have contact with young adults with whom "schools work project" has previously been working unless they are identified by "schools work project" as 'vulnerable adults'.

8.4 If a staff member or volunteer is contacted by a young person on a social networking site, e.g. facebook, they should not respond by messaging that young person, even to inform them that contact in this way is prohibited. Doing so will open up the staff member's profile for the young person for one month. This should instead be followed up in person at the next appropriate
gathering.

8.4 Staff and volunteers should ensure that the content of their social networking accounts, including pictures, are appropriate. Comments and other content must not be derogatory towards those with whom "schools work project" is working, including young people, school staff and other organisations. Applications, groups and other content must be appropriate to the role of a staff member of "schools work project".