

St John & St Stephen's Church, Reading



Health & Safety Policy

Responsibilities of the PCC

As a Parochial Church Council, we acknowledge that we have a duty of care to ensure the safety of those who work in, visit or use our church or cafe. We also acknowledge that, as an employer, we need to meet the requirements of health and safety law. As such, this policy is designed to meet our duty under Section 2(3) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, 1974. This is the enabling legislation from which other regulations flow. By way of example these include work at height regulations and control of hazardous substances (COSHH).

In addition, there are other statutes that underpin our obligations such as The Occupier's Liability Act 1957 and 1984.

Our policy is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that our activities are carried out safely and do not pose a risk to the health of our employees, volunteers, congregation, visitors and others who may use the church or any other premises for which we are responsible. At law the duty we owe to the various classes of person will be different. More onerous duties are deemed to be in place towards employees.

We will ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil this policy and any decisions we make will have due regard for it. Ian Maynard will have specific responsibility for its implementation as the PCC's Health and Safety Officer. We will keep health and safety matters under review at appropriate intervals.

It is the duty of each employee and volunteer to exercise personal responsibility for their own safety. It should be noted that the church could be held liable for any misdeeds of its employees and volunteers. There is therefore a duty to maintain proper oversight of activities and, where appropriate, to provide effective training.

We will endeavour to ensure that everyone involved with the church plays his or her part in its implementation. A copy of this policy will be kept in the church office and made available to anyone on request.

We will ensure that:

- Any accidents or near misses are investigated, recorded and reported if necessary. The accident register is kept in the church office and the PCC's Health & Safety Officer will investigate any accidents and report to the PCC as appropriate. The investigation will consider whether changes need to be made to prevent a recurrence. Any changes in procedure will be agreed by the PCC and recorded at its meetings.
- All employees and volunteers are aware of their health and safety responsibilities.
- Only competent persons carry out repairs, modifications, inspections and tests. The decision as to who carries out any repairs will be determined by the PCC's Health & Safety Officer or the PCC's Buildings & Plant Group.
- Any hazard, defect or damage will be reported at the earliest opportunity to a member of the Buildings & Plant Group, and steps taken to minimise any risk. Once reported, the matter will

be investigated and dealt with promptly. Where defects cannot be rectified immediately, interim steps will be taken to prevent danger.

- Relevant health & safety documents and records are retained and kept in the Parish Centre Manager's Office.
- New employees or volunteers are informed of known hazards.
- Any training required to enable employees or volunteers to carry out their duties safely is made available. The PCC's Health & Safety Officer must ensure the necessary training is undertaken and knowledge, where needed, is kept up to date.
- Nothing provided in the interests of health and safety is misused.
- Risk Assessments will be carried out and recorded when new activities are started, and existing assessments reviewed and updated as necessary. The overarching policy will need an appendix detailing what risk assessments have been undertaken and when they are due to be reviewed. The time between each review will be dependent on the nature and severity of the risk posed. Following the risk assessment, a method statement will need to be prepared indicating how a potential risk is being mitigated or removed

First Aid

We will provide basic first aid facilities including, as a minimum, suitably stocked first aid boxes.

First Aid boxes are located in the office cupboard behind the Parish Centre Manager's desk and in the kitchen. The Parish Centre Manager will ensure their contents are sufficient to enable common, minor injuries to be treated, and that they are replenished as and when required.

There is a defibrillator kept in the staff room at the school, near the door to the playground. It is important that the churchwardens and the vicar (plus any appointed First Aiders) know where this is kept and how to use it.

Fire

We will complete a specific risk assessment to identify what steps are necessary to prevent, detect and be taken in the event of a fire. Fire extinguishers will be tested regularly.

Heating Systems

We will ensure that the Refectory gas heating system is suitably maintained and given an annual gas safety check by a competent person. Records will be maintained of the checks made and any defects found will be rectified promptly.

Contractors

Before employing contractors we will endeavour to ensure that they are sufficiently qualified for the work concerned. We will ensure that they have their own Health & Safety policy and Public & Employers Liability Insurance.

Hazardous Substances

We need to ensure we comply with the COSHH regulations. Hazardous domestic cleaning materials will be stored in the designated cupboard off the ladies' toilet. This is to be kept locked and the key held in the key safe in the Parish Centre's Manager's office. Cleaning contractors are responsible for

ensuring hazardous substances are used and disposed of in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, taking any necessary precautions. Any other hazardous products (eg: graffiti remover) will be stored, used and disposed of in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Working Alone

We will identify circumstances where our employees and volunteers work alone, and implement suitable precautions to ensure their safety. Anyone working alone on the church premises should have a functioning mobile phone with them. If any risk has been identified, then a churchwarden or deputy should be informed. A separate policy document is applicable to Working Alone.

Safety in the Church

Worship Area

No trip hazards will be left on the floor before or during the time of worship. All equipment and furnishings will be kept in good working order. Any item deemed to need repair will be removed and placed out of harm's way (or if this is not possible, screened off)

Responsibility for children's safety

When in the church, unless children are in a scheduled activity, the safety of each child is the responsibility of the parent(s) concerned or adult responsible for that child.

Evacuation

It is the responsibility of the churchwardens to ensure that no-one is left in the building should it need to be evacuated and to check and close windows and doors in the event of a fire or to open windows and doors in the event of a suspected bomb. If the churchwardens are not present for any reason the Leader of the service will designate another two responsible persons to undertake these actions.

For groups using the premises

We remain responsible for any group who uses our premises. It is our responsibility to see that no hazards remain accessible and we will provide clear parameters for the relevant responsibilities of the group using the building and our responsibilities to the user.

Repair, maintenance and building works

Each job requires a separate risk analysis. Standard risk assessments will cover such activities as working at height, including on the roof, and working with electrical circuitry. See above regarding working alone. This is prohibited if ladders (work at height regulations include use of ladders and other equipment), electric cabling or gas piping are involved. Any work involving gas or electricity installations will be carried out in accordance with the prevailing regulations.

Whenever practical the scaffold tower should be used instead of a ladder.

We will keep a record of repairs and this will be monitored by the Buildings & Plant Group. Defective equipment will be removed or labelled so that there can be no doubt that it is awaiting repair.

Our School Neighbours

Visitors to our church (except parents on special days), are kept strictly separate from the school and the children. Welfare of the children is our greatest priority. (Note the school will also have similar obligations as occupier and user of the premises.)

Kitchen

Children should not be allowed in the kitchen when cooking or preparation of hot drinks is taking place.

Hygiene. It is the responsibility of those using the kitchen to keep it clean and to dispose of any out-of-date or unusable food. The bins are emptied by the cleaner. All users of the kitchen should comply with the relevant food and hygiene regulations.

We will ensure that when food is prepared a clean surface, utensils and equipment are used. Food must be stored in such a way as to avoid contamination. Hand washing facilities are provided at a separate sink in the kitchen.

Special care needs to be taken when preparing and serving hot food and drinks to minimise the occurrence of burns, spills and other incidents that may compromise safety.

We will ensure that the gas oven is serviced every 5 years.

Electrical appliances must not be used if there is evidence of frayed wires or other potential danger. All electrical appliances (throughout the whole premises) will be tested regularly.

Outside activities

Each activity outside of the church/school building will need a separate risk assessment. Each individual children's or youth group will include a member who has a current DBS certificate and whose Safeguarding training is up to date. There will not be an adult in sole charge of a group that includes anyone aged under 18. In these circumstances a minimum of two adults is required.

For the PCC to approve an outside youth activity a risk assessment will also need to be presented, with mitigations included.

Covid Risk Assessments

These need updating and renewing as government guidance changes.

Asbestos

An extensive asbestos check was carried out when the school extension was carried out in 2006. The School Premises Manager is aware of areas where asbestos remains.

Car Safety and Parking

Cars should be parked in the designated car park and only on the church forecourt when necessary for access or loading/unloading. Drivers must take care to ensure the safety of any pedestrians in the vicinity to ensure their safety.

Members of the PCC have a duty to read this document and understand what is required of them.

All employees and volunteers have a responsibility to co-operate in the implementation of this policy and to take reasonable care of themselves and others while in the church premises. This will be a condition of contract for all employees.

This policy should be presented to the PCC annually for updating and reminding.

November 2023

Next Review November 2024