

The Benefice of Hatfield St Lawrence

Welcoming all. Caring for our community. Nurturing faith in Christ



Anti-Bullying Policy & Parish Procedures

The Church in serving and flourishing in a Christ-like community will foster relationships of the utmost integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness. Bullying behaviours will not be tolerated at St Lawrence Church. All complaints will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated. It is in all our interests to promote a safe, healthy and just environment in which people can serve.

Trustees (PCC members) have a central role to play to ensure that St Lawrence Church, as a registered charity, has clear policies, and that allegations are handled appropriately. Trustees (PCC members) are responsible for ensuring they have processes in place to hear concerns and address bullying behaviours.

The policy will be reviewed in 2027.

We may amend this policy from time to time or depart from it where we consider appropriate.

The Revd Chris Bishop – Incumbent

Definition of Bullying

Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Examples of bullying in a church context

- shouting or swearing at people in public and private
- ignoring or deliberately excluding people
- persecution through threats and instilling fear
- spreading malicious rumours/gossip
- constantly undervaluing the effort of others
- spontaneous rages, often over trivial matters
- overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision in church activities
- withholding information or supplying incorrect information
- cyber bullying/hate mail

These examples listed are not exhaustive. The actions listed must be viewed in terms of the distress they cause the individual. It is the perceptions of the recipient that determines whether any action or statement can be viewed as bullying.

Standards of behaviour

All Christians – both lay and ordained recognise the importance of setting a good example and the need to treat each other with respect and trust.

Fair procedures

All allegations of bullying will be taken seriously and investigated. Bullying behaviours may, with the subject's consent, be dealt with in one of a number of ways according to the circumstances.

Supporters

Supporters are concerned members of the Staff Team at St Lawrence who have volunteered, and been accepted, to undertake these duties. They have received some training for this role and have the full support of the Incumbent. They are available to offer, in confidence, advice and information as required. They are also able to channel complaints and, if suitably trained, to negotiate or mediate between the parties concerned.

Supporters will not make judgements, recommendations or reports; they will listen in an informal atmosphere and they will allow you to decide what action you may want to take and the support you think you may need. Supporters may make recommendations to the Incumbent, Wardens and Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Informal steps

If you are experiencing bullying behaviour you should initially consider raising the problem informally with the person responsible. Please consider Matthew 18 v.15-20. When a member of the church does something which offends us we are to go and tell them directly. However we recognise that this may not always be appropriate & if you need support with this, then please speak to the Incumbent & Wardens. Letters, emails and even phone calls are less personal means of communication and are always second best.

You should explain clearly to them that their behaviour is not welcome or makes you feel uncomfortable. Please consider well how love and patient caring for the straying individual should always accompany Christian discipline.

You should also speak to the Incumbent or Wardens, who can provide confidential advice and assistance in resolving the issue formally or informally.

Mediation and restorative justice

Mediation is a way of sorting out disagreements or disputes. A neutral third person works with those in disagreement or dispute to help them reach an agreement that will sort out their problems. It is voluntary - people only take part if they want to, but to be successful participants have to want it to work.

Each mediation is different. A mediator will usually start by talking separately to the people involved in the dispute to find out about the situation, how they feel about it and the effects it is having. When the time is right the mediator will bring the parties together in a joint meeting.

At that meeting they will each have a chance to say exactly how they feel without being interrupted and to listen to the other person without interrupting them. The mediator will ask questions, help the parties to look at the situation realistically and help them come up with ways to improve things.

In some circumstances where both sides ask, the mediator can recommend a way forward if the parties cannot find their own solution.

The aim of mediation is to maintain the relationship between two people or groups if at all possible, and so mediation is about the future, not the past or who was right or wrong.

Restorative justice works to resolve conflict and repair harm. Like mediation it aims to maintain a relationship between the parties involved, but it encourages those who have caused harm to acknowledge the impact of what they have done and gives them an opportunity to make reparation. It offers those who have suffered the harm the opportunity to have their harm or loss acknowledged and amends made.

Conflict between people is inevitable, but where it occurs restorative justice can help to 'restore' the balance in a just and fair way. In resolving the harm done it works to prevent it happening again. As is the case in mediation a process of restorative justice has to be voluntary for all parties and it seeks a positive outcome for all parties.

Handling bullying complaints at St Lawrence Church

- **When a person wishes to make a complaint they should, in the first instance, try and seek resolution within the parish involving the Incumbent & Wardens.**
- **Should resolution be unsuccessful then the Incumbent will contact the Area Dean.**
- **The Area Dean will meet with the Incumbent and the perpetrator and seek resolution to the inappropriate behaviour. Future expected behaviours should be agreed & recorded in writing.**
- **Should resolution be unsuccessful then the Incumbent should contact the Archdeacon.**
- **The Archdeacon with the Area Dean will meet with the Incumbent and the perpetrator and seek resolution to the inappropriate behaviour. Future expected behaviours should be agreed & recoded.**
- **Should resolution be unsuccessful then the Incumbent should contact the Suffragan Bishop.**
- **The Suffragan Bishop with the Archdeacon will meet with the Incumbent and the perpetrator**
- **and seek resolution to the inappropriate behaviour. Future expected behaviours should be agreed & recorded. The Area Dean, Archdeacon or Suffragan Bishop may agree a written contract with the lay person which ultimately may result in the lay person not attending that particular church.**
- **Should all of the above measures fail to secure a resolution a discussion will take place at the**
- **Bishop's staff meeting to decide on the appropriate course of action for the parish.**
- **At any meeting held during the above process, the perpetrator may be accompanied by a friend.**