St Chad's Church
Pattingham with Patshull

HEALTH AND SAFETY

FIRE POLICY

FIRE PRECAUTIONS

Fire detection and alarms

There is a fire detection system and alarms in part of the building. They should undergo a thorough inspection and test every six months by a competent contractor and a functional test should be carried out every week. Periodically and at least every 5 years the PCC should review whether the systems remain appropriate.

Fire extinguishers

The fire extinguishers should be visually checked monthly and a basic service should be done every 12 months by a competent contractor. An extended service (including discharge test) should be done every 5 years by a competent contractor.
At least every 5 years the PCC should review whether the number, type and locations of the extinguishers remain appropriate.

Combustible material

Combustible material should not be stored in the church or the churchyard unless it is unavoidable. Combustible material should never be stored or left by doors or on routes which would be needed for escape.

Matches and lighters

Matches and lighters are needed to light candles. They should be stored in a locked cupboard when not in use. The exception is that a means to light the candles in the votive candle stand should be available in the vicinity of the votive candle stand but

precautions should be taken to avoid the risk that it might be taken and used to set fire to other items. That may be done by ensuring that it cannot be taken away from the votive candle stand or being of a nature that it cannot be used in that way.

Candles

Altar candles should be extinguished at the end of the service, the gospel side being extinguished before the epistle side. When the church is locked up the person doing so should ensure that all candles, especially those in the votive candle stand, are extinguished.

Electrical and other equipment

The fixed electrical system, the boiler and other fixed heaters should be regularly inspected and maintained. Portable electrical equipment should be PAT tested in accordance with the PAT testing policy.

EVACUATION AND ESCAPE

Fire Exits

When the church is open the main south door and the north door should be both be available as exits in case of emergency. The south door should be left unlocked. The north door should be kept locked but the key kept in the lock and secured to the door by a chain to prevent it being removed. Each time that the church is locked up the person doing so should check that the door is locked and the key still in the lock and secured by the chain. The door from the church to the Loft area should be kept unlocked at all times.

The west door will not normally be available as an exit. For services and events at which more than 100 people are expected or present the west door should be unlocked so that it is available as an exit.

When the church is otherwise locked and the bellringers are using the tower they will access the church through the west door (which is immediately adjacent to the door to the tower) and will use the west door as an exit in the event of an emergency.

Fire exit signs

There is an illuminated fire exit sign above the door to the Loft area which leads to the north door. There is not an exit sign for the south door as that is not necessary

because those in church will have entered through it and will be aware of it. There is not a sign for the west door but it would be appropriate for there to be a sign to indicate that it is not available as an exit to avoid people trying to use it when it is locked. That sign should be replaced by a sign indicating that it is an exit when it has been unlocked as an emergency exit. The necessity of other signs should be reviewed taking account of the need to balance clear signage with the historical significance and setting of the building.

The Tower

The ringing room, which is used by the bellringers, is in the tower and is accessed by a spiral staircase by the west door at the bottom of which is a door (the "tower door"). There are other levels above the ringing room which are accessed occasionally in connection with the clock, bells, flag, Christmas star and maintenance. The tower door should usually be kept locked but must remain open and unlocked whenever anyone is in the tower.

The Loft Area

The Loft Area is in the north east corner of the church. On the ground floor is a kitchen, toilet, Vicar's vestry, cupboards and the north door of the church. The Vicar's vestry is kept locked when not in use. On the first floor is a toilet and the Loft room. The Loft room is kept locked when not in use. The door from the church to the Loft area is kept unlocked. There is an inner door by the north door which is self closing. Consideration should be given to providing a means of keeping it open in the event of evacuation.

Prevention of obstructions

All doorways, other than doorways which are not in use, and the areas around them must be kept clear of obstructions at all times. All routes which may be used as a means of escape must be kept clear of obstructions. Where there is an obstruction in a walkway steps should be taken to ensure that it is clear that it is obstructed and not available as a means of escape.

Evacuation procedure

Procedures for managing evacuation should be kept under review. Different procedures may be appropriate for different situations depending on the number of persons likely to be present and the number of sidespersons or similar volunteers available.

The issues which will need to be addressed in those procedures will include, but not be limited to:

- the means of giving the alarm;
- the assembly point,
- providing assistance to those who need it;
- ensuring that those present are directed to the most appropriate exit;
- recognition that some of those present may decide to go home or elsewhere rather than going to the assembly point so steps will need to check that all areas of the building have been evacuated rather than relying on a head count at the assembly point;
- the number of “stewards” required and the allocation of duties between them.

Emergency lighting

The lighting throughout the church has a battery backup so that it comes on in the event of a power failure. That system should be maintained regularly and a brief functional test carried out at least once a month and a full durational test at least once a year.

RECORD KEEPING

The churchwardens should appoint one or more competent persons to carry out the regular visual inspections of the fire extinguishers and functional testing of the fire alarms and emergency lighting and ensure that contactors are engaged to provide appropriate maintenance and servicing.
A record should be made in a record book of all visual checks, testing and maintenance of the fire alarms, fire detection system, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting and electrical equipment. That book should be kept in a suitable place to ensure it is both secure and available when required.

Approved by Admin-IWG 29th June 2025 – due for review June 2026