St Chad's Church
Pattingham with Patshull

HEALTH AND SAFETY

BELL TOWER POLICIES

There are five policies which affect the bell tower:

- Policy On Conditions Of Use Applying To Change-Ringing Bells
- Policy On Visiting Bell Ringers
- Policy On Evacuation Of The Tower & Safety For Persons Within The Tower
- Policy On Temperature Control Within The Tower
- Policy On Children In The Ringing Chamber

POLICY ON CONDITIONS OF USE APPLYING TO CHANGE-RINGING BELLS

These notes are based on the guidance to Bell Ringers provided by Ecclesiastical Insurance which have been interpreted for our local situation.

General

Bells must be left in the 'down' position when not in use during the working week between 7am Monday and 6pm Friday except Public Holidays unless they are to be rung on that day (for example for a wedding). Outside this period, if bells are left in the 'up' position then the door of the Ringing Room should be locked and the key kept under the control of the Ringing master or deputy. must be hoisted towards the ceiling on a 'spider' and locked in position. Notices must be displayed on the door of the ringing room and in the ringing room warning that the bells are up. The access doors to the Bell Chamber and the Clock Room should be kept locked at all times and the keys kept in the Ringing Room. This ensures that they are not accessible when the bells are up and the Ringing Room is locked except by or under the control of the Ringing Master or Deputy.

Adult ringers
The Ringing Master, or other person responsible for tower safety, must take reasonable steps to ensure that they are satisfied that all adult ringers (those aged 18 years and over) including visiting ringers are competent, or are in the process of being trained in bell ringing. 'Competent' means that ringers have sufficient experience in the opinion of the Ringing Master. The Ringing Master must warn visiting ringers of the particular circumstances attached to the tower.

Junior ringers
Junior ringers must be suitably experienced or be in the process of being taught to ring. It should be at the discretion of the Ringing Master as to whether or not a child is suitable. At least one responsible adult other than the Ringing Master or deputy (e.g. the parent of one of the children present, or an experienced adult ringer) must be present when children are in the bell tower. A record may be maintained of each junior ringer's instruction and training, and their level of competence.

Bell maintenance
All maintenance should be undertaken with the bells 'down' either by, or under the direction of, the Steeple Keeper. A second person should be present with the Steeple Keeper during maintenance operations to assist and take action in the event of an emergency. Lone working should be avoided. However, where this is not possible, a Steeple Keeper working alone amongst the bells must take steps to advise another responsible person of their proposed activity and timescale. They should advise the responsible person of the likely time of the completion of the task. Failing receipt of such advice, the responsible person must take immediate steps to ascertain the safety of the Steeple Keeper.
Unauthorised access to the ringing chamber must be prohibited whilst work is being undertaken on the bells and/or bell frame.

DEFINITIONS
1 . Ringing Master
Otherwise known as Tower Captain, being the person with delegated powers from the Vicar or alternative authority, with responsibility for the ringing of the bells and safety within the tower.
2. Steeple Keeper
The person with delegated responsibility for the general maintenance of the bells.
3. "Deputy" includes any of the ringers who is deputising for the Ringing Master or Steeple Keeper, whether or not formally appointed to do so.
4. Ringing Room
Room from which the bells are rung
5. Bell-Chamber

The area of the tower in which the bells and bell-frame are located

6. Clock Room

The intermediate room between the Ringing Room and the Bell Chamber in which the clock is located.

7. Up Position

The bell mouth upwards and at rest supported by the stay and slider mechanism in readiness for 'full-circle' ringing

8. Down position

The bell mouth downwards and at rest

POLICY ON VISITING BELL-RINGERS

The resident Ringing Master or Deputy must take reasonable steps to ensure that he/she is satisfied with the competence of visiting ringers and inform them of the Church Health and Safety policies and circumstances attached to the Tower.
The Person in charge of the visiting team should be required to complete an application form at the time of booking the visit. Such form to be retained by the Ringing Master or Deputy for a minimum of three years. (sample attached)

POLICY ON EVACUATION OF THE TOWER AND SAFETY FOR PERSONS WITHIN THE TOWER

It is desirable that if a person/persons is up the Tower they have with them at least one mobile phone to summon help if necessary.

Due to the nature of the limited access and in the event of the necessity to evacuate an injured person the Emergency Services should be called.

In the event of fire blocking the exit from the tower persons should remain in the Ringing Room with the door closed and help summoned by the use of the mobile phone or by ringing the bells to indicate distress.

It is desirable that whenever possible one person does not work alone in the Tower. If this is unavoidable they should ensure that a responsible person is informed of their destination and an estimated time of their return, and if possible they should carry a mobile phone with them.

Emergency lighting is provided in the event of a power failure.

POLICY ON TEMPERATURE CONTROL WITHIN THE TOWER

HEATING
The Bell Chamber is heated by a wall mounted fan heater checked as part of the quinquennial survey. There are also three free standing heaters which are all PAT tested regularly. One of these is used with a timer to enable the ropes to be kept dry in damp weather.

COOLING
A free standing fan is available which is PAT tested regularly.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE LAST PERSON LEAVING THE CHAMBER CHECKS THAT THESE APPLIANCES ARE SWITCHED OFF & WHERE RELEVANT UNPLUGGED.

POLICY ON CHILDREN IN THE RINGING CHAMBER

Requirements relating to children ringing the bells are set out in the Policy On Conditions Of Use Applying To Change-Ringing Bells above under the heading “Junior Ringers”.

Other children should not be present in the Ringing Room unless accompanied by a responsible adult and can demonstrate that they understand and can comply with instructions on their Health & Safety. It is the responsibility of the adult supervising them to ensure their compliance as this is a HIGH RISK AREA.

Original policy October 2001 – revised and approved by Admin-IWG May 2024 – reviewed by Admin-IWG 29th June 2025 and 10th November 2026 – due for review November 2027