

The Parish of Christchurch (Holy Trinity)

COMPLAINTS POLICY and PROCEDURE

Throughout this policy document, 'The Parish of Christchurch (Holy Trinity)' will be referred to as 'The Parish.'

1. Purpose of this policy and procedure

The Parish regards complaints as an opportunity to put things right for the person who has made the complaint, and to give us a means to learn and improve for the future,

The highest standards of conduct and behaviour are expected from all employees and volunteers, members of parish committees, and our consultants. We know there may be times when we do not meet our own high standards. Should this happen we want to hear about it, deal with the situation as quickly as possible and put measures in place to prevent it happening again.

2. Making this policy available

This policy will be advertised in a prominent place on The Parish website, so members of the public can find it easily should they wish to make a complaint. A hard copy should also be provided to any person on request to the Parish Office.

3. What is a Complaint – for the purpose of this Policy

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of The Parish, its operations and its mission and ministry or about an action, or lack of action that requires a formal response. Personal preference or theological viewpoint do not constitute a complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
- To make sure that everyone in the Parish knows what to do if a complaint is received.
- To make sure that all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired and reconciliation explored.
- To gather information in the light of upheld complaints which may help us to improve what we do.

Issue Date	May 2025	Superseded date	
Review Date	May 2026	Responsibility	Governance
Issuer	COO		

4. What complaints are not included in this policy?

This policy does not relate to:

- Internal complaints from staff or volunteers a separate process exists for internal complaints.
- Complaints relating to Safeguarding, which should be referred directly to the Parish's Safeguarding Officer (PSO) safeguarding@christchurchpriory.org or to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser on 01962 737317 or safeguarding@winchester.anglican.org. (A complaint may change to a complaint related to Safeguarding; in this case it will be forwarded to the PSO and treated as such.)
- A complaint relating to Data Protection should be referred directly to dataprotection@christchurchpriory.org
- A complaint about a member of clergy. Such a complaint should follow the Complaints Policy of the Diocese of Winchester <https://winchester.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Complaints-Against-Clergy.pdf>

The Parish will not respond:

- to complaints that do not relate directly to something that the Parish has done or been involved in or failed to do appropriately.
- when the complaint has already been responded to and has been reviewed through the procedure in section 7 below.
- when a complaint has clearly been sent to us and numerous other organisations as part of a bulk mailing or email. In this instance we can choose whether it is necessary for us to reply or not
- to anonymous complaints.
- Complaints made on the Parish's social media platforms. Only complaints made by email, in writing, by phone or in person will be dealt with by this policy.

5. How to make a complaint

- You can contact us in whichever way is most convenient to you and we will respond to you via the same method unless instructed otherwise.
- Written complaints should be sent by email to complaints@christchurchpriory.org. or by letter to Complaints, Parish of Christchurch, Priory House, Quay Road, Christchurch BH23 1BU
- Please include your name, address, and contact telephone number in your email or letter so that we can get back in touch with you easily.
- Where a complaint is incoherent or illegible a staff member will contact the complainant, where possible, to request that the complaint be provided in a legible format or to clarify the complaint. Where a legible or coherent version of the complaint is not provided, the complaint will not be able to be progressed.

- Verbal complaints may be made by phone on 01202 485804, or in person to any member of Parish Staff. In this case a written record of our understanding of the complaint will be returned to the originator to ensure our mutual understanding of the issue, and that the complaint is not malicious. If this is not acknowledged by the originator the complaint will not be responded to further.

6. What we will do when we receive a complaint.

- We will acknowledge your complaint within **five working days of receiving it**. The acknowledgement will explain who is dealing with your complaint and when you can expect a response.
- We will do our best to investigate and respond fully and conclusively to all complaints within twenty-eight working days of a complaint being received. Sometimes a complaint is more complex and so it will take us longer to investigate it. Where this happens, we will send you a progress report and let you know when you can expect to receive a final response.
- We will handle any complaints received with sensitivity and in compliance with the Parish's data protection policy, privacy notice and the law.
- The Parish may decide not to respond to a complaint or to cease to respond to a complainant, where it is considered appropriate and proportionate to do so on the basis that a complainant
 - Is being deliberately abusive, prejudiced, or offensive; and/or
 - Is harassing a member of staff or volunteer within the Parish.

Where the Parish makes such a decision

- Where possible, the investigation into the complaint should be made to continue, in accordance with section 7 below.
- A letter will be sent to the complainant within seven working days of the decision to inform them of the Parish's decision.

7. How will complaints be progressed and resolved?

- Wherever possible, we will look to resolve your complaint amicably and with pastoral care and sensitivity.
- Complaints will be assigned to a senior employee, Church Warden or a member of the Clergy, as appropriate, to investigate each complaint received. This person must not be someone who is personally involved in the events complained about.
- The person investigating will make all necessary and appropriate enquiries to establish the substance of the complaint and note any attempts already made to resolve the matter informally. Where possible, members of staff will be informed of a complaint made about them or any actions for which they were responsible. The Parish has a duty of care to staff complained about as well as to complainants and so the person investigating should ensure, where possible, that the person about whom a complaint has been made has an opportunity to respond to the concerns raised by the complainant. The investigation will not make enquiries with the parties in any specific order.

8. How will we inform you about the outcome of your complaint?

- Once the investigation is concluded, a written response will be made to you, to advise you of the outcome.
- If your complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the outcome letter will normally include an apology, acknowledge where things have gone wrong and explain whether any actions will be taken as a result of the investigation into your complaint. However, the outcome letter will not include personal employment information about any member of staff or any personal information about a staff member, committee member or volunteer.
- The outcome letter will also include information on how you can seek a review if you are unhappy with how your complaint has been investigated or handled by the Parish.
- A copy of the outcome letter will also be recorded for the Chief Operating Officer (COO).

9. What if you are unhappy with how your complaint has been investigated or handled by the Parish?

- If, after receiving the outcome letter, you are unhappy with how your complaint has been investigated or handled by the Parish you may request a review.
- If you request a review within the timescales set out in your outcome letter, one of the Clergy will appoint a member of the Senior Leadership Team or an independent Clergy member to review. The reviewer will consider all the paperwork relating to the complaint and its investigation, as well as the report and the outcome letter and consider whether your complaint has been properly investigated and handled by the Parish. The reviewer will provide a written report to the Chief Operating Officer or Incumbent and a review outcome letter will be sent to you. Reviews will normally take up to 28 days to complete.

10. What if you are still not happy with how your complaint has been investigated or handled by the Parish following a Review

We hope that we are able to resolve your complaint in an honest, open, and satisfactory way. However, if you are still unhappy then you can write, either by letter or email, to either of our regulators:

- The Bishop's Office – Winchester Diocese
- Complaints about charity issues - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk); this is only for issues that may pose a serious risk of significant harm to that charity's beneficiaries, assets, services or reputation

11. Monitoring and learning from complaints

The Executive Leadership Team will regularly review the complaints received by the Parish and their outcomes, to identify any trends or wider learning.

The COO must keep a secure record of the complaints received, the report of the setting out the reasons for their decisions and copies of outcome letters. The COO will report complaints to the PCC as appropriate.

12. Records of your complaint

We will retain a record of your complaint for 6 years after the last contact with you regarding the complaint. We will then destroy all records of the complaint securely.

You can read more about how we look after your records and your rights as a data subject in our Privacy Notice, which is available on our website.

<https://www.christchurchpriory.org/parish/policies>