



The Parish of St Thomas and St Edmund St Thomas's Church Salisbury

DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

Preventing Bullying and Harassment

at St Thomas's Church

Contents

1. Statement of Commitment
2. Defining Bullying and Harassment
3. Standards of behaviour
4. Communication and training
5. Support and Guidance
6. Confidentiality
7. Fair procedures
8. False accusation
9. Approve and Review
10. Revision History

1. Statement of Commitment

The Church is required by God to foster relationships of the utmost integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness. St Thomas's Church aims to provide a supportive environment in which the rights of individuals are respected, and each person is treated with dignity and courtesy at all times. Abuse, harassment and bullying will, therefore, not be tolerated, complaints will be taken seriously, and complaints will be thoroughly investigated.

2. Defining Bullying and Harassment

In establishing the links between 'unacceptable behaviour', 'bullying' and 'harassment' as well as drawing together the common themes and issues, the following broader definitions may be helpful:

- Any behaviour that could potentially undermine someone's dignity and respect should be regarded as unacceptable. If it is not challenged then it is likely to escalate and lead to significant difficulties for all concerned.
- Unacceptable behaviour changes its label to 'bullying' or 'harassing behaviour' when it causes actual harm or distress to the target(s), normally after a series of incidents over a prolonged period.
- Lack of intent does not diminish, excuse or negate the impact on the target or the distress caused.

In general terms, **harassment** is:

Unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women in the workplace. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religious belief (including theology or churchmanship), nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. The important point is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

On the whole it is safest to take the view that if a person complains that they are being bullied or harassed, then they have a grievance, which should be dealt with regardless of whether or not their complaint accords with a standard definition.

Bullying may manifest itself in a variety of different ways. It is usually persistent, and often unpredictable, and can amount to severe psychological intimidation. It is insidious and undermines the ability and confidence of the person suffering from it. It can lead to fear, isolation, demotivation and reduced output, poor concentration, symptoms of stress, a noticeable level of sickness absence or stubborn attendance when obviously unwell, psychological, emotional and physical harm.

Bullying or harassment may be by an individual against an individual or involve groups of people. It may be obvious, or it may be insidious. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted, unwelcome and offensive to the individual affected.

Examples of harassment and bullying behaviour include:

- Behaviour on more than one occasion which is offensive, abusive, malicious, insulting or intimidating.
- The use of suggestive or derogatory remarks, jokes or other verbal abuse at an individual's expense.
- Spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone by word or behaviour (particularly on age, racial, sexual or disability grounds).
- Copying memos that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know.
 - Ridiculing or demeaning someone – picking on them or setting them up to fail.
- Exclusion or victimisation.
- Unfair treatment.
- Overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position.
- Unwelcome sexual advances – touching, standing too close, the display of offensive materials.
- Making threats or comments about job security without foundation.
- Deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism on more than one occasion.
- Preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities.
- Punishment imposed without reasonable justification.
- Changing the duties or responsibilities of staff to their detriment without reasonable justification.

Bullying and harassment are not necessarily face-to-face. They may occur in written communications, email or other electronic communication, and/or by telephone.

3. Standards of behaviour

Those with pastoral responsibilities for the clergy, staff, volunteers and members of the worshipping community of St Thomas's Church recognise the importance of setting a good example and undertake to participate in training provided in support of this policy.

The laity of St Thomas's Church recognise the importance of setting a good example. The clergy of St Thomas's Church recognise the importance of setting a good example.

4. Communication and training

The Parochial Church Council of St Thomas's Church (PCC) is responsible for encouraging and monitoring the implementation of this policy. The PCC will work source and facilitate training for the clergy, laity, staff and volunteers.

5. Support and Guidance

St Thomas's Church is committed to providing appropriate support and guidance to members of clergy, staff, volunteers or laity who feel that they have been in receipt of unacceptable behaviour. If you would like to identify appropriate support, please contact the Rector or Churchwardens in the first instance.

6. Confidentiality

It is St Thomas's Church policy that these matters are to be treated with confidentiality and that no action will be taken without the knowledge and consent of the person who feels he or she has been a target.

7. Fair procedures

It is possible to follow either the informal route or formal route if wishing to make a complaint of bullying or harassment.

The informal route normally involves making it clear to the perpetrator that the behaviour offends and that the target wants it to stop. This could be done by letter or email, if a face-to-face confrontation is too difficult in the first instance, and professional support would be available. This route may stop the offensive behaviour quickly and effectively.

However, there is also the choice of the formal route, which is likely to involve setting out details of the complaint in writing with specifics as to dates and times and an account of what the bullying or harassment is alleged to consist of. The complaint will then be investigated by St Thomas's Church as promptly as possible.

When both the perpetrator and the target are ministers under common tenure, complaints of bullying or harassment may, with the target's consent, be brought under the Grievance Procedure detailed in the Clergy Reference Manual. However, when the perpetrator is a clergy person, it may be more appropriate for the target, or an Archdeacon, with the target's consent, to make a complaint under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003.

When the perpetrator is a lay person and the target is either ordained or lay, complaints of bullying or harassment will be dealt with in the most appropriate way according to the circumstances. In any case resulting in a formal complaint St Thomas's Church will undertake a full investigation which will involve:

- checking whether the person suspected of bullying or harassment has received previous warnings for similar misconduct (or other types of misconduct) and, if so, whether any earlier warnings remain active.
- talking in confidence to any colleagues who may have evidence relating to the perpetrator's alleged behaviour.
- endeavouring to persuade any colleagues who may have been witness to the perpetrator's alleged bullying or harassment, or who may have knowledge of it, to give a written statement to that effect.

- setting up an interview with the alleged perpetrator, allowing him/her the right to be accompanied at the interview.
- allowing the alleged perpetrator a full and fair opportunity to answer any allegations against him/her and/or explain his/her conduct.
- assess objectively whether the alleged perpetrator's conduct appears to have amounted to bullying or harassment.
- adopt an objective and balanced approach to the information gained as a result of the investigation.
- avoid allowing personal views about the alleged perpetrator to influence the overall assessment of the conduct under review.
- keep confidential records of the investigation and ensure that these are handled in accordance with the [UK General Data Protection Regulation \(UK GDPR\)](#) and the [Data Protection Act 2018](#) .

8. False accusation

False accusations are a serious matter. The behaviour of anyone who is found to have made an unfounded, deliberately malicious complaint or allegation will be regarded with the utmost seriousness and where possible formal action taken. In the case of a clergy person this may be a complaint under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003. A member of either the clergy or laity could be subject to an action for defamation if they have made false accusations against someone else.

9. Approve and Review

Policy applicable to:	St Thomas's Church, the Parish of St Thomas and St Edmund Salisbury
Approved by:	St Thomas's PCC
Approved date:	22 nd January 2026
Policy owner:	St Thomas's PCC
Next review date:	22 nd January 2027
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10. Revision History

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