

St Nicholas' Parish Church Thorne - Complaints Policy

1. Purpose

The PCC of St Nicholas', Thorne is committed to fostering a welcoming, respectful and Christ-centred community. We recognise that, despite our best intentions, concerns or complaints may arise. This policy explains how concerns will be handled fairly, promptly and transparently. Our aim is to resolve issues wherever possible through respectful dialogue and reconciliation, whilst ensuring that all complaints are considered objectively and consistently.

2. Scope

This policy applies to complaints concerning the activities, administration and ministry of St Nicholas', including matters relating to:

- church services and parish activities;
- the conduct of volunteers acting on behalf of the parish;
- decisions of the PCC or its committees;
- the administration of the parish;
- the behaviour of church officers where no other formal procedure applies.

This policy does not replace statutory or Church of England procedures where these are more appropriate.

3. Matters Outside this Policy

This policy does not apply to:

- safeguarding concerns;
- allegations of criminal conduct;
- complaints concerning clergy discipline;
- employment grievances involving paid staff;
- complaints that are already subject to legal proceedings.

Where a complaint falls into one of these categories, the complainant will be directed to the appropriate process.

4. Guiding Principles

The PCC will ensure that complaints are:

- treated seriously;
- handled confidentially so far as reasonably possible;
- investigated impartially;
- resolved without unnecessary delay;
- recorded appropriately;
- considered without discrimination.

No person will be treated unfavourably for raising a genuine concern in good faith.

5. Informal Resolution

Many concerns can be resolved quickly through discussion.

Anyone with a concern is encouraged, where appropriate, to speak first with the individual involved or with one of the following:

- the Incumbent;
- the Churchwarden(s);
- the PCC Secretary.

Where appropriate, an apology, clarification or agreed course of action may resolve the matter without requiring a formal complaint.

6. Making a Formal Complaint

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint should be made in writing.

The complaint should include:

- the complainant's name and contact details;
- a clear description of the issue;
- relevant dates and locations;
- any supporting documents;
- the outcome sought.

Anonymous complaints will normally not be investigated unless there is a compelling reason to do so.

Complaints should normally be made within six months of the events complained of. Older complaints may still be considered where it is reasonable to do so.

7. Acknowledgement

The parish will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within five working days.

The acknowledgement will explain:

- who is handling the complaint;
- the next steps;
- the expected timescale for responding.

8. Investigation

The complaint will normally be investigated by the Incumbent, Churchwardens or another person appointed by the PCC who has had no prior involvement in the matter.

The investigator may:

- meet with the complainant;
- speak with those involved;
- review relevant documents;
- obtain further information where necessary.

Every effort will be made to complete the investigation within twenty-eight days. Where additional time is required, the complainant will be informed of the reasons.

9. Outcome

The complainant will receive a written response setting out:

- the findings of the investigation;
- whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld;
- any actions to be taken;
- where appropriate, any recommendations for future improvement.

Where confidentiality obligations apply, some information may not be disclosed.

10. Review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a review within twenty-one days of receiving the outcome.

The review should explain why the complainant believes the matter has not been properly considered.

Where practicable, the review will be undertaken by individuals who were not involved in the original investigation.

The outcome of the review will normally be final.

11. Vexatious or Unreasonable Complaints

The PCC recognises that individuals have the right to pursue legitimate concerns.

However, where complaints become repetitive, abusive, threatening, or clearly unreasonable, the PCC may decide to limit further correspondence after explaining its reasons in writing. Such decisions will be taken carefully and proportionately.

12. Confidentiality

Information relating to complaints will be shared only with those who need to know in order to investigate and resolve the matter.

Records will be held securely and managed in accordance with data protection legislation.

13. Learning from Complaints

The PCC will review complaints periodically to identify themes and opportunities to improve parish life, governance and communication.

Where appropriate, changes to parish procedures may be introduced following consideration of complaints.

14. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- the Parish Safeguarding Policy;
- the Church of England safeguarding procedures;
- relevant Church of England clergy discipline procedures.

15. Approval and Review

Approved by the PCC of St Nicholas' Thorne

Date adopted: 22nd July 2026

Review date: 31st May 2027

Signed:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Tim Clibb', written in a cursive style.

Chair of PCC: