

Southwell Minster

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UNDER 18 YEAR OLDS IN THE BELL TOWER POLICY AND PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The Policy

The Southwell Cathedral Chapter...

“invites everyone to discover God’s love through our welcome, worship, learning and work.”

“is committed to the highest standards of safeguarding so that those using the tower, can do so in confidence and security that everything possible has been done to keep them safe.”

The Cathedral aims to do this through:

- Extending a welcome to under 18s who might wish to ring or visit the bell tower.
- Ensuring that our safeguarding practices in the Minster Tower comply with Cathedral and Diocesan safeguarding practice and any national Belling Ringers’ Association/Guild best practice.
- Ensuring that we have done all we can to safeguard under 18s when in the bell tower.
- Referring any safeguarding concerns through to the statutory authorities for investigation.
- Challenge any behaviour or comments that are likely to cause harm or offence or endanger a child whilst in the tower.

Practice Guidance

Because there are different situations and circumstances in which an under 18 might be in the bell tower, there is a range of guidance from general best practice to context specific best practice.

General guidance for U18s

- Any concerns regarding the welfare or safety of an under 18 should be responded to following the Cathedral safeguarding procedures.

- The Tower Captain retains the right to ask a parent/carer to remove their child from the tower, if the level of risk is considered too great.
- Any child over 8 who is in the tower to ring, must sign the attendance record.
- We do not recommend that children under the age 8 are permitted up the Bell Tower unless under close supervision at all times.
- For those who are under 8 years of age, they will need to be accompanied by their parents/carers who remains responsibility for them at all times, even if the parent/carer is ringing.
- If under 8s are part of a tower tour, the children remain the responsibility of their group leader but the Head of the Tower reserves the evacuate fully or partially, if they feel the health and safety of other users is compromised as per the general responsibilities for Tower safety regardless of age.
- All children visiting the bell tower as part of the Minster Volunteer Ringers' Practice Night, Sunday Service Ringing or other ringing session, should sign the attendance record. At least one DBS checked member of the Minster Volunteer Ringers Group will be in the tower.
- All children visiting the tower as part of a visiting band, for example for a specially arranged ringing session or quarter peal must sign the attendance record. They will be accompanied by their parent/carer or a designated adult with a valid DBS checked at all times. That means they will only be in the ringing chamber with their parent/carer; and if they need to go down the tower they will be accompanied by their parent/carer or designated adult.
- Children who are too young to walk up or down the stairs confidently and safely by themselves should be brought in a baby sling so that the parent is able to climb/ descend the tower steps carrying the child and has both arms free.
- Children too old to be carried in a sling, but not yet capable of climbing up/down the stairs by themselves the parent/carer must be capable of carrying the child safely.
- No adult ringer should arrange to meet an under 18 ringer unless it is with the knowledge of the parent/carer and the Head of Tower or is part of an organised Tower activity.
- Any concerns about the safeguarding of children in the bell tower will be reported to the Head of Tower, or the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer. All members of the Volunteer ringing group should know who to contact if they have a concern and that they must do so.
- **At no point must an under 18 non ringer be left unsupervised.**

Context Specific Guidance

1. **Accompanied existing or future ringers** who are under 18 and have volunteered to be bellringers, been accepted as part of the bellringing group and **whose parents/carers are also in the ringing group.**
 - a) The parent of any under 18 will complete a child permission form before the under 18 goes to the ringing chamber. Forms will be made available by the Head of Tower.
 - b) In the case of emergency, the parent/carer assumes responsibility for the safe egress of the Under 18, under the direction of the Head of Tower.

2. **Unaccompanied existing or future ringers** who have volunteered to be bellringers and accepted as part of the bellringing group who are under 18.
 - a) In the case where an under 18 of the local group cannot be accompanied by their parent, the parent can give permission for the child to be accompanied during ringing by a DBS checked ringer or Head of Tower. In such cases the under 18 will be made very aware that they must stay within sight of the nominated adult / Head of Tower at all times during the ringing session.
 - b) During the ringing the parent or nominated responsible adult must ensure that they are sitting with the child and ensuring that their behaviour is safe.
 - c) Existing 16-18s should not be used to teach younger ringers unless closely supervised by the Head of Tower or another adult who has an Enhanced + Barring DBS certificate through the diocese.
 - d) 16-18s should understand that they should not contact/message other adult ringers unless on an open group messaging system that is externally monitored (such as a ringers group WhatsApp).
 - e) 16-18s should not contact other ringers under 18s without the consent of both sets of parents/carers. The Cathedral will not be responsible for policing this but under a duty of care will remind all ringers of the expected code of conduct that will keep everyone safe.
3. **Accompanied visitors** who are under 18s and part of a group or with parents / carers visiting the bell tower whose parent/carer is ringing are welcome to be in the Tower.
 - a) Any child under 18 who wants to start to learn, then the usual visitor procedure will have been followed. If the under 18 visitors is with their parent/carer then the parent will be asked to sign the register and have a designated ringer to stand near to the under 18 the first time they ring (either from the local band or the child's own parent) to ensure the safety of everyone.
 - c) Only children above the age of 8yrs should accompany their parents if the parent is part of the ringing team. They must have sufficient maturity and understanding to be able to self-occupy and not interfere in the safety of those ringing.
 - d) any non-ringing child must have their name entered on the register and the name of the nominated responsible adult to supervise them must be written clearly beside the child's name.
4. **Unaccompanied visitors under 18s** who are part of a visiting group remain the responsibility of the group leader with whom they have travelled. They should sign the attendance record unless there is a visiting group attendance record already submitted to the Cathedral.
 - a) If the under 18 is also a ringer, they may be invited to ring subject to the Head of Tower being satisfied that they are capable of ringing the bells safely.
 - b) The under 18s will remain the responsibility of their group leader when not ringing.
 - c) The minimum age of an unaccompanied under 18 ringers at this tower would usually be 12 years old.

CODE OF CONDUCT for UNDER 18s

In the ringing chamber

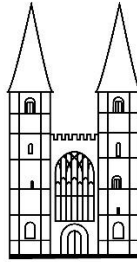
- 1) Babies, toddlers and those not yet able to sit independently must be closely supervised by their parent/carer or designated responsible adult accompanying them. Close supervision means the child will be held or within reach at all times.
- 2) Under 18s old enough and responsible enough to sit by themselves during ringing are allowed to do so on the understanding that they behave in a manner that does not interrupt the ringing session.
- 3) Under 18s should understand that if they are instructed to do something by the named responsible adult or the Head of Tower (whether their parent or not) they must do as they are instructed if this relates to security, health safety or well-being.
- 4) Under 18s must not touch any rope unless they are a ringer who has been asked to ring a particular bell by the Head of Tower or whoever is running the ringing.
- 5) Under 18s must not go into the middle of the rope circle or the centre of the ringing chamber (unless they are ringers moving to ring a particular bell under the direction of the person organising the ringing).
- 6) Under 18s must walk not run in the ringing chamber.

Going up or down the tower steps

- 1) Under 18s capable of walking up/down the steps themselves must do so in a sensible manner, not running on the stairway or attempting to go faster than the person in front.
- 2) Parent / adult responsible accompanying a child must walk immediately **behind** the child on the way up the stairs and immediately **in front** of the child on the way down. That would enable the adult to break the fall of a child should they trip.
- 3) Babies and those children too young to walk up steps must be carried in a baby sling to enable the adult carrying them to have hands free.
- 4) Those using slings must be able to put those on quickly, in case they need to carry the young child in an emergency egress situation.
- 5) If a young child is too big for a sling but unable to climb up/down the steps unaided or at reasonable speed, the adult accompanying them must be capable of carrying the child up/down the steps.

General safeguarding for Parents

If you have any concerns regarding safeguarding please raise these with the Head of Tower or the Cathedral Safeguarding Office. Contact details for the Safeguarding Officer is through email safeguarding@southwell.anglican.org or phone 01636 817200.



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Agreement for Visiting Bellingers

By prior arrangement with the Head of Bell Tower (working on behalf of Chapter), visiting bellingers will be welcomed to ring for services or practice nights with Southwell Minster's group of volunteer bellingers.

On behalf of the group or myself [please delete as appropriate]

1. I confirm that I/we have no pre-existing health issues that would stop me/us being physically able to climb up and down the steps to the Ringing Chamber and (in the case of emergency exit being needed).
2. I confirm that I/no one in our group have/has no 'Sexual Harm Prevention Order', 'Sexual Risk Order' or 'Church Safety Plan' in place with any parish, diocese or tower that would prevent my/them ringing in the Tower at Southwell Minster.
3. I confirm that I have read and understood the Emergency Egress from Tower Risk Assessment and have ensured this has been shared with the group.
4. I have read and understood the information provided to me by the Head of Tower and clarified anything I am unclear about and/or discussed any issues with the Head of Tower.
5. I have provided my/the name(s) of the group to the Head of Tower in advance of the visit and will notify him of anyone else joining late as soon as is possible
6. I will bring a final list of those in the group with me and leave it with the Head of Tower if it differs from any previously provided list.
7. I/we agree to comply with the Minster security arrangements at all times and understand that these may be subject to change at short notice.

The following rules and procedures must be followed for your own safety and that of others.

- a) Only the people named in advance or on the final list will be allowed to enter the Tower as a visiting bellringer.
- b) If any visiting bellringer will be a minor, i.e. aged 18 or below, on the date of the visit, the Head of Tower must have been informed and additional information and procedures will be discussed with the parent/carer of the young person. A parent or a designated responsible adult carer of the minor will accompany them at all times.
- c) All visiting ringers must wear sensible footwear.
- d) No large bags must be brought into the Minster, as each bellringer must have both hands free when climbing and descending the stairs.

- e) Members of the band are responsible for the security and insurance of their personal property, and Chapter accepts no liability for any loss or damage howsoever caused to any such property.
- f) No passing on the stairs.
- g) No smoking is permitted anywhere in the Minster.
- h) No one under the influence of alcohol or drugs is permitted in the Tower. No alcohol may be brought into or consumed in the Tower.
- i) If the Minster Tower needs to be evacuated, all visiting bellringers must follow the instructions of the Head of Tower/other designated person accompanying them.
- j) The Head of Tower/nominated volunteer ringer at Southwell Minster will meet the visiting ringers outside the Tower so they can all enter together.
- k) Photography or video recording can take place in the ringing chamber **only** if agreed in advance by the Head of Tower and the visiting team lead **must** confirm that express permission of every person concerned has been obtained before photo or recording is permitted).

I/We understand and agree to abide by all of the rules and procedures as set out above, and I/We confirm that the statements 1-6 are accurate.

Signature of the visiting bellringer

Date

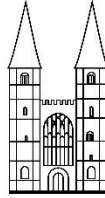
Print name

For visiting ringers whose children are also visiting the tower, please complete the following additional information

1. I have informed the Head of Tower of the name(s) and age(s) of my child(ren) and confirm that my child(ren) is/are at least 8 years of age.
2. I have read and understood the Code of Conduct for Under 18s up the tower and will ensure that my child(ren) follow(s) the code.
3. I will sign the tower register on arrival in the ringing chamber and put the name of the nominated responsible adult beside the name(s) of my child(ren) in the register.

Signature of the visiting bellringer

Date



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Adult to child ratios

The Chapter and Diocese follow the national Church of England safeguarding best practice that states at least 2 adults must be present when working with or supervising children and young people. As a minimum, the following adult to child ratios help to keep children/adults and staff/volunteers safe: Where you know that one or more of your children have additional needs or behaviour that might require intervention then you should increase the number of adults available to ensure the activity is undertaken safely.

0 – 2 years:	1 adult to 2 children
2 – 3 years:	1 adult to 4 children
4 – 8 years:	1 adult to 6 children
9 – 12 years:	1 adult to 8 children
13 – 18 years:	1 adult to 10 children

When young people are helping to supervise younger children, then only people aged 18 or over should be included as adults when calculating adult to child ratios. The safer environments and activities guidance of the Church of England states that young leaders must be five years older than the oldest child in the group. If this is not possible then there must be an adult present who meets this criterion and who must be overall responsible for the activity and input of the young leader.