

St Mary's Bletchingley regards the safety of all who worship here and join in our activities as paramount. The PCC has adopted 'A Safe Church', the safeguarding practice guidance of the Diocese of Southwark as its own safeguarding policy, and ensures it is followed in all circumstances. In 2019, St. Mary's did not have a Director of Music or an official lead for the Church Choir – which meant that in regards to safeguarding it only met the standards for an adult only choir. Three safer recruited members of the choir volunteered to adopt the lead role, which made it possible to have a mixed choir with minors. Sadly, this supervision was unable to contend with a number of allegations of safeguarding concerns, one described as serious. All allegations were found to be without merit at local and subsequently diocesan level after the concerns were escalated further. Good safeguarding practice has been adhered to at all times by the church, ensuring that no choir members were exposed to any harm.

Despite the best efforts of the volunteers and all complaints being entirely unfounded, it became apparent that the only way to meet the safeguarding standards without a lead, was to make it an adult only choir again.

We now have a new Director of Music, who has been in place since 2020. Once we get over the last of the pandemic restrictions we want to welcome minors into the choir again. We have been so blessed to have Ian Skipper during the pandemic and look forward to him taking us through a new and exciting time for St. Marys.