

Protecting Young Ringers

Guidelines for Maintaining a Safe Environment for Young People in the Belfry

1. The parents or guardians of the young person (referred to here as the parents) should complete a consent form when the young person starts to learn to ring. This form should be up-dated annually and should set out the necessary rules for safe practice. The form should be available from the PCC, but a sample Permission To Ring Form may be downloaded from www.leicesterdg.org.uk. The parents of young people already engaged in ringing should be asked to complete a Permission To Ring Form at the earliest opportunity. The parents should be encouraged to come to an early lesson to see what is involved.
2. The Tower Captain should endeavour to establish that the young person has no known medical conditions that may affect safety.
3. The Tower Captain should make sure that the parents are aware of and content with arrangements for young people travelling to and from ringing activities.
4. The parents should be told if there is any plan to use a video camera as a training tool, and the Permission To Ring Form should make this clear. The videotape should be erased after the teaching session, preferably in the presence of the parent or the Tower Captain.
5. The young people should undertake to ensure that suitable clothing is worn for all ringing activities. It should be loose under the arms to allow freedom of movement and not overtly provocative. These requirements should also be made clear to parents at the outset.
6. The parents should be informed that to act with sufficient speed in an emergency or when learning to control a bell, it may be necessary to raise one's voice, or make physical contact (e.g. by taking hold of the learner's hand to take control of the bell rope). This can be demonstrated to the parents during their early visit to a practice. Procedures for acting in an emergency should be rehearsed, e.g. following the instruction 'Let Go' if the bell gets out of control.
7. If an outing is planned, parents should sign a detailed permission form. Transport arrangements should be made so that young people do not travel in a car with just one adult. In the event of this being necessary as an exception, the young person should sit in the back.
8. Where a parent is always present during ringing, e.g. as a member of the band, the parent is responsible for the young person's welfare. However, it is important to bear in mind that there may be occasions when a parent cannot be there or the young person is taken out by other members of the band (e.g. to another tower). As with other aspects, it is advisable to follow the standard procedure in all cases so as not to make an issue of any changes in routine.
9. Two adults (if possible of different sexes) should normally be present whenever young people are taking part in ringing or being transported to or from ringing events. The Tower Captain should endeavour to ensure that at least two adults arrive at the start of any planned ringing.
10. The Tower Captain and any deputies who may run the practice or any ringing sessions where young people are present should be notified to the PCC, and will be responsible for ensuring that these guidelines are followed. It is likely that it will be these people who will need to undergo a criminal records check.
11. The Tower Captain should not delegate responsibility for the care of the young people unless it is to someone previously notified to the PCC and who has completed the criminal record check.
12. It is always good practice for an attendance register to be kept and completed, including the recording of the names of any visitors.
13. Young people should not be allowed into a potentially hazardous situation unaccompanied.
14. Normal Health and Safety issues should always be taken into consideration, and if possible a trained first aider should be present. A first aid kit should be available and an accident logbook kept.
15. A copy of these Guidelines should be displayed on the belfry notice board.