

Pontifical Institute of Religious Teachers Filippini

Baseline Audit Report
April 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 This is a baseline audit of the Safeguarding arrangements at the Pontifical Institute of Religious Teachers Filippini. The audit has been undertaken as part of the CSSA's Baseline Audit phase of Religious Life Groups (RLGs). The audit seeks to assess the effectiveness of current safeguarding arrangements, by considering practice over the last twelve months.

1.2 The Pontifical Institute of Religious Teachers Filippini, who will be referred to as The Pontifical Institute for the remainder of this report, are comprised of five Sisters in the UK based in one convent in Hampshire, with one visiting Sister from overseas who they hope will be able to join permanently in the future. They are the UK institute of a Roman Catholic Religious Institute founded in Italy over 300 years ago. The headquarters are based in Rome, where the Superior General and General Council are located. The Regional Superior Sister has responsibility for the UK institute and all its activities conducted in the United Kingdom. One Sister works at a Children's Nursery whose building is owned by the Pontifical Institute and leased to Single Steps Nurseries. Single Steps Nurseries were last inspected by Ofsted in June 2022 and their overall effectiveness was rated as Good. The remainder of the Pontifical Institute's work is prayer and caring for each other. Their on-site chapel is part of a Parish within the Diocese of Portsmouth with a Diocesan priest visiting to hold Mass. Aside from preparing the Church for Mass and attending the services the Pontifical Institute carry out no additional ministry related to the Chapel.

1.3 The CSSA has devised a categorisation scheme for Religious Life Groups taking part in safeguarding audits. This categorises Groups on a scale from Level 1 Apostolic or Level 1 Enclosed (small communities with minimal outreach and no known safeguarding concerns), Level 2 (a medium sized community with some outreach with vulnerable populations and/or providing some Diocesan Activities such as a Parish Priest) or Level 3 (a large community and/or one with significant outreach with vulnerable populations and/or a disproportionately high number of open safeguarding cases). The Pontifical Institute have been categorised as a Level 1 Apostolic audit.

1.4 The CSSA recognises the rich diversity of the Religious, and acknowledges that the Religious Life Groups within any particular category may vary significantly in terms of size, ministry and safeguarding practice. Consequently, CSSA analysts

may use professional judgement to ensure that Religious Life Groups are graded against the national standards in such a way that reflects their uniqueness.

2. Scope & Methodology

2.1 This Baseline Audit Report was undertaken following the submission of the Level 1 Apostolic Self-Assessment by the Regional Superior which was posted to the CSSA on 15th October 2024.

2.2 The Regional Superior was interviewed alongside two of the Sisters in person on 14th November 2024.

2.3 Liaison has also taken place between auditors and the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS)¹ regarding the Pontifical Institute's engagement with them. RLSS confirmed that the Pontifical Institute have only recently joined RLSS in October 2024 and have engaged with their Membership and Safeguarding teams.

3. Audit Grading

3.1 Safeguarding practice is assessed against the eight safeguarding standards adopted by the Catholic Church in England and Wales².

3.2 Safeguarding practice is graded in accordance with the CSSA Maturity Matrix for Level 1 Religious Life Groups. Each standard is graded on an ascending three point scale of *Not Met*, *Met with Recommendations* and *Met*. Grades for individual standards are combined in order to produce an overall grading for the Religious Life Group as an outcome of the audit. The audit draws on evidence generated from self-assessment, interviews and liaison with RLSS.

¹ The Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS) is an independent team of safeguarding professionals offering safeguarding services to the Religious of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Their website is available [here](#)

² A description and full details of the Standards can be found on the CSSA website [here](#)

3.3 This report summarises the findings of the audit undertaken with the Pontifical Institute and their progress towards meeting the eight safeguarding standards. The overall grading for the Group is assessed as Met with Recommendations.

Overall Grading	Met with Recommendations
Standard 1 – Safeguarding is embedded in the Church body’s leadership, governance, ministry and culture	Not Met
Standard 2 – Communicating the Church’s Safeguarding Message	Met with Recommendations
Standard 3 – Engaging with and Caring for those who report having been harmed	Met with Recommendations
Standard 4 – Effective Management of Allegations and Concerns	Met with Recommendations
Standard 5 – Management and Support of Subjects of Allegations and Concerns (respondents)	Met with Recommendations
Standard 6 – Robust Human Resource Management	Met with Recommendations
Standard 7 – Training and Support for Safeguarding	Not Met
Standard 8 – Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement	Not Met

4. Audit findings against each standard

4.1 Standard 1 Safeguarding is embedded in the Church body's leadership, governance, ministry and culture

4.1.1 The Pontifical Institute are in the process of adopting a basic Safeguarding policy from a template produced by RLSS. They are finding it something of a technical challenge due to some limitations in their IT proficiency. However, they intend to persevere and adopt this policy as soon as they are able.

4.1.2 Due to the small size of the community the Regional Superior takes on many roles, including that of leading on Safeguarding. Often her priority has been to ensure that the day to day care needs of Sisters are met, for example through liaison with Hampshire Social Services who have engaged carers on their behalf. This can mean that there is less time to focus on issues such as finalising the Safeguarding policy.

4.1.3 There are three Trustees of the Pontifical Institute, two resident in the UK and the Superior General. Meetings are not regular and minutes are not produced. The Pontifical Institute should aim to ensure that they meet the recommended minimum of the Charity Commission of at least two meetings per year³. It would also assist their governance if agendas and minutes or actions were recorded. Safeguarding should also be included on each agenda even if it only receives a mention.

4.1.4 The Regional Superior said that she had recently read Integrity in Ministry⁴ online and talked about it informally with her Sisters. Due to their recent association with RLSS, and the fact that they have not received a Safeguarding audit before, the Pontifical Institute are still in the early stages of understanding the eight Safeguarding standards and how these can be applied to their life and work.

Graded: Not Met

³ [Charity meetings - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/charity-meetings)

⁴ Integrity in Ministry is a code of conduct for Religious engaged in ministry in the Catholic Church in England and Wales

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

4.2.1 The Pontifical Institute do not have a Safeguarding communication plan. As they are a small group who live together they disseminate Safeguarding information through informal group discussions. They have just engaged with RLSS and started to receive communications from them which can inform future discussions. It will be important to continue to discuss these updates with the Sisters to help them understand developments in Safeguarding and to ensure that Safeguarding remains in their collective consciousness. Given the small size of the Pontifical Institute it would be appropriate for communication planning to form part of the overarching Safeguarding policy which is in development.

4.2.2 The Chapel displays the expected Diocesan Safeguarding information including the name and contact details of the Parish Safeguarding Representative and contact details for the Diocesan Safeguarding office. A Safe Spaces⁵ poster is also presented on the noticeboard.

4.2.3 In their self-assessment the Pontifical Institute identified that they had links with RLSS, the Parish of St. Mary's Alton and Portsmouth Diocese to keep people safe. They have also liaised with Hampshire Social Care to ensure the care and safety of Sisters with care needs. When it has proved necessary they have asked for care workers not to be returned to them when they were unhappy with the service they were providing.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

⁵ Safe Spaces is a free and independent support service, providing a confidential, personal, and safe space for anyone who has been abused by someone in the Church or as a result of their relationship with the Church of England, the Catholic Church in England and Wales or the Church in Wales.

4.3 Standard 3 Engaging with and Caring for those who report having been harmed

4.3.1 The Pontifical Institute in the UK have not ever had to respond to an allegation or concern from a Survivor. Therefore, the audit of Standards 3, 4 and 5 is entirely theoretical.

4.3.2 In interview, the Regional Superior indicated that if a Survivor were to approach them to make a disclosure they would listen to the person in as reassuring a manner as they could to let them know that they were doing the right thing in coming forward. Notes would be taken and the information promptly shared with RLSS. The Pontifical Institute would act upon any recommendations that RLSS made with regard to supporting Survivors.

4.3.3 The existence of the Safe Spaces poster in the Chapel also allows Survivors to independently reach out to Support services designed to meet their needs without direct reference to the Pontifical Institute.

4.3.4 Whilst the likelihood of being approached by a Survivor may be relatively small, the Pontifical Institute should be prepared for the possibility by accessing relevant training and having a clear process available for all Sisters to follow.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

4.4 Standard 4 Effective Management of Allegations and Concerns

4.4.1 As above, this section has not been assessed against any actual practice examples because there are none. The Regional Superior said that, were she become aware of any allegation or concern, she would report it to police immediately if it was an emergency. All concerns would also be reported to RLSS and, dependent upon the nature of the concern, to Social Care as necessary. The Pontifical Institute are confident in dealing with Adult Social Care and the NHS as they have engaged with them over the care needs of the Sisters.

4.4.2 There is not a formal process for reporting allegations and concerns to leaders and Trustees. However, in practical terms the Regional Superior would inevitably be aware of any issues arising within the small convent.

4.4.3 In their self-assessment the Pontifical Institute indicated that the greatest risk to the Sisters is likely to come from external sources so they take practical measures, such as not answering the door alone, to protect themselves. This will be covered in greater detail under training but developing an in-depth awareness of the types of abuse that exist will ensure that the Sisters can recognise them and report them promptly.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

4.5 Standard 5 Management and Support of Subjects of Allegations and Concerns (Respondents)

4.5.1 The Regional Superior indicated that, were a member of the Pontifical Institute to be a Respondent to an allegation, she would consult with the international General Administration. If the individual needed to be removed from their current accommodation then it is likely that they would be temporarily rehoused in Rome.

4.5.2 The General Administration would also be able to assist if guidance was needed in matters of Canon Law. The Regional Superior also recalled that she has encountered Diocesan clergy who would be able to advise on matters of Canon Law if necessary.

4.5.3 The Pontifical Institute would refer any concerns or allegations promptly to RLSS so would be able to utilise their expert support in managing, monitoring, risk assessing and supporting Respondents to allegations. As part of their developing relationship with RLSS the Pontifical Institute should access training and seek guidance to develop their knowledge of how any Respondents should be supported and managed.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

4.6 Standard 6 Robust Human Resource Management

4.6.1 The Pontifical Institute do not have a Safer Recruitment Policy. Safer Recruitment expectations should form part of the Safeguarding policy when it is finalised. One current member of the Pontifical Institute undertakes a role that needs a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)⁶ check. This is organised through her employment at the nursery and the Pontifical Institute hold a copy. The Pontifical Institute have no direct employees. Their two volunteers assist in the sunken garden in roles that do not require DBS checks. East Hampshire Adult Services oversee the safe recruitment of the carers that support some of the Sisters.

4.6.2 The Mother General invites an individual to move from one country, or entity, to another. One Sister from overseas is currently resident in the Convent, with a view to joining permanently. A police background check was completed on her prior to her receiving a visa for the UK and references from the past 10 years of her placements, wherever she has served, were gained.

4.6.3 The first point of contact for the Sisters to raise any concerns is the Regional Superior. The Sisters also spoke highly of the availability of the Mother General who has at least annual contact with all of the Sisters. Therefore, whilst there are no formal complaints or whistleblowing policies the Sisters were confident that they could report any concerns to the Regional Superior or, if they related to the Regional Superior, directly to the Mother General. When the Safeguarding policy is complete it should include clear guidance on how any complaints received will be managed.

4.6.4 Training will be covered in the below section but the Pontifical Institute will need to have clear expectations of the Safeguarding training necessary for any new members, including those joining from overseas, to ensure that they understand and can work within the expected Safeguarding standards.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

⁶ [Disclosure and Barring Service - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

4.7 Standard 7 Training and Support for Safeguarding

4.7.1 The Regional Superior, who has been in the UK for nine years, has experience of completing Safeguarding training, particularly from her time working in schools administration in the United States. The Sister who is employed in a nursery is compliant with the nursery's training expectations, including in Safeguarding, and the Pontifical Institute hold copies of her training certificates.

4.7.2 The Pontifical Institute joined RLSS recently and have yet to undertake any of their available Safeguarding training. It is also acknowledged that engagement online is particularly challenging for some of the older or more infirm Sisters. However, as part of their Safeguarding policy the Pontifical Institute should outline their Safeguarding training expectations for all of the Sisters. This might be to establish a basic level of Safeguarding awareness across all the Sisters to ensure that they would recognise forms all potential forms of abuse and would be able to report them if they saw them.

4.7.3 Training expectations for leaders, Sisters with larger ministries or greater public contact and for those arriving from overseas should also be established. The Pontifical Institute should then engage with the training team at RLSS to implement the expected training in a way that meets their needs. Records of training completion and expected renewal dates should also be kept.

Graded: Not Met

4.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

4.8.1 The Pontifical Institute engaged proactively with this CSSA audit process and demonstrated during the audit visit the care that they have for each other. They have also joined RLSS with a view to accessing their support in providing a safe environment for the Sisters and those they come into contact with. They are in the very early stages of engagement with RLSS and should consider how they will utilise their resources and support in future to strengthen their Safeguarding practice.

4.8.2 Trustees of the Pontifical Institute should ensure that, when they meet, there are agendas and minutes or actions which include Safeguarding each time. This

will demonstrate active consideration of Safeguarding by leaders, even if there are no developments to report on. However, as part of continuous improvement the Pontifical Institute should consider how they will implement the recommendations of this audit as part of an action or development plan. These can be tracked in Trustees' meetings to ensure that they are completed in a timely manner. Completion of RLSS training for Trustees will help leaders understand their roles and the legal obligations placed upon them.

Graded: Not Met

5. Summary of Overall Findings

5.1 The Pontifical Institute of Religious Teachers Filippini are a small group of Sisters who have very recently started their engagement with RLSS to develop their Safeguarding practice. Their care for each other, and desire to ensure that they are all safe, was evident during the audit visit. They take practical measures, such as ensuring that they do not answer the convent door alone, to facilitate this.

5.2 To develop their Safeguarding further it will be important to ensure that there is regular, recorded Trustee oversight of Safeguarding from Trustees meetings. Finalising and implementing a Safeguarding policy and establishing a Safeguarding training expectation, both with the support of RLSS, will augment the existing steps they take to ensure that each other are safe and cared for.

5.3 Whilst there are some of the Safeguarding standards where expected Safeguarding practice standards are Not Met the evidence demonstrates that an overall rating of Met with Recommendations is appropriate.

6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

- Set a minimum number of Trustees' meetings per year and include Safeguarding on each agenda. Take minutes or record actions
- Share relevant Safeguarding updates from RLSS with the Sisters and discuss to ensure an appropriate level of understanding

Within 6 months

- Finalise the Safeguarding Policy with the support of RLSS, to include Safeguarding Communications, Safer Recruitment and Complaints handling, and ensure that all Sisters have access to a copy
- Establish an expectation of Safeguarding training completion and renewal for the Sisters and engage with RLSS to implement this. Training to include basic Safeguarding awareness, Safeguarding awareness for new members including those from overseas and where relevant, how to respond to a disclosure of abuse

Within 12 months

- Leaders to access RLSS training and guidance on understanding how to support Survivors and also Respondents to allegations of abuse
- Trustees to complete RLSS training for Trustees
- Records to be created of Safeguarding training completion by the Sisters including expected renewal dates

7. Arrangements for Follow-up

7.1 In line with an overall rating of Met with Recommendations, the earliest date of the next audit of the Pontifical Institute by the CSSA is within two years in November 2026. If the CSSA becomes aware of a significant Safeguarding concern or allegation in the intervening period then an earlier audit will be required.