

Society of Mary (Marist Fathers)

Baseline Audit Report

October 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 This is a baseline audit of the safeguarding arrangements of Society of Mary, commonly known and hereafter referred to as the Marist Fathers. This audit has been undertaken as part of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency's (CSSA) baseline audit programme of Religious Life Groups (RLG).

1.2 The Marist Fathers is an international Roman Catholic religious congregation of male members, founded in 1816 in France by Jean Claude Colin. Globally, the Society comprises six provinces: Europe, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Oceania, and Canada, and five districts: Africa, Asia, Brazil, Mexico, and South America. The Society is formed of 602 members working across more than 20 countries, with the Mother House located in Rome. The Marist Fathers in England belong to the Province of Europe. This province was formed on 1 July 2008 through the amalgamation of seven former provinces: Italy, Ireland, France, Germany, England, the Netherlands/Norway, and Spain. The administrative headquarters for the Province of Europe is in Paris, with overall responsibility held by the Provincial who resides in Paris.

1.3 The Society of Mary in England is currently made up of members based in three communities: Hull, Wells-next-the-Sea, and Notre Dame de France in London, with several others assigned internationally. In Hull (Diocese of Middlesbrough), six members are present. Among the members in Hull, one individual holds the roles of trustee, national administrator, and safeguarding lead, and additionally volunteers two days per week at a refugee centre. Another member serves as a trustee and provides occasional supply ministry. One member, though retired, continues to support local community groups. A further member regularly provides supply ministry and conducts mission appeals at various churches across England. One member is retired and no longer engaged in active ministry. In Wells-next-the-Sea (Diocese of East Anglia), three members are active: one serves as parish priest, another as community superior and trustee, and a third contributes through occasional supply ministry. At Notre Dame de France in London (Diocese of Westminster), four Marist priests currently seconded from overseas, originating from France, Ireland, and Africa, are actively involved in pastoral ministry, with one acting as local superior. Internationally, four members are currently based in France, Russia, and Ireland, including the Provincial who also holds the role of Trustee. Additionally, two members of the Society hold episcopal appointments: one

currently serves as the Bishop of Brentwood in Essex, while the other, the Bishop Emeritus of Menevia, is now retired and offering pastoral support in Newport, Wales. Members across these locations contribute to the Society's mission through governance, ministry, and community service. This audit will focus solely on the active ministry of Marist Fathers based within England and Wales and does not include any work undertaken internationally.

1.4 The Marist Fathers directly employ a total of four staff members. This includes a cook, a housekeeper, and the Safeguarding Coordinator based at the community in Hull, as well as a cook employed at the Wells-next-the-Sea community house. Staff at Notre Dame de France, however, are recruited directly by the church, which operates as a separate organisation with safeguarding responsibilities held by Westminster Diocese.

1.5 The needs of the Fathers vary considerably, with some living independently without support, while those in Hull may require minor assistance such as appointment reminders and travel support. This is closely monitored by the Safeguarding Coordinator and Safeguarding Lead, who have confirmed that, should additional care be required, it would be provided through domiciliary services or, if necessary, residential care. Currently, no personal care is needed.

1.6 This audit seeks to assess the effectiveness of current safeguarding arrangements, by considering practice over the last twelve months. The CSSA has categorised RLGs on a scale from Level 1 (a small community 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), to 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 Marist Fathers were audited against the Level 2 framework.¹

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

¹ More full information about the RLG audit framework can be found here: [Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency](https://www.catholic-safeguarding-standards.org/)

professional judgement to ensure that Religious Life Groups are graded against the national standards in such a way that reflects their uniqueness. The Society of Mary, Marist Fathers have been assigned to a Level 2 audit.

2. Scope & Methodology

2.1 The CSSA analyst initially contacted the Safeguarding Coordinator on the 8 January 2025 to confirm a baseline audit for the week commencing the 31 March 2025. This was subsequently amended to the week commencing the 5 May 2025, to maximise the Marist Fathers availability.

2.2 In advance of the formal audit week, the Marist Fathers were requested to complete a Level 2 audit self-assessment tool providing information on their adherence to the eight National Safeguarding Standards and progress in the overall implementation of said standards. The Marist Fathers were provided with the self-assessment tool and guidance on the 8 January 2025. The completion date for the self-assessment and supporting evidence was scheduled for the 5 April 2025.

2.3 On 8 January, the CSSA analyst held a telephone conversation with the Safeguarding Coordinator to discuss the audit arrangements in further detail.

2.4 This baseline audit was undertaken following the submission of the self-assessment on 4 April 2025 and further evidence was reviewed by the auditor during a site visit on 7 May 2025.

2.5 Information from the self-assessment and supporting evidence provided by the Marist Fathers was reviewed by the CSSA analyst and this evidence was assessed against the Level 2 Maturity Matrix to arrive at ratings for each standard and a combined overall grade.

2.6 The following methods were employed:

2.6.1 Interviews

- Interviews were conducted with key individuals and groups from the Marist Fathers across four dates: 6, 7, 8 and 9 May:
 - Interviews held via Zoom on the 6 May
 - Interview with the Trustees

- Interview held at the Marist Father Community House in Hull on the 7 May
 - Interview with the Religious Safeguarding Lead
 - Interview with the Safeguarding Coordinator
 - Group meeting with the Fathers residing in the community within Hull
- Interviews held via Zoom on the 8 May
 - Interview with two members of the community in Wells-next-the-Sea
 - Interview with one Father for the Notre Dame de France community house in London
- Interview held on 9 May
 - Interview with one Father from the Notre Dame de France community house in London

2.6.2 Document Review

- Review of the following key documents additionally took place
 - Self-assessment form
 - Supplementary evidence (Listed at Appendix A)

2.7 Liaison has also taken place between the analyst, Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS)² and the Safeguarding Teams in Middlesborough, East Anglia and Westminster dioceses regarding the Marist Fathers engagement with their safeguarding expectations.

3. Audit Grading

3.1 Practice was assessed against the eight National Safeguarding Standards adopted by the Catholic Church in England and Wales³ and graded in accordance with the CSSA Maturity Matrix for Level 2 RLGs.

² The RLSS are a provider of safeguarding services to RLGs in England and Wales.

³ Full details of the eight standards and underpinning sub standards are available here: [The Eight National Safeguarding Standards \(catholicsafeguarding.org.uk\)](https://catholicsafeguarding.org.uk)

3.2 Potential audit ratings against each standard, and the final overall ratings, are: Below Basic, Basic, Early Progress, Firm Progress, Results Being Achieved, Comprehensive Assurance and Exemplary.

Overall grading	Results Being Achieved
Standard 1 – Safeguarding is embedded in the Church body’s leadership, governance, ministry and culture	Results Being Achieved
Standard 2 – Communicating the Church’s safeguarding message	Firm Progress
Standard 3 – Engaging with and caring for those who report having been harmed	Comprehensive Assurance
Standard 4 – Effective management of allegations and concerns	Results Being Achieved
Standard 5 – Management and support of subjects of allegations and concerns (respondents)	Results Being Achieved
Standard 6 – Robust human resource management	Firm Progress
Standard 7 – Training and support for safeguarding	Firm Progress
Standard 8 – Quality assurance and continuous Improvement	Early Progress

4. Audit findings against each standard

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

Strengths

4.1.1 The Safeguarding Policy for the Marist Fathers states that they are committed to safeguarding all children and adults. The policy encompasses the principles that “each person has a right to expect the highest level of protection, love, encouragement and respect”. The safeguarding policy discusses their commitment to the One Church Approach. It also states that the policy and procedure apply to all within Marist Fathers Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) regardless of their role or the activities they undertake and that it is the responsibility of all within Marist Fathers to prevent, whether by action or omission, abuse. The Safeguarding Policy, based on an RLSS template, was created in May 2023 with a review held in July 2024, the next scheduled review is in July 2026. The self-assessment completed by the Marist Fathers states that during an assembly held in April 2024, for all Marist Fathers in England, the safeguarding policy was presented and discussed with all attendees and this event offered an opportunity for questions to be raised and answered.

4.1.2 The Marist Fathers have six Trustees, all of whom are Religious and meet five times a year. Trustee meeting agendas and minutes from the past twelve months confirm that safeguarding is a standing item at each meeting. In particular, the agenda and minutes from the December 2024 meeting record the submission of the annual risk management report by the Safeguarding Coordinator. This report included a risk register highlighting several areas of concern. The Trustees discussed the assessment and acknowledged ongoing health issues among members, alongside relevant health and safety considerations. This discussion helped to inform individual risk assessments for those members requiring additional support. The December 2024 minutes also confirm that the Safeguarding Coordinator initiated a comprehensive review and update of safeguarding policies, practices, and procedures, confirming that “all documents were revised to reflect recent changes in UK regulations”. The Safeguarding Coordinator confirmed that

these risk assessments are reviewed regularly and presented to the Trustees on an annual basis.

4.1.3 The Religious Safeguarding Lead confirmed that the trustees had discussed the potential need for a dedicated safeguarding committee. However, given the current size of the Marist Fathers, they concluded that establishing such a committee was not appropriate at this time. Instead, it was agreed that the Religious Safeguarding Lead who also serves as the designated trustee responsible for safeguarding, would continue to work within the existing structure alongside the Safeguarding Coordinator. At a recent trustee meeting held in March 2025, the Trustees discussed the need to appoint a safeguarding link person within each community. This role is intended to support improved communication, enhance understanding of safeguarding matters across the Marist Fathers, and confirm the effective circulation of key safeguarding messages. These individuals have now been appointed and are in place within each community. It was also recognised that it would be beneficial for the safeguarding link persons to meet regularly, either virtually or in person, to share updates, raise concerns, and receive guidance and training from the Safeguarding Coordinator and Religious Safeguarding Lead. It has been agreed that a designated safeguarding day will be organised for June 2026 to include all safeguarding link persons. A formal schedule for these meetings should be established to promote consistency and strengthen collaboration across all communities in relation to safeguarding practices. In addition, a clear role description for safeguarding link persons should be developed to define expectations, responsibilities, and lines of communication.

4.1.4 The safeguarding policy mandates that all Marist Fathers will undergo safeguarding training relevant to their role. The policy lists the minimum standards for training for each role within the community. The policy outlines the specific safeguarding responsibilities assigned to key roles, including the Trustees, the Provincial Leader and the Religious Safeguarding Lead (with assistance from the Safeguarding Coordinator, and all other roles). Each group's duties are detailed in relation to safeguarding governance, oversight, case management, and reporting obligations. A further section reinforces that all members, regardless of position, are responsible for understanding how to report concerns by making themselves

familiar with the content of the policy and the procedure contained within it and any other associated policies or procedures.

4.1.5 Safeguarding and personnel records are securely stored, either electronically or in locked paper files, with access restricted to those who require it. In accordance with the Safeguarding Policy, these records are shared with the RLSS when necessary. Any allegations or concerns involving members of the Marist Fathers are held securely in the Safeguarding Coordinator's office. Additional safeguarding documentation stored on the Safeguarding Coordinator's laptop is regularly backed up onto external hard drives, which are retained by the Safeguarding Coordinator. These hard drives are not left in offices overnight, and the Safeguarding Coordinator is the sole individual with access to these files.

4.1.6 The Religious Safeguarding Lead has been in post for three years and is the designated trustee with a clearly defined job description and overall responsibility for safeguarding across the Marist Fathers. The Safeguarding Coordinator has been in role since 2012 and has been directly involved in managing safeguarding concerns since their appointment. Initially employed on a part-time basis, their role expanded to full-time after six months, eventually encompassing additional responsibilities as a regional bursar and charity secretary. In this capacity, they liaised with boards of trustees and supported the closure of schools and properties as the number of members within the Marist Fathers declined. The Safeguarding Coordinator currently works 21 hours a week, and supports the Safeguarding Lead on all safeguarding matters, also providing cover in their absence. The Safeguarding Coordinator is now planning a phased retirement from their finance related responsibilities, with their new working pattern reducing to three to four days per month, with additional days available if necessary. They bring extensive experience from the charity sector, particularly with organisations connected to religious life, including work in community centres, finance and business roles lasting over two years, during which they managed safeguarding concerns involving families and children. They also served as a trustee for a regional survivor support organisation for seven years until 2017, and have provided consultancy and accountancy services to charities, further strengthening their expertise in both safeguarding and organisational governance. The relationship between the Safeguarding Coordinator and the Religious Safeguarding Lead is clear and

collaborative, with both confirming that they meet regularly, supported by the Safeguarding Coordinator being based on site. As the Safeguarding Coordinator has been in the role for many years and her responsibilities have evolved over time, there is currently no up to date formal job description in place. She also noted the possibility of working remotely in the future. Given the forthcoming changes to her working hours and role, it is recommended that an updated job description be developed. This should clearly outline her responsibilities, including the consistency, frequency, and format of meetings with the Religious Safeguarding Lead.

4.1.7 All of those spoken to demonstrated an understanding of the need to address low level concerns and share information with the Safeguarding Lead and the RLSS, when necessary. Those within interviews also recognised that on occasion statutory agency referrals may be made.

4.1.8 The Marist Fathers have signed formal contracts with the RLSS and CSSA, and the Religious Safeguarding Lead actively engages with the RLSS for safeguarding queries. The Religious Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Coordinator are committed to continuing this collaboration with the RLSS to enhance safeguarding practices across all RLGs.

4.1.9 The Safeguarding Coordinator confirmed that members of the Marist Fathers have each been provided with a personal safeguarding booklet. This resource includes the eight National Safeguarding Standards, a copy of Integrity in Ministry⁴, and the document Caring Safely for Others Pastoral Standards and Safe Conduct in Ministry⁵. These materials serve as key reference points to support and promote the consistent implementation of safeguarding practices throughout the Marist Fathers' communities.

⁴ *Integrity in Ministry* is a code of conduct for Catholic clergy, religious, and lay pastoral ministers. It outlines the ethical and professional standards expected in their service to the Church and the wider community.

⁵ *Caring Safely for Others* outlines mandatory standards for clergy conduct in relation to safeguarding. It integrates safeguarding with the core Christian mission: caring responsibly for every person, especially children and adults at risk, <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/04/Caring-Safely-For-Others.pdf>

Areas for development

4.1.10 The current safeguarding policy for the Marist Fathers was last updated in 2024 and is not scheduled for review until 2026. This two-year review period is too infrequent given the evolving nature of safeguarding legislation, guidance, and best practice. To ensure the policy remains current and responsive, it is recommended that the policy should be reviewed annually.

4.1.11 The Marist Fathers have yet to develop a safeguarding implementation plan to support structured adherence to the eight National Safeguarding Standards in England and Wales. While they have informed the CSSA analyst that they intend to use the recommendations from this audit process to inform this plan, it should also serve as a practical framework to structure safeguarding activity, clearly allocate responsibilities and resources, and provide a means for regularly monitoring and reviewing progress. It should be shared with and reviewed by the Trustees to ensure effective oversight and accountability

Graded: Results Being Achieved

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's safeguarding message

Strengths

4.2.1 The Marist Fathers' safeguarding statement, along with contact information for the RLSS, is prominently displayed in all community locations, including the community houses in Hull, Wells-next-the-Sea, and Notre Dame de France in London. This was verified during a site visit to the Marist Fathers' community house in Hull and further confirmed through interviews with members of the communities in Wells-next-the-Sea and Notre Dame de France.

4.2.2 The Marist Fathers currently have a communications policy that was introduced in April 2019 and reviewed in December 2023 and 2024. However, the document does not specify a proposed date for the next review. The Religious Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Coordinator noted that communication with

the Marist Fathers in Hull is regular and often informal, as both are frequently present on site. These interactions typically focus on the care and protection of the Fathers and are conducted in a manner that promotes openness and trust. They also stated that communications with those in different communities is provided by email or community meetings. The three communities, Hull, Notre Dame de France and Wells-next-the Sea, and members attached to their communities hold a monthly online meeting. The purpose of this online gathering is described as “to keep a sense of unity with its members”. During the meeting information is shared regarding community life, ministry and safeguarding information, including, training opportunities as well as any feedback people may have. The Religious Safeguarding Lead also states that individual communities hold their own meetings according to their own timetable.

4.2.3 Within the context of care for the Fathers within the community in Hull, the Safeguarding Coordinator, Religious Safeguarding Lead, and Housekeeper meet weekly to discuss any issues. The Safeguarding Coordinator explained that many Fathers who are no longer in active ministry or who require additional support tend to move to Hull. Together, these three individuals are able to monitor those who may need extra care or assistance and the Religious Safeguarding Lead is able to take action if necessary. Although these meetings do not follow a set agenda, minutes are taken, with the primary focus being the wellbeing and care of the Marist Fathers. Any issues identified are then raised with the Trustees.

4.2.4 The Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Coordinator stated that they ensure Catholic safeguarding updates from the CSSA and the RLSS and briefings regarding policies and procedures are circulated to the Trustees for information and the Trustees confirmed they will consider any actions for the charity as a result.

Areas for development

4.2.5 While safeguarding information is accessible internally, access for the public remains limited as the Marist Fathers do not have a website and therefore, the Safeguarding Policy is currently not available externally. There is no additional content or resources available for the public to access regarding specific safeguarding policies, procedures, or contact details. This limits transparency and access to key safeguarding information for individuals seeking more clarity on how

safeguarding concerns are managed within the community. By establishing an official website, the Marist Fathers would significantly improve their visibility, enhance transparency, and foster stronger communication with their community, stakeholders, and peers. However, it is understood that launching and maintaining a website requires careful consideration of various factors beyond safeguarding. Therefore, it is important that this matter be discussed thoroughly by the trustees and the Marist Fathers as a whole, to assess whether creating an official website is proportionate to the Marist Fathers' needs, priorities, and capacity.

4.2.6 It is recommended that the Communications Policy of the Marist Fathers be strengthened to better reflect the current and future needs of the organisation. In particular, the policy would benefit from the inclusion of digital communications, to improve access to important information, including safeguarding policies. The policy should also identify how the Charity maintains regular communication with external audiences.

4.2.7 The Marist Fathers should consider formalising a commitment to better serve non-English-speaking members and vulnerable communities by providing materials in alternative formats, accessible versions, and different languages. This would support greater engagement and inclusivity across the Charity's work. During interviews, representatives of the Marist Fathers indicated that such an initiative would be welcomed.

4.2.8 It is also advisable to create a clear procedure for crisis communications, setting out who is authorised to speak on behalf of the organisation and outlining steps to be taken during safeguarding incidents or reputational challenges.

4.2.9 The Marist Fathers should implement mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their communications to support continuous improvement.

Graded: Firm Progress

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

Strengths

4.3.1 During the 12 month audit period, no allegations were made against any member of the Marist Fathers. However, in February 2025, the Religious Safeguarding Lead received correspondence from a survivor relating to a non-recent allegation. The analyst was subsequently presented with this evidence. In the correspondence, the survivor expressed sincere appreciation for the compassionate and supportive response they had received when engaging with the safeguarding process two years earlier, highlighting a marked contrast with a much earlier experience many years ago, which had initially left them reluctant to come forward again. The Religious Safeguarding Lead explained that this correspondence was shared with the Trustees and formed the basis for reflection at a recent Trustee meeting. During the discussion, the previous response was compared with current practices to identify lessons learned and to acknowledge areas where safeguarding responses have improved, supporting a culture of ongoing development and accountability within the Marist Fathers. Furthermore, the Religious Safeguarding Lead also reflected on a separate disclosure, wherein a survivor reported non recent abuse but expressed a clear preference not to engage with the Marist Fathers at this time. The Religious Safeguarding Lead emphasised the importance of avoiding any actions that might retraumatise the individual, while also recognising the need to remain accessible and supportive should the survivor wish to initiate contact in the future. He outlined the thoughtful and sensitive approaches he had considered for potential outreach, ensuring they would align with the survivor's expressed boundaries and emotional wellbeing.

4.3.2 The Marist Fathers Safeguarding Policy states "The Society of Mary (Marist Fathers) CIO is committed to safeguarding all children and adults" and "Following on from the safeguarding reviews in 2020 we are committed to the One Church Approach to safeguarding by implementing the changes needed and ensuring we respond to victim/survivors promptly and compassionately." This demonstrates an intention to uphold a survivor centred approach to safeguarding and shows a

commitment to continual improvement and acknowledges the importance of responding to disclosures in a manner that is both timely and compassionate.

4.3.3 The Marist Fathers' *Management of Allegations and Concerns Guidance* was created in December 2022 and is due for review in December 2025. The guidance provides a structured, trauma-informed approach to safeguarding. It comprehensively outlines how to respond to safeguarding concerns and allegations and sets out the support available to both the respondent and the survivor. The guidance emphasises the importance of consistent and compassionate responses to survivors, including clear expectations for risk management, support during temporary withdrawal from ministry, and the processes for reintegration or dispensation. It also addresses situations where statutory agencies do not take further action, demonstrating a commitment to safeguarding that extends beyond legal thresholds. When clearly integrated with the broader Safeguarding Policy, this framework ensures that all members, including those not in active ministry, can respond appropriately and offer meaningful support to those affected by abuse or misconduct. Further information about this document is provided in section 4.4.2.

4.3.4 During interviews, the Religious Safeguarding Lead, Safeguarding Coordinator, and Trustees confirmed their commitment to meeting with any survivor who comes forward. All participants interviewed stated that, in the event of receiving a disclosure, they would listen to the individual and offer support, either pastorally or through appropriate referrals. All members demonstrated awareness of the need to contact the Religious Safeguarding Lead following a safeguarding disclosure, as well as the importance of considering statutory referrals where appropriate.

4.3.5 The Religious Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Coordinator are suitably trained and experienced in responding to disclosures of harm and were able to discuss actions taken in relation to non-recent cases. While the examples provided fell outside the audit remit, having been finalised over 12 months beforehand, the Religious Safeguarding Lead demonstrated evidence of appropriate engagement with the RLSS. The Safeguarding Lead also provided evidence of empathetic communication with survivors, the provision of counselling support for survivors and their families, and the issuing of apology letters where appropriate.

4.3.6 The Trustees, Provincial, Religious Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Coordinator recognise the importance of sharing information with the RLSS when necessary and informed the CSSA analyst that they would work closely with the RLSS for support whenever they become aware of any safeguarding allegations regarding their members. The Trustees confirmed that they would expect to be informed of any safeguarding disclosures and would review any information provided to them in order to fulfil their oversight responsibilities.

4.3.7 During interviews, all members acknowledged the importance of referring safeguarding concerns to the Religious Safeguarding Lead and appropriate safeguarding bodies when necessary. Members were able to recall Safe Spaces and would seek support from the Safeguarding Coordinator who maintains a list of support organisations. Members also recognised that individuals receiving disclosures may require pastoral support and indicated that they would seek assistance from the Provincial, the Religious Safeguarding Lead, or the Safeguarding Coordinator to access appropriate support in such situations.

4.3.8 In interview, the Religious Safeguarding Lead described several instances where the Marist Fathers have given careful consideration to the potential impact of their presence at certain public or community events. This was also evidenced within emails and correspondence between Fathers. In these situations, the Fathers demonstrated a thoughtful and trauma-informed approach by recognising that their attendance, particularly in cases where individuals had previously raised non-recent allegations, could be distressing or re-traumatising for survivors. As a result, they made the decision to step back and not attend these events, prioritising the wellbeing of survivors. This reflects a growing awareness within the congregation of the wider implications of safeguarding and the importance of survivor centred practices in both formal and informal settings.

4.3.9 The General Care Policy, was adopted in 2018 and has been reviewed every two years. The policy was last updated in December 2024. This policy protects the Marist Fathers by establishing a clear, supportive framework that encourages open communication about health and wellbeing within the community. It explicitly assigns responsibilities to the Provincial Superior, Community Superior, and individual members, ensuring that everyone is aware of their role in monitoring, discussing, and addressing health concerns. The policy emphasises the

importance of members initiating conversations about their own health or diagnosed conditions, fostering a culture where raising personal concerns is welcomed and normalised. By promoting regular reviews and assessments of living status, the policy ensures timely recognition of changing health needs, enabling appropriate adjustments to living arrangements and care levels. This proactive approach helps prevent situations where health issues might be neglected or concealed, thereby protecting members' dignity, safety, and wellbeing while also reducing the risk to others. Overall, the policy creates a supportive environment that empowers Fathers to raise concerns about themselves confidently and receive the necessary care and support in a structured, compassionate manner.

Areas for development

4.3.10 While the Management of Allegations and Concerns guidance outlines a commitment to pastoral support, assigning a designated contact person and providing regular written updates to the victim/survivor, it is recommended that the guidance be further strengthened by explicitly detailing the types of support available, such as emotional, psychological, spiritual, and practical assistance. To strengthen the document, it is recommended that the role of the designated contact person be clearly defined. This should include their core responsibilities (e.g., maintaining communication with the victim/survivor, coordinating support, providing information), and the scope and limitations of their role. Clearly outlining this role will help manage expectations, ensure consistent support is delivered across cases, and reinforce the Church's commitment to a transparent and survivor-focused safeguarding approach.

4.3.11 The Marist Fathers should implement a formal mechanism for gathering survivor feedback, this would enhance the Marist Fathers' commitment to compassionate and responsive care and ensure continuous improvement in how support is provided. Leaders should consider how direct engagement with survivors, or through Religious Life Groups with direct experience, can inform future safeguarding reviews.

4.3.12 Support agency information should be displayed in communal areas including information for Safe Spaces. In addition, this information should be made available on the organisation's website, should this be pursued. Making this visible

and easily accessible would help survivors access support services confidentially and without unnecessary barriers. Currently, there is no visible signage or material promoting support organisations beyond those referenced by the RLSS.

4.3.13 The Marist Fathers should develop a comprehensive central register of local and national support organisations within the UK to be maintained by the Religious Safeguarding Lead and accessible to all relevant individuals across the organisation. An up-to-date and accessible directory would help ensure the Religious Safeguarding Lead and others can swiftly and appropriately signpost individuals to relevant support.

4.3.14 The Fathers should consider proactively engaging with local statutory and voluntary organisations, such as local safeguarding partnerships or community-based support services. Regular meetings or participation in multi-agency forums would enable the sharing of best practices, facilitate collaborative working, and ensure the Fathers remain informed about developments in safeguarding practice. This engagement would demonstrate a commitment to working within the wider safeguarding community.

4.3.15 The Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Coordinator have attended specific training with the RLSS for safeguarding leads, as well as Safeguarding and Child Protection training in 2024 and 2025. In 2023, both also completed the “Walking Together with Victims and Survivors” training delivered by the RLSS. Given that it has now been two years since this specialist training, it is appropriate for them to consider undertaking a reflective review of their safeguarding knowledge and practice. This may include attending further advanced or specialist safeguarding training, focused on survivor engagement and trauma-informed care. Such steps would support their ongoing professional development and help ensure their safeguarding approach remains current, effective, and aligned with best practice and national standards.

Graded: Comprehensive Assurance

4.4 Standard 4 Effective management of allegations and concerns

Strengths

4.4.1 There have been no safeguarding allegations involving the Marist Fathers in the last 12 months. While historical allegations and safeguarding plans fall outside the audit's evidence review period, these were discussed in interviews to provide contextual understanding. As such, the assessment in this area is informed by relevant policies and theoretical discussions, rather than direct review of past case evidence.

4.4.2 The Marist Fathers' Management of Allegations and Concerns Guidance (2022) provides clear, comprehensive, and practical guidance, offering a strong framework for responding to safeguarding concerns. It outlines the necessary referral steps, specifies who to inform (including the Safeguarding Lead and Provincial), and sets clear timelines for action, including referral to statutory agencies within one working day. The guidance provides information on the information required when making a referral, such as details of the victim, alleged perpetrator, nature of the allegation, and how the disclosure was made, which ensures consistency in reporting. The guidance also addresses case recording, risk management, temporary removal from ministry, and support for all parties involved, as well as information on the review process and clear responsibilities for reintegration or dispensation of members. It also discusses in detail the "management of allegations and concerns where there remains a concern following acquittal, a decision not to prosecute or no further action from statutory agencies". This detailed procedure enhances accountability and transparency. When referenced and integrated more clearly within the Safeguarding Policy, this alignment will ensure all members, including those not in active ministry, can confidently follow correct procedures.

4.4.3 The Marist Fathers Safeguarding Policy states that "It is the responsibility of all within Marist Fathers to prevent, whether by action or omission, abuse." This establishes a clear expectation that safeguarding is a shared responsibility, applying to all members regardless of role. The policy includes a brief list of recognised categories of abuse and goes on to state that behaviours which

amount to modern-day slavery, or where there is evidence of discrimination or radicalisation, must also be recognised and addressed as safeguarding concerns. This demonstrates an awareness of wider safeguarding risks and reinforces the importance of vigilance in identifying and responding to all forms of potential harm.

4.4.4 The Trustees state that in practice they should have oversight of any disclosures received. The Trustees have demonstrated a clear understanding of their responsibilities and the importance of ensuring that such information is shared with them. In addition to their oversight responsibilities, the Trustees have stated their understanding of the legal obligations surrounding safeguarding incidents, specifically their duty to report any serious concerns or incidents to the Charity Commission.

4.4.5 During interviews the Marist Fathers displayed an awareness of their responsibility to support individuals who make disclosures and to listen to their concerns. They also understand the importance of referring any safeguarding concerns to the Safeguarding Lead.

4.4.6 The Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Coordinator work closely together and were able to reflect on their handling of non-recent allegations prior to the audit period, highlighting how their collective experience contributed positively to the process. Both the Religious Safeguarding Lead and the Safeguarding Coordinator are suitably trained to receive disclosures and emphasised the importance of collaborative working with the RLSS in the management of allegations. This joint approach supports a consistent and informed safeguarding response, based on experience, training, and an effective partnership. The Religious Safeguarding Lead is also a member of the Conference of Religious and attends these meetings with the chair of Trustees, he also stated that he attends the RLSS AGM meeting. The Safeguarding Lead stated that these meetings provide access to a network of other safeguarding leads from different religious life groups and has on occasion allowed him to gain insights from others' experiences and explore how similar cases have been handled elsewhere.

4.4.7 The Safeguarding Policy states that the Marist Fathers have a responsibility to ensure that all case files held are accurate, up to date and stored securely. This is further reiterated in the Management of Concerns and Allegations guidance. The

Marist Fathers also have a data retention policy and a data protection policy in place which were both created in July 2018 and last reviewed and updated in December 2024.

4.4.8 The Management of Concerns and Allegations guidance states that the advice of a qualified Canon Lawyer should be sought to ensure compliance with the requirements of Canon Law. Furthermore, it outlines that in any instance where a review is requested by either the complainant or respondent, the Review Panel should either include a Canon Lawyer or have access to one.

Areas for development

4.4.9 There are issues of alignment between the Safeguarding Policy and the Management of Allegations and Concerns Guidance. While the latter provides clear, detailed, and well-structured procedures for handling safeguarding concerns and referrals, the Safeguarding Policy does not explicitly reference this guidance. It states simply that “concerns must be reported to the RLSS immediately” without directing readers to the Management of Allegations and Concerns Guidance for the next steps. This lack of cross-referencing creates a risk that members may be unaware of the comprehensive process already outlined in the document. Furthermore, the referral pathway is presented inconsistently across the two policies: the Safeguarding Policy appears to imply direct contact with the RLSS, whereas the Managing Allegations Policy clearly describes a route through the Safeguarding Lead and Religious Congregation Leader before involving the RLSS and statutory authorities. Clarifying this pathway and referencing between the policies would improve cohesion and ensure all members understand and follow the correct process.

4.4.10 The Safeguarding Coordinator confirmed that all documents pertaining to low level concerns are held within their office, with none raised during the audit period. However, the absence of a centralised log makes it unclear whether all concerns, including informal or pastoral ones, are consistently reported to Trustees. To strengthen oversight and ensure timely escalation, a centralised, standardised log should be introduced across all community houses. Trustees should review this log regularly, documenting patterns, risks, and lessons learned to support continuous improvement in safeguarding practices.

4.4.11 The Marist Fathers should consider engaging stakeholders and other religious life groups to help quality assure their policies. This collaborative approach would ensure that the policies align with best practices, reflect the values and needs of the broader community, and are continually improved through feedback from various perspectives.

4.4.12 The Managing Allegations Policy includes several measures that support basic data protection compliance for a small organisation, such as clear responsibilities for recording and storing safeguarding information, timely documentation and retention, secure storage in locked cabinets, limited access based on need-to-know, and detailed case file content including referrals, meeting notes, and risk assessments. It is recommended that the Charity makes a minor addition to its Data Protection Policy to explicitly reference the handling of safeguarding data. While safeguarding information is likely to be covered under existing provisions for special category data, it would be beneficial to clearly outline how such data is processed, accessed, and retained. Additionally, cross-referencing the Data Protection Policy, Data Retention Policy, and Safeguarding Policy would improve clarity and coherence, ensuring consistent practice and ease of understanding for those with safeguarding responsibilities.

Graded: Results Being Achieved

4.5 Standard 5 Management and support of subjects of allegations and concerns (respondents)

Strengths

4.5.1 The Marist Fathers have not managed any respondents in the past 12 months. While historical allegations and safeguarding plans fall outside the audit's evidence review period, these were discussed in interviews to provide contextual understanding. As such, the assessment in this area is informed by relevant policies and theoretical discussions, rather than direct review of past case evidence.

4.5.2 The Marist Fathers have shown a proactive commitment to safeguarding by actively engaging with the RLSS for training and safeguarding advice. The RLSS

provide personnel that are trained in managing, monitoring and supporting respondents of allegations. In the event of any allegation or disclosure, the Fathers have acknowledged the importance of consulting with the RLSS to ensure the appropriate actions are implemented, and stated they would seek support from the RLSS, and consider the management of allegations and concerns guidance, if a Safety Management Plan was needed.

4.5.3 The Trustees, Religious Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Coordinator showed a clear understanding of the need for confidentiality when managing allegations and recognised that respondents may require emotional, psychological, legal, or practical support. The Fathers stated they would liaise with the RLSS to ensure respondents are appropriately supported.

4.5.4 The Religious Safeguarding Lead, Trustees, Safeguarding Coordinator and Provincial acknowledge that respondents may need to be withdrawn from ministry if necessary. They have indicated that, should such a situation arise, the respondent would receive ongoing support from the Religious Safeguarding Lead, Trustees, and the RLSS. The Trustees stated that should alternative accommodation be required support would be made available if needed. The management of allegations and concerns guidance discusses actions the Marist Fathers will take for “the temporary removal from ministry, ecclesiastical office or other post”. It also discusses the option for pastoral support for the accused person. The Safeguarding Lead was able to provide information regarding non-recent cases where alternative accommodation was considered. In one instance, a member was relocated from his community base to the main religious residence, where he was supported by the Safeguarding Lead and undertook a dedicated prayer life. There were also discussions regarding a safeguarding management plan previously undertaken with a diocese. The Safeguarding Lead confirmed that future safeguarding management plans would now be developed in conjunction with the RLSS. The Marist Fathers should update their management of allegations and concerns guidance to ensure that their collaboration with the RLSS is accurately documented and aligns with current policy.

4.5.5 The management of allegations and concerns guidance for the Marist Fathers indicated that, in the event of an allegation or disclosure the advice of a qualified canon lawyer should be sought to ensure compliance with the requirements of

Canon Law. As the Religious Safeguarding Lead is currently a member of the Conference of Religious, he stated that it would be through them that he would identify this support.

Areas for development

4.5.6 The Marist Fathers Safeguarding Policy and the management of allegations and concerns guidance addresses key aspects of managing safeguarding allegations; however, during interviews the members stated they would benefit from further clarification on the process and the types of support available to respondents. While the Fathers demonstrated an understanding of the emotional and legal needs that a respondent may experience, they were unaware of the support that they may receive and confirmed that this needs to be further articulated within the any current guidance. Including this information in the additional guidance would ensure a consistent, fair, and transparent approach. This guidance should outline what support may be offered, the role of the RLSS, and how the wellbeing of the respondent will be balanced with safeguarding responsibilities.

4.5.7 The Marist Fathers should consider whether their policies and procedures would benefit from liaison with other Religious Life Groups that have had recent experience of supporting Respondents to ensure they are as effective as possible.

Graded: Results Being Achieved

4.6 Standard 6 Robust human resource management

4.6.1 The Safeguarding Policy outlines the safer recruitment process for all members of the congregation, lay staff, and volunteers. The Safeguarding Policy requires that all members of the congregation, lay staff, and volunteers undergo appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, including enhanced disclosures, in accordance with statutory requirements and the standards set by the Catholic Church. Those working with vulnerable individuals are also asked to self-disclose any relevant convictions. All applicant documentation is treated as confidential and securely stored within the Safeguarding Coordinator's office. The policy clearly states that no appointment will be confirmed until a satisfactory DBS disclosure has

been received and employment references have been verified as acceptable. Upon appointment, individuals are provided with relevant safeguarding policies and procedures and must sign a declaration confirming their understanding of these documents and the responsibilities they entail. The Religious Safeguarding Lead stated that if there was a DBS blemish, contact would be made with the RLSS, and the appropriate Diocese if the individual worked within a Parish, to determine next steps and gain advice.

4.6.2 The Safeguarding Coordinator maintains a central register of DBS applications for all members, which is updated annually. Members who do not require a DBS check are recorded as such. It was confirmed that those ministering at Notre Dame de France are all Marist Priests seconded from overseas, typically serving three-year terms. The Safeguarding Coordinator acknowledged that recruitment and safeguarding standards vary internationally and that the Marist Fathers request a testimonial of suitability for these members.

4.6.3 The Religious Safeguarding Lead confirmed that the Marist Fathers directly employ a total of four staff members. This includes a cook, a housekeeper, and the Safeguarding Coordinator based at the community in Hull, as well as a cook employed at the Wells-next-the-Sea community house. Staff at Notre Dame de France, however, are recruited directly by the church, which operates as a separate organisation with safeguarding responsibilities aligned with Westminster Diocese. Therefore, the Marist Fathers do not hold responsibility for these employees. The Marist Fathers' Trustees stated that they would receive confirmation of any new recruits within the Hull and Wells-next-the-Sea communities.

Areas for development

4.6.4 The whistleblowing section of the Marist Fathers Safeguarding Policy states that individuals are encouraged to raise safeguarding concerns without fear of victimisation or disadvantage. It specifies that concerns relating to malpractice, illegal acts, or omissions within the Marist Fathers or other religious institutions should be reported to the RLSS. The policy states that the RLSS will assess the nature of the concern and, where appropriate, carry out an investigation followed by suitable action. Written feedback, including a rationale for the decisions made, will be provided to the individual raising the concern. While this framework supports

transparency and accountability, the policy could be enhanced by explicitly referencing protections under UK whistleblowing legislation, providing options for anonymous reporting, outlining additional internal reporting channels, and ensuring access to support for whistleblowers. Incorporating these elements would align the policy with best practice and legal standards.

4.6.5 The Marist Fathers complaints policy, adopted in 2018 and most recently reviewed in December 2024, outlines a clear and structured approach to handling complaints, including contact information, timeframes, and a commitment to fair and timely resolution. It addresses confidentiality and references compliance with data protection requirements. To further strengthen the policy, it is recommended that it explicitly cross references the Data Protection and Data Retention policies to ensure clarity on how personal data is managed throughout the complaints process. Including a summary of possible complaint outcomes would enhance transparency, and formalising the escalation route for safeguarding concerns would provide further clarity. While the policy demonstrates a fair approach to managing general complaints, it currently lacks specific reference to safeguarding concerns or related procedures. Expanding the policy to include clear guidance on how safeguarding concerns should be reported and handled, distinct from general complaints, and cross-referencing the safeguarding policy and appropriate guidance, would help ensure that individuals can raise such concerns appropriately. Furthermore, the policy should explicitly acknowledge the role of the CSSA. The CSSA's policy, *Making a complaint to the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) about a diocese, eparchy or religious life group in England and Wales*, clarifies that the CSSA is responsible for investigating safeguarding complaints and acts as the final stage for unresolved matters. Therefore, the Marist Fathers should ensure that their complaints policy informs individuals of their right to escalate safeguarding concerns to the CSSA for independent investigation. Finally, introducing a mechanism for logging and reviewing complaint trends, with regular reporting to the Board of Trustees, would support continuous improvement and strengthen accountability.

4.6.6 The Fathers should establish a clear mechanism for receiving feedback on policies, allowing for continuous improvement and ensuring that they meet the needs and expectations of those who may need to use them.

4.6.7 The Religious Safeguarding Lead states that as a unit of the province, they do not recruit new candidates or individual Marists from overseas, as this is done at a provincial level. However, once a candidate or Marist from another country arrives in the province, the organisation ensures all safeguarding procedures are followed. It is recommended that the policy explicitly state these procedures, including verification of identity and qualifications, obtaining necessary criminal record checks or equivalent disclosures from relevant countries, securing character references, and addressing any documentation gaps. Overseas individuals should also complete safeguarding training and sign a declaration of understanding before undertaking any role. Additionally, the policy should clearly identify who is responsible for overseeing all recruitment checks, including safeguarding and DBS procedures, and include provisions for ongoing safeguarding training and support for staff and volunteers after appointment. Finally, the policy should cross-reference the Charity's Data Protection Policy and Data Retention Policy to ensure consistency and compliance with data handling and retention requirements. These additions will enhance the clarity and effectiveness of recruitment procedures.

4.6.8 It is recommended that the organisation develops a clear and consistent procedure for managing situations where a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check reveals a blemish. This procedure should outline the steps to be taken when a disclosure is received, including prompt consultation with the RLSS and, where applicable, the relevant Diocese or safeguarding authority. It should also include guidance on risk assessment, documentation, decision-making responsibilities, and communication with the individual concerned. Establishing a formal process will ensure that such cases are handled transparently, fairly, and in line with safeguarding best practice and Church standards.

Graded: Firm Progress

4.7 Standard 7 Training and support for safeguarding

4.7.1 The safeguarding policy states that all Marist Fathers will undergo safeguarding training relevant to their specific roles and lists the minimum standards required for each role. It also specifies that Marist Fathers and board

members will undertake regular refresher training when required to do so, within a two-year period.

4.7.2 The Safeguarding Coordinator oversees a log of completed training for all members. This log includes all training undertaken from 2021 until 2025. The Religious Safeguarding Lead confirmed that the Marist Fathers are required to complete an annual questionnaire to confirm their current ministry and any recent training they have undertaken. The Religious Safeguarding Lead confirmed that he has only received one completed form for 2025 at this time and will be chasing this up. The Religious Safeguarding Lead also confirmed that three fathers will be undertaking upcoming training with the RLSS for safeguarding in the context of the sacrament of reconciliation.

4.7.3 The training log for the Marist Fathers confirms that all Trustees have undertaken the required training for Trustees with the RLSS in either 2024 or 2025. Evidence also confirms that the Religious Safeguarding Lead has completed safeguarding and child protection, safeguarding lead, and trustee training in 2024, as well as social media and safeguarding, safeguarding lead, and trustee training in 2025. The Safeguarding Coordinator has undertaken advanced safeguarding, adult safeguarding, and trustee training in 2024 with the RLSS, and in 2025 completed external training on the importance of good governance.

4.7.4 The Trustees and Religious Safeguarding Lead reported that they have not encountered any compliance issues requiring intervention to date. However, they confirmed that if non-compliance with safeguarding training expectations were to arise, appropriate action would be taken and the matter would be addressed through direct conversation, with Trustees reinforcing the importance of adhering to training requirements.

4.7.5 The Religious Safeguarding Lead receives regular email updates from the RLSS regarding upcoming training opportunities, which are currently shared informally and formally with the community. To strengthen communication and ensure safeguarding remains a priority, the Fathers should ensure their communication plan reflects how upcoming training will be discussed formally.

Areas for development

4.7.6 The training log for the Marist Fathers lacks clarity regarding the level of training required for members, particularly those in active ministry or providing supply cover in local parishes. From inspection, it appears that several Fathers have not completed the advanced safeguarding training within the last two years, as required by the safeguarding policy. Additionally, the training log does not include renewal dates and only records the year training was completed, rather than the specific month, limiting its effectiveness in monitoring compliance. To improve the system, it is recommended that the training log be updated to include the names of all members, the level and type of training required for their role, the date (including the month and year) of training completion, and the due date for renewal. This will support accurate oversight and ensure full compliance with safeguarding expectations.

4.7.7 The Marist Fathers should create a Training Needs Analysis to identify the training needs for individuals by the roles that they undertake and the expected frequency of refresher training. Compliance should then be reported to the safeguarding committee and to Trustees for their meetings to reassure them that safeguarding training is proceeding according to expectations. The Fathers should also hold reflective discussions within their communities after attending training to explore its implications and reinforce learning. This will ultimately strengthen safeguarding practices and ensure that training is tailored to the specific requirements of the Fathers and staff.

Graded: Firm Progress

4.8 Standard 8 Quality assurance and continuous improvement

Strengths

4.8.1 The Marist Fathers recognise the importance of listening to and engaging with Survivors of abuse. The Trustees have affirmed their commitment to meeting with any Survivor who chooses to come forward, if that is the Survivor's request. This reflects the organisation's dedication to openness, accountability, and the ongoing

need to learn from the experiences of Survivors to strengthen safeguarding practices.

4.8.2 The Religious Safeguarding Lead stated in interviews that membership of the Conference of Religious provides access to continuous professional development opportunities, peer-led learning, and a valuable network of safeguarding colleagues across religious life. While this is not a formal substitute for supervision, this engagement encourages accountability and reflective practice. The opportunity to share policies, resources, and experiences with other congregations also supports consistency in safeguarding approaches and helps ensure that the Safeguarding Lead's practice remains current, collaborative, and aligned with wider Church expectations and safeguarding standards

4.8.3 The Marist Fathers intend to use the recommendations of this audit with a view to improving their safeguarding practice and ensuring their adherence to the eight National Safeguarding Standards of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

Areas for development

4.8.4 Formalising internal quality assurance mechanisms to assess progress against safeguarding standards will help ensure continuous improvement and accountability for the Fathers. Establishing clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), such as compliance with safer recruitment, vetting procedures, and safeguarding training, will allow for regular, evidence-based reporting to trustees. To support this, the Religious Safeguarding Lead or Safeguarding Coordinator should produce an annual safeguarding report for the Board of Trustees. This report should include key activity from the year, such as training compliance, incident data, policy updates, risk assessments, and identified areas for improvement. Together, these measures will enable Trustees to fulfil their legal responsibilities and provide effective strategic oversight of safeguarding practices.

4.8.5 Trustees should discuss the progress of the intended implementation plan that will be created post audit. The Trustees should make sure that any actions set are allocated to individuals or groups who are given appropriate resources and time to complete them. Progress should be reported to Trustees in their meetings so any issues can be identified and addressed.

Graded: Early Progress

5. Summary of Overall Findings

5.1 The Marist Fathers comprise 15 Members currently within England and Wales with the Provincial living in Paris. The Marist Fathers demonstrate a strong commitment to safeguarding through several key strengths. They have a clear and comprehensive Management of Allegations and Concerns document that provides transparent and timely procedures for handling safeguarding reports, ensuring accountability and the safety of all involved. Their safeguarding policy includes roles and responsibilities and tailored training requirements for different roles, with regular refresher courses and the Safeguarding Coordinator maintaining a training log. Trustees, the Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Coordinator have completed relevant and up to date training, reflecting ongoing dedication to maintaining safeguarding standards. The organisation also shows a genuine commitment to caring for and supporting survivors, with Trustees affirming their willingness to meet with any survivor who comes forward, reinforcing openness and accountability. Additionally, the Marist Fathers benefit from engagement with wider religious safeguarding networks, which supports continuous professional development, reflective practice, and consistency in safeguarding approaches. Together, these strengths provide a solid foundation for effective safeguarding within the community.

5.2 The primary focus should now be on updating their safeguarding policy to explicitly include guidance on new vocations and to align the recruitment section of the Safeguarding Policy with best practices. The current training log requires improvement, as it lacks detailed information such as individual names, specific training dates (month and year), types of training completed, and renewal deadlines, which limits effective monitoring of compliance. Implementing a Training Needs Analysis will be essential to identify role specific training requirements and schedule refresher training appropriately. Additionally, establishing formal internal quality assurance measures such as clear KPIs for recruitment, vetting, and training compliance, will strengthen accountability. The Religious Safeguarding Lead or Safeguarding Coordinator should provide regular, evidence based safeguarding reports to the Board of Trustees to support effective oversight. The Marist Fathers should now prioritise the implementation of safeguarding recommendations to include clear action and accountability and

ensure that safeguarding practices are robust, consistent, and aligned with current expectations and standards. Trustees must also actively track progress on action plans, ensuring assigned responsibilities, adequate resources and regular updates.

5.3 The Marist Fathers have demonstrated that their current practice exceeds minimum safeguarding practice. They have been rated as Firm Progress on three standards, Results Being Achieved on three further standards, Comprehensive Assurance on one standard, and Early Progress on one standard. Based on these ratings, the overall assessment is Results Being Achieved.

6. Recommendations

6.1 To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

- To create formal role descriptions for community safeguarding link persons, define their responsibilities and communication lines, and schedule regular meetings (online or in-person).
- Formally document the decision regarding the establishment of an official website to publicly display safeguarding information, including policies, procedures, and key contact details. If agreed, see recommendations for 12 Months.
- Create a structured implementation plan to align with the eight National Safeguarding Standards, assign accountability, allocate resources, and enable Trustees to monitor progress.
- Create a centralised safeguarding concerns log using a standard format across all communities. Trustees should regularly review this to track patterns and risks.
- Strengthen training monitoring systems by revising the training log to include names, roles, specific training types, dates (month/year), and renewal deadlines for accurate tracking and compliance.
- Display support information visibly in communal areas contacts for relevant support agencies. To include on website if agreed.

- Align the Safeguarding Policy with the Management of Allegations and Concerns document by clearly cross-referencing it and describing the referral pathway clearly.

Within 6 months

- Establish a process to hold reflective discussions within communities after attending training to explore its implications and reinforce learning and use this to inform the training needs analysis.
- Conduct a Training Needs Analysis to identify required training by role, set refresher schedules, and report compliance regularly to the Trustees.
- Implement mechanisms to measure and review the effectiveness of safeguarding communications and continuously improve them.
- Create and provide safeguarding information in alternative formats and multiple languages to meet the needs of non-English-speaking and vulnerable groups.
- Develop formal guidance including procedures for the recruitment of individuals from overseas to ensure safer recruitment requirements are upheld consistently.
- Develop a clear and consistent procedure for managing situations where a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check reveals a blemish.
- Update the communication policy to:
 - Reflect digital channels for sharing safeguarding information internally and externally.
 - Include clear crisis communication guidance that explains who is allowed to speak on behalf of the organisation, what steps to take during a safeguarding incident or reputational issue, and how to manage communication with the public.
 - Ensure that upcoming training is included.

Within 12 months

- Engage with survivors (directly or via Religious Life Groups) to inform future safeguarding practices. Additionally, liaise with other Religious Life Groups for any transferable lessons in managing allegations and supporting survivors and respondents.

- Produce an annual safeguarding report summarising key activity, including training compliance, incidents, risk assessments, and lessons learned for Trustee oversight.
- Expand the Complaints Policy to include clear procedures, timescales, confidentiality provisions, GDPR compliance, escalation routes, outcomes, and acknowledgement of complainants' rights to appeal, including escalation to the CSSA.
- Review the Safeguarding Policy annually ensuring that it:
 - Includes commitment to survivor and respondent and the type of support available, including emotional, legal and practical assistance.
 - Defines the responsibilities, boundaries, and scope of the designated support person for survivor engagement to ensure consistent and transparent practice.
 - Embeds data protection standards (GDPR compliance, breach procedures, retention, etc.).
 - Enhances the whistleblowing section (UK legislation, anonymity, internal channels, and support).
- Establish a formal feedback mechanism for continuous policy improvement. Consider allowing feedback on policies or general experiences through the website.
- If the decision to develop a website is agreed, set a timeline for development, content planning (including safeguarding info and feedback mechanisms), and launch, with oversight from the Safeguarding Lead and Trustees.

7. Arrangements for Follow-up

7.1 In line with an overall rating of Results Being Achieved, the earliest date of the next audit of the Marist Fathers by the CSSA is within two years, in May 2027. If the CSSA becomes aware of a significant Safeguarding concern or allegation in the intervening period, then an earlier audit will be required.

8. Appendix

Evidence provided

- Annual report and accounts
- Charity Commission annual return
- Charity Commission serious incident report and acknowledgement
- Conference of Religious membership confirmation
- Correspondence evidencing engagement with Charity Commission
- DBS records
- Example documentation relating to casework
- Example letter of apology to a survivor
- Example testimonial of suitability
- RLSS training slides, newsletters and other documentation evidencing engagement
- Role and Responsibilities of the Safeguarding Lead
- Society of Mary (Marist Fathers) CIO policies:
 - Communications
 - Complaints
 - General Care
 - Management of Allegations and Concerns
 - Safeguarding
- Training certificates
- Training log
- Trustee agendas and minutes