



ST JOHN'S
DOWNSHIRE HILL

Introduction

We are committed to pursuing high standards in caring for children entrusted to us. This document sets out general principles and guidelines for all those involved in working with children at St John's in line with the Church of England Safeguarding Policy (Protecting All God's Children) and the Diocese of London Safeguarding Policy.

General Guidelines for Relating to Children

General Attitude to Children

We want to treat the children in our care with respect and dignity. Therefore we will want to:

- Avoid ridiculing, scapegoating or humiliating children
- Avoid showing favouritism to any particular children
- Be aware of speech, tone of voice and body language and the effect that it has on the children
- Treat each child as an individual and don't make comparisons between children (whether peers or siblings)
- Work hard to encourage the children, highlighting their strengths and where appropriate giving them responsibilities

Physical Contact

Physical contact is a normal part of many relationships. There is no reason to avoid appropriate physical contact with children in our care. However we need to ensure that such contact is neither inappropriate nor misunderstood. Therefore we will want to:

- Remember that you will be stronger than most children
- Avoid engaging in rough games or behaviour or in any activity that puts the child at unnecessary risk of injury
- Avoid physical contact in any place or context that isn't open and in sight of others
- Avoid engaging in any activity or game that could be considered sexually provocative
- Avoid touch which is inappropriate to the age of the child
- Respect the child – allow them to decide how much physical contact to have with others and in most cases allow them to initiate
- Encourage each other to avoid behaviour that might be perceived to be inappropriate. This will usually mean raising our concerns with fellow leaders either on the spot (if urgent) or after the event. Where we have concerns that behaviour is actually inappropriate we may need to take further action – see below.

Toileting

Crèche

Nappies may need to be changed during crèche. If the parents have given you permission, and you are comfortable doing so, then please follow these guidelines:

- Tell another leader you're about to change a nappy.

- Use the changing table in crèche (unless an older child expresses discomfort or unease about being changed in public).
- Tell parents after the service that you had to change their child's nappy during crèche.
- Wash your hands afterwards using the sink in the disabled toilet.

Scramblers/Starters

Some of the children in our younger groups (Scramblers/Starters) may ask for help when it comes to toileting – in these instances it is best to get parents from upstairs, as a club leader it is not your responsibility to help the children use the toilet, that remains with their parents. If a parent has asked you to help their child, and you are comfortable doing so then that is acceptable, but do observe the guidelines above and remember that if you are uncomfortable helping a child use the toilet then you don't have to.

Adults

During SJDH Sunday and midweek clubs, adults are required to use the disabled toilet to avoid being alone in the toilets with children.

Discipline

From time to time, children will engage in unacceptable behaviour and, as responsible leaders, we must be ready to discipline them. Our fundamental principle is to discipline out of a love and concern for the individual and group rather than just anger or irritation on our part.

Dealing with unacceptable behaviour

- Act sooner rather than later – be observant and don't let situations get out of control
- Ensure that you understand the situation as fully as possible – give the children involved opportunity to explain
- Pinpoint the behaviour that you find unacceptable
- If appropriate, mention positive behaviour and encourage them to extend it
- Avoid raising past (and possibly unrelated) behaviour in general terms – e.g. 'What's wrong with you? You're always so selfish'
- Explain to the child the implications of their behaviour for other individuals and the group as a whole
- Ask them to respect other individuals and the group
- If they refuse lay down clear and specific rules and explain what will happen if these rules are not kept
- Ensure that you carry out the action that you have indicated (don't make empty threats)
- Judge your response accordingly and escalate your sanction if children continue to misbehave – for example:
 - General request to behave acceptably
 - Specific rules (e.g. 'please don't climb on the table')
 - Separate child from others
 - Have the child sit in a particular place (e.g. in front of you or next to another leader)
 - Speak to their parents later
 - Send them out / take them to their parents now

After the Event

- Reflect on why the child may be behaving in this way
- Reflect on whether there is something that can be changed in the structure of the club that would help remove the opportunity or temptation for unacceptable behaviour (e.g. are the children bored?)
- Discuss persistent unacceptable behaviour with other leaders and decide on a consistent course of action
- Reflect on whether you should you alert the child's parents and ask their advice

General Guidelines

- As leaders take a collective approach to discipline – don't side with a child against another leader or allow children to play leaders off against each other
- If you have concerns about the approach taken by a leader do raise your concerns but don't do it in front of the children – either take them aside there and then (if it is urgent) or speak to them afterwards
- Be wise in deciding whether to discipline a child in front of others or whether to take them to one side
- Don't use physical punishment (e.g. smacking)
- Try to avoid shouting, using a change in tone instead
- Stop abusive peer activities (e.g. ridiculing, bullying, name-calling) at the earliest opportunity and make it clear that they will not be tolerated

What to do if a child makes inappropriate advances or engages inappropriate behaviour

- Tell the child that their language or behaviour is unacceptable, even if this is embarrassing for you or for them.
- Tell the Sunday Club Co-ordinator or Child Protection Officer of the incident, again, however embarrassing the incident.
- Agree with the Sunday Club Co-ordinator or Child Protection Officer what action should be taken to help the child and to minimise the chance of a recurrence.
- The Sunday Club Co-ordinator or Child Protection Officer should file a brief written record of the incident in case of the matter being raised in the future.

Health & Safety

We must be careful to ensure the safety of the children in our care.

- Ensure that you have access to a telephone and first aid kit in the place where you are meeting
- Take special care with children when:
 - crossing the road
 - ascending and descending stairs
 - where hot liquids are present (e.g. kitchen)
- Ensure that after the group has finished, the children are supervised until they are picked up by their parents
- Ensure that you have an up to date copy of parent's contact details
- Ensure that you are familiar with any specific medical requirements of the children in your care – these are detailed on the Parent's Declaration forms stored in the Children's folder.
- Do not allow children with infectious illnesses to attend the group
- Ensure that there is a route of escape in event of a fire
- Ensure basic hygiene in the preparation of food and drink

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General Precautions for the Care of Children

We must take reasonable precautions to ensure the safety and comfort of the children who are entrusted to our care. Although the process can seem a little excessive it is designed for the benefit of all concerned and is not meant to be offensive.

Selection of Leaders

All those who will come into contact with children at St John's will be asked to complete a Confidential Declaration form and Job Application form before so doing. These forms ask for information regarding both past experience in working with children and any potential cause for concern (e.g. past convictions, allegations). The forms also ask for the names of two referees (these referees must satisfy certain conditions). The information collected will be used to assess an individual's suitability for work with children.

All individuals will need to complete such a form in order to be involved in working with children at St John's. They may be asked to fill in a form again in subsequent academic years whilst they continue to be involved.

At least one reference will be taken up, with the referee being asked to complete a standard 'Referee's Declaration'.

All those who will be leading or helping with children's clubs will also be asked for a DBS disclosure. This must now be a DBS specifically for children's work at St John's. While an application for a DBS disclosure is being processed, a new helper may join in with a children's club but only if they are under the supervision of an experienced, DBS checked leader.

Only once the Church Safeguarding Officer is satisfied that suitable scrutiny has taken place will the individual be able to take up a position involving work with children. In addition, it will be our general practice not to have a single individual alone with a group of children for a prolonged period of time.

Occasional helpers with the crèche, including mothers of the children in the crèche, will not be expected to produce a DBS disclosure, but there will always be a Supervisor in the Crèche who has satisfied the Church Safeguarding Officer in this way. Occasional helpers will never be left in sole charge of a child or group of children.

Examples of those who will need to satisfy the Church Safeguarding Officer include:

- Sunday Club Leaders and Helpers
- Crèche Supervisors
- Holiday Club Helpers
- Helpers with children's programme at occasional events such as the Weekend Away

The rota for each of these activities will take these principles into account. This therefore has a bearing on which individuals are available to cover for a leader who is unable to make a particular club. The Sunday Club Co-ordinator or Church Safeguarding Officer should therefore be informed of all such swaps **in advance** where possible.

Church Safeguarding Officer: Ruth McIlmoyle

Parental and Child Information

Prior to a child being involved in a Children's Club, we will ask those responsible for the child to complete a 'Parent's Declaration'. This form asks for information about the child (e.g. name, age, medical condition) and about the parent (e.g. contact information). The form also requests the parent's consent for their child's involvement. This form may need to be completed on a Sunday at the beginning of the club.

Registers

We need to keep accurate records of the attendance of children and adults. Registers will be provided for this purpose.

Incident Record Forms

Should any out of the ordinary incident occur (e.g. accident, injury, allegation of abuse), an incident record sheet should be completed by those either involved or responsible for taking action. This form asks for information regarding the incident and what action was taken. Incident report forms can be found in the children's club folder and in each of the children's group boxes.

After completing an incident report form please return it to Kerry Jones to be kept in the children's clubs folder in the church office.

The Children's and Youth task team will send quarterly reports on incidents to the Church Safeguarding Officer, and an annual review will be completed by the CSO to determine where there are trends of incidents occurring.

Maintaining Records

Information collected as detailed above will need to be carefully stored for possible referral in the future.

Information stored securely in the Church Office includes:

- Completed Leader's Declaration forms
- Completed Referee's Declaration forms
- Completed Registers
- Completed Incident Record forms

Information stored in the Children's Folder includes:

- Completed Parent's Declaration forms - with the emergency contact details
- Registers currently in use
- A copy of this policy and guidelines.

These records will be kept for a minimum of five years.

Training

We want to be able offer children the best possible care. We are committed to improving the leadership we offer to them. Therefore we are committed to a continued pattern of training in teaching and looking after children (including the areas described in this document).

Abuse and Neglect

Sadly, abuse and neglect do occur. Without being paranoid we need to recognise this and to be alert to the possibility of abuse or neglect by either those within or without St John's. An explanation of abuse and neglect and some signs that might be associated with them are given at the back of this document. The following sections detail what action should be taken if abuse is alleged or suspected.

What to do if a child begins a conversation regarding inappropriate behaviour

The aim is to ensure that the child is given the opportunity to make the statement they want to make, as clearly and as fully as possible. This is **not** the time to investigate or to judge the matter. If possible try to have another adult present whilst the child speaks (perhaps by delaying the conversation) However, don't prevent the child from speaking if this is not a possibility or if it would unduly inhibit the child.

Things to Do

- **Provide an environment in which the child can explain clearly and fully the nature of their complaint**
 - Give the child time to talk freely and without fear of being overheard
 - Give the child your full attention
 - Try to be sympathetic and to reassure the child that it is right to speak with you –e.g. ‘Thank you for telling me’
 - Stay with the child until you feel they have said everything they want to say
- **Explain:**
 - Explain to the child what you will do next in a way that they can understand and assure them that you will let them know what happens.
 - Find out whether they would be happy to speak to another adult about what they have said.
 - Try not to leave them in a distressed state.
- **Follow Up the Incident**
 - Write down as fully as possible the content of the conversation (include what you said and any observations of how the child appeared). Do this as soon as possible (ideally within an hour)
 - Speak as soon as possible to a ‘responsible person’ as explained in the next section
 - Don’t speak to anyone else about the matter at this stage
 - If the child needs urgent medical attention, ensure that they receive it as soon as possible
 - Ensure that the child is kept informed of what is happening
 - Until further action is taken, where there is continued contact with the child, try to ensure that this is as normal possible. Only discuss the issue further if the child raises it.
- **Remember:**
 - that the child may want the abuse to stop but still love the abuser
 - that the child may think that you are able to stop the abuse without anything else happening
 - that the child may have been bribed or threatened not to talk
- **Pray**

Things to Avoid

- **Promising secrecy or confidentiality:** If pressed, explain that you will need to tell other responsible adults for the benefit of the child.
- **Investigating:** Be very careful not to put words into the child’s mouth and don’t press for information. Avoid asking questions except where it is absolutely necessary to clarify a point of detail.
- **Judging the situation:** Don’t pass judgment on the child or the matter being presented. Rather just collect information. Even if they appear to you to have acted unwisely or to have broken a rule, at this stage avoid anything in your words or manner that is reproachful towards the child – e.g. ‘Why didn’t you tell me earlier?’
- **Embellishing details:** When making a disclosure to a Responsible Person (see below) try to recount only the facts the child confirmed to you, not what you suspect to be the case, this is important for the report to be accurate.
- **Panic or shock:** Try to retain your composure. Avoid appearing shocked or saying anything that might make the child feel more embarrassed about talking to you – e.g. ‘I can’t believe it!’ ‘Are you sure that this is true?’

What to do if you receive an allegation of, or suspect abuse of any kind

If you suspect, or any allegation is made to you (by a child or an adult), that some form of abuse has taken place (whether in the context of a St John’s activity or elsewhere), please contact one of the ‘responsible

persons' listed below as soon as possible. In normal circumstances those nearer the top of the list should be approached first. However, if one or more of the individuals is implicated in the suspicion or allegation, please contact one of the other 'responsible persons'. If all are implicated, you will need to contact an responsible external agency (e.g. Diocese of London Child Protection Office, Social Services, NSPCC).

- the Church Safeguarding Officer: **Ruth McIlmoyle**
- The Minister **Tom Watts**
- the Sunday Club Co-ordinator: **Kerry Jones**
- The Children's Champion: **Claire East**
- A member of the Trustee body: **John Lawson**
Alex Chitra
Gareth Burns
Mary Wenham
David Choi

The action the 'responsible person' will take depends on the exact nature of the suspicion or allegation. In all cases they will:

- Ascertain from you the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and investigate appropriately (they may ask you to fill out an 'incident report' form)
- Inform the other 'responsible persons' listed above
- Keep a written record of information collected and decisions made using the 'incident report' form

In addition, they will take the following action:

In the case of a suspicion or allegation of sexual abuse:

- Limit their investigation to clarifying specific details
- Contact the Social Services Duty Worker, Police Child Protection Team or London Diocesan Child Protection Officer for advice

In the case of a suspicion or allegation of other serious forms of abuse:

- Contact the Social Services Duty Worker, Police Child Protection Team or London Diocesan Child Protection Officer for advice on the appropriate action to take

In the case of physical assault:

- Ensure that medical attention has been received
- Ensure that the police have been alerted

If, at any stage, you feel that the child is in imminent danger, you should contact the police or Social Services immediately.

If you are not satisfied with the action that has been taken, then you retain a responsibility as a member of the public to report serious matters to the Social Services Department and should do so without hesitation.

What are abuse and neglect?

Abuse

Abuse involves potentially or actually causing harm to a child. It can take a number of forms, including the following:

- i. **Emotional Abuse:** Persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate. It may also involve frequently frightening a child or making them feel in danger or persistent rejection or humiliation.
- ii. **Physical Abuse:** Causing physical harm to a child.
- iii. **Sexual Abuse:** Actual or potential involvement of a child in sexual activity or sexually inappropriate behaviour (including the production or use of pornographic material), whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This includes deliberately causing a child to look at such material or activity.
- iv. **Domestic abuse:** Domestic abuse is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality. Domestic abuse has an impact on children because: they are at an increased risk of physical injury (by accident or because they attempt to intervene); they are greatly distressed by witnessing the physical and emotional suffering of a parent; exposure to parental conflict can lead to serious anxiety and distress; children in violent households are more likely to be exposed to other forms of abuse.
- v. **Spiritual abuse:** Within faith communities harm can be caused by the inappropriate use of religious belief or practice, including the misuse of leadership authority or discipline, oppressive teaching, obtrusive/healing and deliverance ministries (including abuse linked to belief in spiritual possession) or rituals, any of which may result in children experiencing physical, emotional or sexual harm.
- vi. **Sunday club leaders should also be aware that other forms of abuse can occur:**
 - Stranger abuse
 - By electronic communication, including internet abuse, or texting
 - Bullying – including by electronic communication
 - Fabricated or induced illness
 - Abuse of disabled children
 - Deliberate self-harm
 - Allegations of possession by evil spirits
 - Child trafficking
 - Sexual exploitation
 - Forced marriage
 - Peer abuse

Neglect

Neglect involves a persistent failure to meet a child's basic needs. This includes failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing or appropriate medical care. It also includes failure to take reasonable steps to protect a child from potential or actual harm.

General Observations

- Abuse may be spontaneous or organised. Organised abuse involves one or more abusers and a number of abused children.
- Most cases of abuse or neglect involve those already known to the child rather than complete strangers.
- Abuse may be inflicted by other children
- Children with special needs are especially vulnerable to abuse

What signs are there of abuse?

Abuse and neglect of children can be difficult to spot. However, any of the following observations may be a sign of abuse or neglect. However, in many cases, there will be another explanation.

General Indicators / Indicators of Emotional Abuse

In general, **changes** in a child's behaviour or mood, either suddenly or over a period of time, may be significant. Such changes may be particularly important where a child becomes more **withdrawn** or more **aggressive**. Examples of such changes are listed below.

Mood

- Anxiety or depression
- 'Frozen watchfulness'
- Loss of ability to learn or concentrate
- Obsessions, phobias or fears
- Loss of self-esteem

Behaviour towards others

- Excessive attention seeking
- Truancy, running away or withdrawal
- Aggression
- Stealing or Lying
- 'Clinginess'

Lifestyle

- Loss of appetite
- Eating disorders
- Severe sleep disturbances and persistent tiredness

Indicators of Physical Abuse

- Reluctance to reveal parts of the body (e.g. remove a jumper when hot)
- Repeated urinary infections or tummy pains
- Marks of injury, especially injuries which:
 - have not received medical attention
 - are not consistent with the explanation provided.
 - occur to the body in places not usually exposed to falls and other accidents.

Guide to Injuries

- Bruises, especially:
 - those in or around the mouth
 - those of different colours (indicates injuries of different ages)
 - those from fingertips, especially on arms, chest or face indicating tight gripping or shaking
 - those from belt, implement, hand
 - those around ear-lobes (also signs of tears)
 - those to head or soft tissue areas of the body
- Bite-marks
- Burns and scalds, especially:
 - those with a clear outline – in particular circular (e.g. cigarette burn) or linear (e.g. from hot metal rod)
 - those of a uniform depth over a large area
 - those caused by friction (e.g. from being pulled across a carpet)
 - those surrounded by a clear water line (e.g. from immersion or pouring of hot water)
 - those surrounded by splash marks (e.g. where hot liquid has been thrown)

- those that have caused scars (indicating previous burns)
- Fractures, especially:
 - Any fracture on a child under one year
 - Any skull fracture on a child under four years
- Cuts, scratches

Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Level of sexual knowledge inappropriate to the child's age
- Indication of sexual activity through words, stories, drawing, games or behaviour
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour towards adults or other children, especially where surprising given the age of the child
- Pre-occupation with sexual matters and requests for sexual advice
- Allusions to unusual practices (e.g. unusual bed-sharing arrangements at home)

Neglect

- Under-nourishment
- Failure to grow
- Constant hunger
- Stealing food
- Untreated illness