

Children and Young People Policy

Adopted by the Church Leadership Team on 08/09/2025

Purpose

Church Leaders need to be mindful of the positional power dynamic that exists between staff and volunteers and the children and young people under their care. The measures in this policy seek to address this imbalance and create safe environments that reduce the risk of harm to children and young people and safeguard leaders from false accusations.

Scope

This Policy applies to:

- a. all Church Leadership, staff and volunteers; and
- b. all people who are involved in or attend the Church and its programs.

This policy is to be read alongside the *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People*, in conjunction with the *Safe Church Policy* and:

- *Code of Conduct* ;
- *Social Media Policy*; and
- All relevant Church Policies.

1. Risk management

Risk Assessments will be completed on a yearly basis for regular ministries in which the location and activities remain consistent throughout the year. These are to be submitted to the Safe Church Team no less than 2 weeks before the program begins. Ministries that offer outings and/or special activities will complete a Risk Assessment for each outing/event and submit these to the Safe Church Team no less than 2 weeks before the beginning of the term in which they occur. The Baptist Insurance Services Risk Assessment Template and Guide is to be used.

2. Never alone

As a general rule, Church staff and volunteers should never be alone in private (outside of line of sight of another person) with any child or young person unless they are family members. Exception may be made for family or personal private arrangements which are separate from any role or activity at the Church, such as babysitting, if this is authorised by the parent or guardian responsible.

3. Accountability

When making decisions about activities involving children and young people it is important to maintain accountability, including oversight processes, safe use of physical spaces (e.g., clear panels in doors) and transparent communication (e.g.,

accessible reporting procedures). Documenting any potential incident as soon as possible provides both accountability and protection for those involved.

4. *Awareness*

Staff and volunteers should remain alert to potentially dangerous grooming behaviour by any other staff or volunteer.

5. *Gender*

If there is a single gendered small group in school years 7 to 12 (e.g., year 7-8 girls Bible study), the Church will have at least one leader of the group who is of the same gender as the members of the group.

Particular issues

Attendance, permission and roll keeping

Yearly Child Information Forms will be used to obtain permission from a parent/guardian for the child or young person to attend church programs at the beginning of each ministry year or as new participants join a program. In certain circumstances, young people aged 16 or over may be permitted to register without parental consent. Prior discussion with the Safe Church Team is needed in these instances.

Attendance is to be recorded by marking of a role for each session. This may be done in paper format or electronically/via Elvanto. If recorded in paper format, these records must be submitted to the Church Office within 2 weeks. Leaders present are to be recorded, as well as any parent who remains onsite or other adults who are present for any reason.

These records will be kept for a minimum of 45 years.

Leader / participant ratios

Consideration will be given to ratios that provide for positive, effective discipleship of children and young people when determining if a ministry is appropriate to run. As a minimum, each ministry will ensure that there are two appropriately screened and trained leaders participating in each program. Programs for children and young people over 5 years old may operate with one leader per group in situations where they remain in the same room or line of sight can be maintained at all times, providing that the minimum leader/participant ratio for the age group is in place. For mixed age groups, the ratios are based on the age of the youngest participant in attendance.

Minimum leader/participant ratios are as follows:

Birth – 24 months = minimum 2, then 1:4

24 months – 36 months = minimum 2, then 1:5

36 months – Preschool = minimum 2, then 1:10

Preschool & up = minimum 2, then 1:15

Junior leaders under 18yrs do not count toward ratios, however they may be involved in leading elements of the program alongside suitably screened and trained leaders.

Driving

Licences and Drivers

There are to be no church organised P Plate drivers involved in transporting participants to activities or programs.

Time alone in cars

No staff member or volunteer should be in a car alone with a child or young person (unless they are family members). Exception may be made for private arrangements, such as babysitting, which are separate from any role or program at the Church, if this is authorised by the parent or guardian responsible (this does not include young adults transporting youth to activities or events).

If there are extraordinary circumstances where no one else is available, and the child or young person may be at greater risk of harm if they were not transported in the car, then the time spent alone in the car should be minimised as far as possible and some additional measures taken as below:

- the child or young person rides in the back seat of the car;
- the staff member or volunteer receives express permission from the child's parent or carer for the specific occasion; and/or
- a phone call is placed to another leader and maintained throughout the journey (where legal to do so).

If it has been necessary for a staff member or volunteer to spend time alone in a car with a child or young person then the situation and the circumstances giving rise to the situation should be recorded and the Safe Church Team and Ministry Leader should be notified.

Overnight activities

Where there are activities involving overnight accommodation, sleeping quarters will be single-sex only with separate quarters for leaders and participants. Appropriate supervision schedules will be in place and locations chosen will provide appropriately separate bathroom facilities and safeguards to ensure other occupants are appropriately screened or segregated. It is important that a thorough risk assessment is conducted and recorded. The list of activities, leaders and sleeping arrangements should also be recorded and provided to the Safe Church Team as part of the risk assessment. These records will be stored, along with permission and attendance records for the event, for a minimum of 45 years (or preferably 100 years).

Social contact

In person communication outside Church programs and events

Staff and volunteers, when meeting with a child or young person, should:

- keep a record of parental or carer consent;
- meet with them in a public place (for example, a café) in line of sight of other people;
- not have a child or young person alone in your home;
- not visit a child or young person in their home when no other adult is present; and

- make a record of the time, location, duration and circumstances of any face to face meetings with any child or young person.

Telephone, postal and online communication outside Church programs

Contact with all children and young people in our Church:

- parent/carer consent will be obtained on the Child Information Form;
- staff and volunteer leaders in our Church must not engage in any telephone, postal or online communication that:
 - constitutes unlawful discrimination;
 - is harassing, threatening or derogatory;
 - is obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic;
 - is inappropriately personal or intimate;
 - attempts to hide the identity of the sender or represent the sender as someone else; or
 - is defamatory.

	Contact with Primary Aged Children (K-6)	Contact with Children in Years 7 and 8	Contact with Young People in Years 9 to 12
Telephone Contact	Staff and volunteers should first contact parents and then, with permission of the parents or carer, speak with the child. If the child answers the phone the staff member or volunteer should ask to speak to the parent first and explain to the parent why they are calling. Staff and volunteers should never call a child in years K to 8 on their mobile phone (unless there is a serious emergency relating to the safety and wellbeing of the child).		Is permissible if consent of the parent/carer has been officially obtained (ie. Through the Child Information Form).
SMS Contact (or other messaging service e.g., Whatsapp) Only messaging services that retain a record of the message may be used	Must be limited to conveying information about Church programs. Never message a child in years K to 8 privately or one-on-one.		Is permissible and should be limited to conveying information about Church programs and encouragement (e.g., praying for you this week). This communication should be in a group chat with another leader. Messages should be retained for accountability.
Videocalls (e.g., Facetime, Skype, Zoom, Teams)	One-on-one video calls are not appropriate, however, group video calls may be appropriate in some circumstances (e.g., small group bible study context). Staff and volunteers should be aware and retain control of group chat and screen sharing settings. Sessions should be recorded and kept where possible.		
Email or postal Contact	Email must be limited to conveying information about Church programs. Postal communication is permissible on an ad hoc basis for the purposes of encouragement. More significant conversations should be held in person.		Can include logistics and private conversations. If possible, more significant conversations should be held in person. Messages should be retained for accountability.

<p>Other Online Contact (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok)</p>	<p>Must be limited to conveying information about Church programs. Staff and volunteers should never communicate directly (privately or one-or-one) with primary-aged children on a social networking site.</p>	<p>Caution must be used when participating with children and young people on social networking sites. Staff and volunteers must maintain transparency and be accountable for what they say. They must also take care with the message they intend to communicate through both the words and images they use as it may be perceived differently by those who view it. Staff and volunteers should consider limiting social media contact with children and young people in years 7 to 12, however, if social media contact is made with children in years 7 to 12 the following safeguards need to be in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit contact to group discussions that can be read by others (including other staff and volunteers). • Consider gender dynamics. Staff and volunteers should be beyond reproach and consider societal expectations regarding online communication with a group of young people of the opposite gender. • The history of the chat should be kept for accountability. Staff and volunteers should not communicate using social media platforms that automatically erase messages. • Privacy settings must prevent personal contacts from seeing or interacting with child contacts connected to the ministry. • Staff and volunteers will ensure any text is beyond reproach and cannot be misconstrued. • Staff and volunteers will ensure all photos are beyond reproach and cannot be misconstrued. 	<p>Messages are to be group chats which include at minimum one other leader</p>
<p>In-person contact outside of Church programs and events</p>	<p>Leaders will only meet with students one-on-one in exceptional circumstances. Leaders will only meet with groups of children if it is for discipleship and ministry purposes. Meetings will always be with the permission of the parents or carer and ministry leader and will occur in a public place with appropriate visibility by other adults (e.g., café).</p>	<p>Leaders may meet with same gender students one-on-one or in mixed groups if it is for discipleship and ministry purposes. Leaders may also meet with different gender students in exceptional circumstances for discipleship and ministry purposes (e.g., preparation for baptism). Meetings will always be with the permission of the parents or carer and ministry leader and will occur in a public place with appropriate visibility by other adults (e.g. café).</p>	<p>Leaders may meet with same gender students one-on-one or in mixed groups. Leaders may also meet with different gender students in limited circumstances for discipleship and ministry purposes (e.g., preparation for baptism). Meetings will always be with the permission of the parents or carer and ministry leader and will occur in a public place with appropriate visibility by other adults (e.g., café).</p>