

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF LITTLE HEATH

(Registered Charity No. 1133045)

Behaviour Management Policy

Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.” (Mark 9:37)

At Christ Church we have several children’s groups ranging from Sunday School groups, bible study and outreach work so it is important that they enjoy their time in the session, hear the Good News and take part in their group with a consistent well-managed behaviour strategy. Parents and carers want to feel confident that their children are being kept safe, being taught well and having fun, so it’s our responsibility to manage behaviour well. Our aim is for children to become self-disciplined, but they may need guidance and support to do this.

In line with our Safeguarding policy we should treat children with respect and fairness, without showing inconsistency or favouritism. However, within this we should also be aware of children with additional needs and the need for differentiation (and inclusion) in both teaching, activities and suitable behaviour strategies.

Three Rules will cover many issues:

Respect God – Listening to and allowing others to listen to God’s Word and to respect the teaching in the Bible as we want to love God and grow in our faith.

Respect Others – Treat others with kindness and consideration and listen to the adults. Make sure that they put other people’s needs first.

Respect the Building – Taking care and not deliberately damaging property or equipment.

Encouraging Good Behaviour

There are lots of things that can be done in advance to help create an environment where good standards of behaviour are established and maintained

Come Prepared

Avoid long unplanned gaps and don’t plan too much time where children have to sit and listen. The general guideline is that children can listen and concentrate for as long as their age. E.g. A six-year-old can listen for 6 minutes. Vary the activities so that children burn off energy and re-focus.

Know your material so you engage with your children. Use prompt cards or bullet lists as a reminder but they do not take your attention away from the children for too long.

Set Up Your Area – *Be organised by setting up before your session starts. Cover things over, break up the room, put things away as you go to prevent fidgeting*

Get to know your group - Find out what their interests are and remember this will change. This is particularly important for children with additional needs so that you can have a box of items ready if they are struggling.

Don't ask a child who struggles to read to read a large section of text. They will get more and more self-conscious as the other children start to fidget or look bored.

Engagement - Fast-paced, lots of energy and engaging activities makes a HUGE difference. Ask specific questions to specific children (use their names) to draw out quieter ones and control the more confident children. Build in breaks/change of activity. Use hand signals, musical instruments, clapping or actions to get their attention.

Distraction – Avoid getting side-tracked by secondary issues, (deal with them at the end). Praise the positive behaviour (sitting nicely, colouring carefully) and ignore the negative behaviour (pen clicking, hiding under tables). Remember some children fidget but are still listening.

Praise the Good

Be clear and point out which children are doing things well.

E.g.

I can see is sitting up straight ready to start.

Fantastic listening, Well done.

Thank you for waiting so patiently/letting use that felt tip first.

Use healthy competition to get things done.

E.g. *Who is going to be the first person to pick five bits up off the floor and put them in the bin?*

Can we all sit in a circle before I get to zero? 10,9,8....

Preventing Negative Behaviour

Ignore the Bad (to a point)

Low level disruption can divert your attention and the children's particularly if you give it fuel. Don't stop what you're doing and focus on that child. Try using silent gestures as you talk first.

Facial expressions (furrowed brow), shake of head, finger to lips (Sssh gesture).

Sometimes just moving round and standing behind or to the side of that child can be enough.

If a child shouts out a lot, give them a job such as listening to others and then feeding back to the group what each person said.

Keep the tone of your voice level and calm and your body language open and relaxed; 60% of all communication is non-verbal.

Remember it's the behaviour not the child so demonstrate humility and grace as well as being consistent and fair.

Low-Level Disruption

Use body language or physical signs to prevent further interruptions of the bible teaching.

- Praise, good listening, sitting, helping etc.
- Make sure the leaders are spaced out around the room and positioned next to more disruptive children.

- Body Language (silent instructions)

Eye contact, raising of eyebrows, shake head, give a 'stare'. Point to person teaching, finger to lips.

- Sit between children who talk or hover behind them so that they can 'feel' your presence.
- Whisper a short statement with 2 options of your choosing:

"Put the toy away now or I will have to hold it for you."

"Stop talking to your friend or I will have to move you."

"Sit still or you will have to sit next to me."

With all these strategies please be aware that children with additional needs may not be able to sit quietly or fidget. So know your children and their interests. It is appropriate to use sensory toys for these children. Above all, don't spend too long sitting on the carpet and talking to the children.

If you do need to move children do it with minimum disruption and no physical contact. If they refuse to listen or move you need to state that this will have consequences and you will need to speak to them at the end of the session. Remember to follow up and talk to them / refer to Cath but do not do this out of sight or ear shot of other adults.

When a child demonstrates unacceptable behaviour, it is the behaviour that is unacceptable, not the child. Therefore, give the child the opportunity to correct/redeem their inappropriate action and discuss with them the positive choices that could have been made.

De-escalation

If you have used lots of strategies and children are still not behaving, then you need to ask yourself why. Are they bored? Unable to engage in the activity? Is it too hard for them? Do they have a low attention threshold? Is there a medical reason that you are not aware of? Are they having a difficult time at home/school/church etc or is this deliberate rebellion?

Each reason has its own unique solution so be sensitive and aware.

Just using praising the positive is not the solution and it doesn't help children grow/encourage self-discipline. God changes our hearts, so we want to live for him and obey him. We want children's hearts to change so that they behave for the right reasons. So, we need to point out sin in a constructive way by pointing them to Jesus, particularly if they are breaking one of the 3 ground rules or being disruptive during Bible teaching.

Remember:

Reflect the gospel – show grace and remind them we all struggle but it doesn't make their behaviour acceptable. Correct out of love as you want them you grow in faith, have self-discipline and live wisely.

Be encouraging, loving and build up relationships

Keep to your word, don't change the goal posts.

Forget about past mistakes and move on as soon as they are resolved.

Be consistent as a Team and help others, especially if you see other Leaders having difficulties.

Identify the rule breaking and state that their behaviour is not acceptable. Don't get drawn into an argument with a child who may try and argue with you to save face. Talk to them quietly away from the rest of the group but make sure you can be seen and within ear shot of another leader.

They are stopping themselves and others from learning about God or being safe. There is a sinful motivator for this behaviour (selfishness, pride etc). Be clear about the impact of their behaviour (not them) on the learning and group. God wants us to learn and grow and it is important that everyone hears God's word.

What happens if de-escalation and other strategies are not working?

1. Deferred consequence

As a first step you should have a quiet word with them, (if the rest of the group go into Church). If you have to do this, make sure other leaders are aware of this and they are able to be seen and heard by others. It may be that you use the foyer area whilst the service is going on but never be alone with a child.

Use this as an opportunity to speak to them about their behaviour and see if there is anything else going on in their lives that may be affecting them. Talk calmly and focus on behaviour and be positive about them as a person.

2. Escalate

Refer to Cath Hawes, the Children's Outreach Worker immediately if they need to be removed and have some time out or speak to them with Cath present at the end of the session. This should be a last resort and behaviour should be managed in the group with moving them next to a leader or away from certain friends – even having rug or carpet places can help.

3. Report

Discuss with Cath first, we can say to a child that we will speak to their parents at the end of the session about their behaviour. Please make sure that this is NOT the first conversation you have had with the parents. Communication with parents should be predominantly positive, to help us build relationships with families so that any significant negative behaviour issues can be dealt with effectively because we already know the family and have a foundation of trust with the parents.

Dealing with unacceptable behaviours

Whenever possible leaders will use this de-escalation script when dealing with anti-social/unacceptable behaviour:

Child's name

I can see that something has happened

I am here to help

Talk and I will listen

Come with me and...

This de-escalation script aims to remove judgment, blame and disempower negative behaviours. It allows children to feel they have a voice and know their side of the story is considered, making them more open to conversation and consequences.

Remember we would only intervene and handle a child if they were in immediate risk or danger. E.g. Running across road in front of a car.

Appendix 1:

Behaviour Management - Quick Reference Help Sheet

1. Evaluate

Have I done everything I can to positively engage them?

Why are they misbehaving? Do they have additional needs?

Remind them why we are there and the importance of listening to and learning from God's Word as well as loving others.

2. Warning

Be Clear – What exactly are they doing wrong and why is it not acceptable?

What will the consequences be if they continue? YOU MUST FOLLOW THROUGH

3. Consequence

Remind them that you have already given them a warning

Move them

Deferred Consequence

4. Escalated consequence

Report to Cath Hawes

Report to parent

5. De-escalation Script

Child's name

I can see that something has happened

I am here to help

Talk and I will listen

Come with me and...

6. Follow Up

Who do I need to speak to? Rest of Team? Children's Outreach Worker? Parent? Team Debrief?

Speak to child at start of next session and focus on the positive behaviour or what you agreed after the last session.