

Child Protection Policy

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:4–9)

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:14–15)

Introduction to the Child Protection Policy

The nurturing of children and young people entrusted to our care is of fundamental importance to Brackenhurst Baptist Church. Our church must be a place of stability for children and young people, where they are free to be open and feel safe. This is what the child protection policy addresses.

Brackenhurst Baptist Church has adopted guidelines of how children and young people entrusted to our care should be treated. These have been approved by the elders and are to be used for safety of children, the instruction of workers, and the protection of the organisation.

Our Mission in Children’s Ministry

The children’s ministry of Brackenhurst Baptist Church (“the church”) seeks to glorify God by:

- maintaining a safe and secure environment for children;
- supporting and encouraging parents who are primarily responsible for teaching biblical truths to their children (Ephesians 6:4);
- making the whole counsel of Scripture known to children with special emphasis on the gospel (Deuteronomy 6:6–9; Romans 1:16–17);
- praying for children and relying on the Holy Spirit to regenerate their hearts through the faithful teaching of his word (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:4–10);
- living faithfully before children and modelling for them how Christians are called to respond to God, interact with each other, and with the world around us (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1);
- encouraging children to learn to serve and to not just be served (Mark 10:43–45);
- maintaining the highest ethical standards such that volunteers and teachers always live and serve above reproach, protecting the reputation of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and
- preparing children to one day walk with God as adults, which means getting them ready to be a part of the public services and Lord willing, one day, a fully participating adult member.

Staff and Volunteer Expectations

Children’s ministry staff and workers share a particular responsibility for:

- loving children as Christ loves them;
- setting an example of proper Christian conduct in the way we live our lives;
- ministering to children; and
- understanding that the care of children is not a right, but a privilege, and this privilege embodies responsibilities to God for ministering to and caring for children.

Child Protection

Our first concern is that children be safe while they are in our care. To this end we:

- screen all children’s ministry workers;
- require training for all children’s ministry workers;
- equip each room with a basic first aid kit;
- adhere to a healthy child policy for admittance to children’s ministry; and
- adhere to a two-worker room policy whenever possible.

Parameters for the Child Protection Policy

This child protection policy applies to children, from birth to twelve years, who are voluntarily placed by parents under the responsibility of the church for the church’s public worship services or specific children’s ministry-related activities, such as Friday night children’s ministry, camps and outings, and holiday Bible clubs. Any form of abuse, harm, neglect or other problems related to children at home, school, or in any Bible-study, activity, or venue not directly related to children’s ministry at BBC is not covered by this policy.

Personnel Summary

The following is an explanation of the terms used for various personnel within this policy.

- “Workers” are church members who work with children in church ministry.
- “Helpers” are minors, who might be non-members but are children of members. Helpers must be at least three years older than the children they are assisting and must always be accompanied when in the presence of children by at least two workers, as defined above.
- “Ministry heads” are members appointed by the pastors to oversee the children’s ministry in question. These include, at present:
 - Sunday crèche (from ages 0 to 3)—Jill Van Meter;
 - Sunday children’s church (from ages 4 to 5)—Mark MacKaiser;
 - Friday night Basic ministry (from ages 4 to 12)—Stephen Scholtz; and
 - Kids for Christ (holiday Bible club) (from Grades 1 to 7)—Stuart Chase.
- “Pastors” (or “elders”) are elected officers of the church who serve the church by providing teaching and leadership to the congregational as a whole.

Protecting the Children Before They Arrive

Ensuring a safe environment begins long before Sunday or Friday ministries. Every applicant who wishes to serve in children’s ministry is required to go through a screening process.

Screening Procedure

To ensure safe and quality care, BBC has established a screening procedure to approve all workers to work with our children:

- All workers must be members, in good standing, of BBC, at least sixteen years old.
- Workers must have been members in good standing with BBC for at least one year before commencing teaching responsibilities in children's ministries.
- Minors under the age of sixteen, who are at least three years older than the children they are assisting may, be invited to help, subject to the approval and direction of the pastors and the ministry head, but must always serve in addition to, and not as a replacement for, adult workers.
- All workers must have completed the child worker agreement form and been approved for ministry by an elder and the ministry head. The child worker agreement form must be completed every year by anyone desiring to work in the children's ministry.
- All completed records and applications will be kept securely.

The church reserves the right to reject any applicant for service or dismiss an existing worker for any reason, including, but not limited to, refusing or failing to complete screening; failing to provide requested information; providing information that is subsequently determined as false or misleading; sin or suffering issues that compromise the applicant or workers' ability to care for children; any criminal report or charge; obtaining information from references or criminal record checks that suggest that the applicant is not suitable to help with children.

Protecting Children at Arrival and Departure

The following are guidelines for protecting children as they arrive to and depart from children's ministries.

Signing a Child in to Children's Ministry

A parent will be required to take a child to the ministry venue or the place designated to gather with workers and register the child for the ministry. The specific registration process may differ from ministry to ministry but it will, at the very least, require a parent to sign children in when dropping them off and sign them out when collecting them. Ministry heads may require a worker to sign alongside a parent acknowledging that the child has been received by the ministry workers. For children of visitors, workers may only release the children to the same parent who signed them in.

Sunday school. Parents may take their children directly to their Sunday school class when arriving at the church. Teachers will be present in class to receive children no later than 8:20 AM on Sunday morning. Parents will be required to sign a registration form acknowledging that the child has been left in the care of the Sunday school teachers. Parents will be asked to sign the child out when collecting him or her. No child will be handed to anybody's care without a parent's signature. If a parent is not present at the church, workers will require written consent to receive the child from the adult dropping them off and collecting them.

0–2-year old crèche. Parents may take children aged 0–2 to the crèche facility prior to the commencement of the services. Children will receive a name tag and parents will be required to sign a registration form acknowledging that the child has been left in the care of the crèche workers. Parents will be asked to sign the child out when collecting him or her. No child will be handed to anybody's care without a parent's signature. If a parent is not present at the church, workers will require written consent to receive the child from the adult dropping them off and collecting them.

3-year old crèche. Parents may take children to the three-year-old crèche facility at the designated time in the service. An announcement will be made from the pulpit regarding the appropriate time to

take children to crèche. Children will receive a name tag and parents will be required to sign a registration form acknowledging that the child has been left in the care of the crèche workers. Parents will be asked to sign the child out when collecting him or her. No child will be handed to anybody's care without a parent's signature. If a parent is not present at the church, workers will require written consent to receive the child from the adult dropping them off and collecting them.

Friday night ministry. Parents may accompany their children into the building on a Friday night to sign acknowledgement that they have left their child in the ministry's care. Parents will be asked to sign the child out when collecting him or her. No child will be handed to anybody's care without a parent's signature. If a parent is not present at the church, workers will require written consent to receive the child from the adult dropping them off and collecting them.

Holiday Bible club. A parent or an adult with delegated parental authority may bring children to the registration table and sign to indicate they have left children in the ministry's care. A parent or an adult with delegated parental authority must sign when collecting children to acknowledge that the adult has assumed responsibility for the child. If a parent is not present at the church, workers will require written consent to receive the child from the adult dropping them off and collecting them.

At registration, parents should inform the workers of any allergies or special needs the child may have. Ministry heads and workers reserve the right to refuse any child at check-in for any valid reason. Valid reasons might include potential illness, behaviour that endangers other children, the room being closed because the adult-to-child ratio, or anything else that might impair our ability to maintain a safe and secure environment for the children.

Children will only be released to parents or guardians who return the identification slip they received at registration.

Protecting Children in Our Care

The following are guidelines for protecting children while in the church's care. If the guidelines below cannot be maintained, the ministry in question will be cancelled and children returned to parents.

Two-Worker Rule

For all children's ministries, at least two workers (as defined above) must be present in each classroom at all times. For children in Grade 3 and lower, at least one female worker will be present. For children in Grade 4–7, two male workers may be in charge of a class. Ministry heads will determine worker-to-child ratios based on the number and needs of the children in the class and reserve the right to refuse to receive additional children where the worker-to-child ratio cannot be honoured. Helpers may serve in addition to workers but may not replace worker requirements. Helpers are never to be left alone at any time, inside or outside the classroom, with children. Children must never be left alone in a classroom.

A worker may take children out of the crèche or classroom only for a compelling reason, such as to use the bathroom or in cases of illness, emergency, or evacuation. Helpers are not permitted to take children out of the classroom without a worker. Workers should avoid private one-on-one meetings with children. When a meeting on the church premises is necessary, it should be done with at least one other adult present and held with the knowledge and consent of the staff and the parents.

Visibility

When children's classes or programs are in session, interior doors and/or windows should allow for unobstructed views from the outside of everyone inside the room.

Appropriate Discipline

All children's ministry workers are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in which children can learn, play, and interact with others. This atmosphere should be maintained by preparing beforehand, proactively directing children towards acceptable activities, verbally encouraging positive behaviour, and, when necessary, correcting or redirecting inappropriate behaviour.

Acceptable means of redirecting inappropriate behaviour may include correcting the child verbally, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating a child from the situation or problem for a brief time (particularly if his behaviour is endangering or upsetting other children). Correction should be discrete, in the classroom, and never outside of the sight of others. Steps of correction might include (depending on the age of the child):

1. Remove the child from the situation or problem.
2. Point out the problematic behaviour, talking to the child about his/her sin and need for Christ.
3. Pray for the child and redirect to a new activity.
4. Help the child to reconcile with the offended children when appropriate.

Workers should view misbehaviour as an opportunity to introduce children to the gospel.

Children's ministry workers and staff members are strictly prohibited from using any form of corporal punishment such as slapping, kicking, punching, spanking, or hitting. They should never speak harsh words, insults, belittling comments, threatening words, or any other verbal humiliation to children.

If a child's behaviour is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the acceptable means of discipline indicated above, workers or staff should alert the parents. If the child assaults, harasses or bullies other children, misbehaves beyond minor correction, or has a pattern of misbehaviour, parents should be immediately called and the child removed. Workers are allowed to physically restrain a child if he or she is physically endangering other children. Once a child is removed from children's ministry, reinstatement is possible at the determination of the pastor who oversees children's ministry and the children's ministry head. A child may be reinstated if the risk of reoffence has been adequately reduced.

Physical Touch Policy

Two types of relationships are important to consider: worker-to-child and child- or teen-to-child.

Worker-to-Child

While appropriate physical contact with children can be an effective means of aiding in communication, redirecting attention, calming restlessness, or showing godly love and care, it can also be misinterpreted. Particularly in our interaction with children, we want to be blameless and above reproach. Refusal to adhere to the guidelines below will result in removal from all children's ministry of the church. The following will help workers to avoid any compromise or concerns in this area.

- Always remain in open sight of other adults.
- Appropriate touch nurtures children and develops a sense of emotional security and maturity in their interactions with adults. Appropriate touch is applied to meet the needs of children, not adults.
- Appropriate physical contact will vary according to the age of the child.
- Inappropriate touch involves, but is not limited to, coercion or other forms of physical contact, which exploits the child's lack of knowledge, satisfies adult physical needs at the expense of the child, violates laws against sexual or physical contact between adult and child, and any attempt to modify child behaviour with physical force.
- Sitting on laps is only appropriate for ages 0–5.
- In general, a man will need to limit physical contact more than a woman in the same situation, especially when working with older children.
- Workers should refrain from rough-housing, wrestling, shoulder or piggy-back rides, rubbing, massaging, or any physical activity that might make a child feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Only touch children in “safe” areas and for brief time. “Safe” areas generally include hands, arms, shoulders, upper back, or gentle pats on the top of the head. Never touch a child on or near any region that is private or personal, unless when necessary while assisting in a nappy change or bathroom visit.
- Never touch a child out of frustration or anger. Physical discipline is not an appropriate means of correcting someone else's child.

Child- or Teen-to-Child

No male or female under eighteen should ever be alone together while in children's ministry. No inappropriate touching (as defined above) of any kind will be accepted. Fighting will not be tolerated and any child participating in violent action will be dismissed from a class or program and placed into his or her parent's care.

Parents in the Classroom

Parents are permitted to join a child in class if necessary for a few minutes. If the child cannot remain without the parents beyond this, parents should remove the child from the classroom. Workers may kindly but firmly ask a parent to leave the classroom if the parent is causing difficulty or presenting concerns for the welfare of the class.

Food and Drink Policy

At registration, workers will seek permission from parents to give children appropriate sweets or snacks for children in the classroom. Parental wishes will be honoured in this case. Unless express permission is sought and received, parents may not send snacks for their children because workers cannot guarantee that another child will not grab a child's snacks or that a child won't share his food or drink with another child. This might prove dangerous to children who suffer, potentially lethally, with certain allergies. Parents who wish to send snacks or drinks with their child should discuss this with the ministry head and/or workers beforehand.

Security and Emergency Response

The following procedures are in place in the event of an emergency situation.

Emergency Situations

In emergency situations, children and children's workers should follow the ordinary evacuation procedures observed by the church, as determined by fire and safety compliance regulations.

Accidents, First Aid and Medical Emergencies

All classrooms will be equipped with basic first aid kits. In the event of life-threatening injury or illness, emergency medical services will be called and parents should be located and informed immediately. Workers must be prepared to offer parents of an injured child a detailed report of the events that led to the injury. In the case of a medical emergency, a worker will summon medical volunteers to the location of the emergency.

Use of Technology While Serving in Children's Ministry

Workers and helpers will only use technology that has been previously approved by the children's ministry head or the pastor overseeing children's ministry. Out of respect for parents and their personal decisions related to technology, workers and helpers will refrain from any use of unauthorised technology in the classroom. If photographs or videos are taken during children's ministry, teachers and workers are prohibited from sharing these images or videos on any social media platform without the express permission of parents. This is for the protection of children and privacy of families.

Child Protection Declaration Form

This will remain private and confidential

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Are you a Christian? If yes, please give us an account of your conversion, baptism in water, and any other specific events in your Christian walk.

What experience have you had in the past with children?

Are you a qualified first aider? YES | NO

Do you hold any other qualifications that could be of use (e.g. lifeguard, minibus license, etc.)?

Have you ever been arrested or convicted of a criminal offense or been involved in an act that could be seen as a violation of the church's Child Protection Policy? YES | NO

If yes, please give details.

Have you read, and do you ascribe to, the Child Protection Policy? YES | NO

I declare that I have read and understood the Child Protection Policy of the church and I am aware of the appropriate ways of acting around children. I testify that the information I have given is correct to the best of my knowledge and I am willing to obey the guidelines given to me.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

This is version 1.01 of the Child Protection Policy of Brackenhurst Baptist Church