

Introduction

We believe all people, whatever their age or circumstances are valued equally and created in God's image. We are honoured to serve those with additional needs and want to provide an environment where all can have an encounter with God.

We take additional needs to mean those who need extra or different help from that given to others. This extra help may be needed because of a range of needs, such as thinking, understanding, reading, physical or sensory difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties, difficulties with speech or language, or how they relate to and behave with other people. Our aims are that people with additional needs are:

Included and Welcome – All belong to God's family and are welcome.

Involved – All have different gifts and something to contribute.

Invited to Encounter – Create an environment where all can encounter God and see their relationship with God and others grow.

St James has an important part to play in empowering and including those with additional needs. Our aim is therefore to ensure that those with additional needs get the support they require during Sunday worship and through our Children's Ministry on Sunday and in midweek groups. Any barrier for those with additional needs should be lifted wherever possible by trying to give them the extra or different type of support needed.

Although this policy is based largely on the Diocese of Southwark's document: '**A Safe Church- Children with Special Needs.**' (section 9, page 25) we believe it is relevant to people of all ages. The Policy should be read in conjunction with **St. James' Safeguarding Policy**. The policy does not apply to Brownies as they have their own national policies and guidelines. Young people in the Youth Ministry are catered for by the Furzedown Churches (FCL) policies and attendees at Furzedown Youth Centre by FYC policies.

Accessibility

St James Church building has:

- A permanent sloped access and a portable, door step ramp at the entrance.
- A hearing loop system within the body of the church.
- An accessible toilet in the Church Centre.

We are aware that it is difficult for those with some disabilities to access our Halls. In addition to the stepped access, there is currently no hearing loop system or accessible toilet. These issues will be addressed under our 'Building for the Kingdom' programme.

Types of Additional Need

Listed below are some examples of additional needs that we may encounter in our care for our congregation at St James. This list should not be taken as exhaustive. Such people may:

- ❖ Find it difficult to process information, communicate, make eye contact and socialise, e.g. Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Dementia, Alzheimer, Psychosis.
- ❖ Find it difficult to sit still and concentrate, e.g. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).
- ❖ Not like to be touched, even in play and games, e.g. ASD, ADHD.
- ❖ Not like loud music and cover their ears or try to hide or may find the 'echoey' noise of the upper hall distressing, e.g. ASD, those with hearing aids.
- ❖ Find it difficult to hold pencils, make letters and draw in an age appropriate way, e.g. Dyspraxia.
- ❖ Find flashing lights and fast-moving pictures could become distressing and initiate a seizure e.g. Epilepsy.
- ❖ Find it difficult to read, e.g. Dyslexia.
- ❖ Find it difficult to read notice and service sheets with small type.
- ❖ Find it difficult to read words projected on the screens.

Response

To help us cater well for those with additional needs we will endeavour to:

- Take action on any information about additional needs disclosed by parents/carers, or in the case of adults, themselves, on our Registration Form, or gained through conversation.
- Ensure that all activity/group leaders and helpers, and others on a 'need to know' basis, are aware of any additional needs.
- In the case of children, and adults were relevant, ensure that:
 - i) a child with additional needs joins the age-related group, e.g. Crèche, Bubbles, Splash, unless the family and leaders feel this to be inappropriate.
 - ii) the leader who has the best rapport with the family chats informally with them to discover if any additional or different support may be needed (e.g. likes and dislikes, what might make them agitated or calm them down, any requirement for special equipment.)
 - iii) try to learn from the family what is acceptable behaviour and what works best if a child's behaviour is known to be challenging. If necessary, we will ask the parent/carer to help in handling an incident of challenging behaviour.
 - iv) in the case of adults, we will always work with the family, and statutory agencies were relevant, to ensure that the adult is treated in the most inclusive appropriate way possible bearing in mind their specific additional needs and the group to which they belong
- Take into account the additional needs of those in our groups when planning activities.
- Encourage our leaders and helpers to go on additional needs awareness training.
- Be aware that some children and adults with additional needs *may* be at greater risk of abuse.
- Provide a number of large print copies of any leaflets/service sheets on colours appropriate for those with dyslexia. Use a font that is helpful for dyslexics e.g. dyslexia
- Use background and font colours for any projected material on the screens

In conclusion

- We want *everybody* to feel welcome at St James and to grow in their faith and in their understanding of Christ in a way that is appropriate for them.
- We want Sunday and midweek groups to provide parents/ carers the time and space to develop *their* own faith without the increased pressure they may be under due to their loved one's additional needs.
- We want all those with additional needs, whatever their age and ability, to be able to fully partake in and contribute to the life and worship of St James