To magnify Christ by making disciples in Clare and beyond

Code of Behaviour for Children and Young People

1. Purpose

It is the policy of Clare Presbyterian Church to safeguard all children and young people interacting with its ministry in any form. This includes actively protecting children and young people from all forms of harm or abuse. As our Safeguarding Children Policy affirms, "Safeguarding is imperative for our church and a central component to our mission; when we do it well, we are proclaiming the excellencies of our Lord Jesus."

We are therefore committed to seeing all children and young people treated with dignity, respect and compassion, and to keeping them safe from harm. This Code establishes clear expectations for the behaviour of children and young people within all church activities. The purpose is to ensure a safe, respectful, and nurturing environment that protects the wellbeing of all participants, including leaders. It should be read alongside our Safeguarding Children Policy and our Anti-Bullying Policy.

2. Scope

This Code applies to all children and young people (defined as individuals under 18 years of age) who participate in church-run activities, including but not limited to:

- Sunday school and youth groups.
- Sports events, camps, retreats, and outings.
- Any other church-sponsored event or program.

This policy also applies to all leaders interacting with children and young people in these settings.

3. Principles

This Code is underpinned by the following core principles:

- **Safety and Wellbeing:** The physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of every child and young person is paramount.
- **Respect and Dignity:** Every individual is treated with respect, dignity, and fairness, reflecting the love of Christ.

- **Clear Expectations:** Behaviour expectations are clearly communicated and understood by all participants.
- **Positive Encouragement:** Positive behaviour is recognised and encouraged, while inappropriate behaviour is addressed constructively and consistently.
- **Partnership with Parents and Guardians:** The church works in partnership with parents and guardians to support the healthy development of children and young people.

4. Expected Behaviour

All children and young people are expected to:

- Treat others with kindness, courtesy, and respect always.
- Listen to and follow instructions from leaders, volunteers, and other authorised adults.
- Use appropriate language and tone of voice.
- Respect church property and the property of others.
- Participate in activities safely and responsibly.
- Report any concerns about their own safety or the safety of others to a trusted adult.
- Uphold the values and ethos of the church.

5. Prohibited Behaviour

The following behaviours are strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action:

- **Physical Aggression:** Hitting, pushing, fighting, or any form of physical violence toward others.
- **Verbal Abuse:** Bullying, threatening, name-calling, teasing, or using offensive language.
- **Cyber Bullying:** Using digital devices, social media, or other platforms to harass, intimidate, or humiliate others.
- **Disruption:** Deliberately disrupting church activities.
- **Damage to Property:** Wilfully damaging church property or the belongings of others.
- **Substance Misuse:** Possession or use of alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, or other prohibited substances.
- **Inappropriate Conduct:** Any behaviour that is sexually suggestive, discriminatory, or otherwise contrary to Christian principles.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 The Kirk Session

- Ensure this Code is adopted, implemented, and reviewed regularly.
- Provide appropriate training for all leaders working with children and young people.
- Ensure that adequate safeguarding procedures are in place and followed.

6.2 Leaders

- Model appropriate behaviour.
- Communicate behaviour expectations clearly to children and young people.
- Implement the Code consistently and fairly.
- Report any serious behavioural incidents to the Designated Person.
- Complete required safeguarding training.

6.3 Parents and Guardians

- Support the church in promoting positive behaviour.
- Ensure their child or young person understands and adheres to this Code.
- Communicate any relevant information about their child's needs or circumstances to the church.
- Work collaboratively with the church to address any behavioural concerns.

7. Behaviour Management and Discipline

The church will use a restorative and educational approach to behaviour management, focusing on teaching children to understand the consequences of their actions and to make amends where possible. The following steps may be taken:

- **Verbal Warning:** A reminder of expected behaviour is given.
- **Cool-down Period:** The child or young person is given time and space to calm down and reflect.
- **Discussion with Parent/Guardian:** The parent or guardian is informed and involved in addressing the issue.
- **Loss of Privileges:** Temporary removal from certain activities or privileges.
- **Formal Behaviour Agreement:** A written agreement outlining expected behaviour and consequences is established.
- **Suspension or Exclusion:** For serious or repeated infractions, temporary or permanent exclusion from church activities may be considered, with input from the Kirk Session and the parent or guardian.

8. Reporting and Complaints

Any individual (child, young person, parent or leader) who has a concern about behaviour or safety should report it promptly to the Designated Person. All reports will be taken seriously, investigated fairly, and handled with confidentiality.

Complaints regarding the application of this Code should be submitted in writing to the Kirk Session and will be addressed in accordance with the law of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI).

https://presbyterianireland.org/resources/general-assembly/the-code

9. Safeguarding

This Code is an integral part of the church's broader safeguarding framework. The church is committed to protecting all children and young people from harm, abuse, and exploitation. All leaders must adhere to the church's Safeguarding Children Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy. Where a behavioural incident raises safeguarding concerns, the church's safeguarding procedures will take precedence, and the matter will be referred to the appropriate statutory authorities.

10. Review

This Code of Behaviour will be reviewed every two years by the Kirk Session. If there is a legislative change that requires the Code to be updated or reviewed within that time, the Kirk Session will ensure that this update or review takes place, in accordance with advice from PCI.

It is the responsibility of the Kirk Session to ensure changes are communicated in a timely and effective manner to children, young people, leaders and the congregation.

Approved by the Kirk Session at its meeting on 21 June 2026.

Code End