



## **Safe Child Policy and Procedures**

*Version 2*

*Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.”*

- Colossians 1:28-29

### **Grace Kids Mission Statement**

Grace Kids exists to partner with parents in raising up children in the training and instruction of the Lord Jesus Christ; through gospel focused, Bible based, age appropriate teaching and care. It is our desire to see our children come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and to grow in the faith.

### **Introduction**

The church is an outpost of the Kingdom of Heaven where members serve one another in love and help in the teaching of children whose parents attend the weekly gathering. However, we gather in the context of a world still marred by sin and so there is always the possibility for sin to affect even our most carefully planned and supervised activities.

With that in mind, the following policies have been put into place to help keep the children of Grace Kids safe while they are in our care.

### **A. Qualifications for Serving In Grace Kids**

- a. All volunteers who serve in Grace Kids are required to be members of Grace Evangelical Church Sharjah (Grace Church) in good standing for a minimum of three months.
- b. Before being allowed to serve, permission will be granted by an elder of Grace Church, to ensure that nothing that would make it inadvisable to serve in children's ministry came up in the membership interview process.
- c. All volunteers are expected to read these policies and agree to follow them while serving at Grace Kids.
- d. Volunteers must sign the Grace Kids Volunteer Information & Covenant.

## **B. Sign in procedures for Children**

- a. As quickly as Grace Church changes and grows, it is impossible for all of the leaders to know all of the children and their parents.
- c. Nametags must be worn at all times by children. Security cards are used for children up through age 11. Children should not be dismissed unless the card number matches the number on their nametag. Security cards protect both the children and the church and ensure that children are safely in the care of their parents when they leave our care.
- d. Only the child's parents can register and collect them from classes. This allows us to know that children are safe and out of our care.
- e. If a matching security card is not presented, only the Children's Ministry Co-Ordinator, Pastoral Assistant, a Pastoral Intern or an elder of Grace Church can release the child and proper ID must be shown and the "Lost Security Card – Sign Out Register" signed before a child is released. There are no exceptions to this, even if the parent is well known to the church.

## **C. Sign in procedures for Volunteers and Parent / Nanny Visitors**

- a. All volunteers are expected to wear nametags with photo ID any time they are with children.
- b. The only visitors that are allowed in the room are Parents and Nannies of children, there are no exceptions to this rule. Parents and Nannies must wear "Parent / Nanny" nametags and sign in using the register when they enter the room with valid ID to be shown (Emirates ID / Passport / UAE Driving License). They must sign-out using the register when they leave.

## **D. Protecting the Room**

- a. A child should never be allowed to leave or be removed from the room by a volunteer, except during a toilet break (as per the instructions in Section I below). If you need to alert a parent, a volunteer should go to the service and ask the parent to come to the room. Under no circumstances should a child be taken to the worship hall.
- b. Volunteers should be aware of hazards, such as unlocked or open windows, sharp objects, electrical sockets, etc, and should try to minimize the risk to the children.
- c. Room Timings:
  - i. **St. Mark's Hall** is reserved for Grace Church from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. every Friday. However, we are officially allowed access from 8:45 a.m. and the next booking is not allowed to enter the room until 12:15 p.m.
- d. No one other than Grace Church staff, Grace Kids volunteers, Registered Children, and Parent / Nanny visitors are allowed into the rooms between 8:45 a.m. and 12:15 p.m.

- e. The only exception to this is routine cleaning by St. Martin's church which is allowed between 8:45 and 10:15 a.m. only
- f. This restriction includes the staff and contractors of St. Martin's Church (other than for cleaning between 8:45 and 10:15 a.m. and in the event of an emergency). Please politely refuse them entry explaining that Grace Church has a booking and entry is restricted. If they insist on entering the room, please contact the Pastoral Assistant or Pastoral Intern who will handle the situation.

#### **E. Fire and Emergency Procedures**

- a. All volunteers should be familiar with the Fire and Emergency procedures of St. Martin's Church building.
- b. When the alarm sounds, gather the children and proceed in an orderly fashion to gather outside. Take the register and check that all children are present outside.
- c. If and when safe to do so, return to the room and check that all children are safely back.

#### **F. Visibility**

- a. All Grace Kids rooms have windows into the rooms.
- b. The windows into the rooms should not be blocked for any reason.

#### **G. Ratios Of Volunteers To Children**

- a. No one should ever be alone with a child in any situation. There should always be another volunteer or other children present.
- b. There should always be a minimum of three adult volunteers scheduled for the class each week.
- c. In the 0-4 year class one of the volunteers must be female
- d. Ratios for age 0- 4 class - There should be 1 adult for every 4 children.
- e. Ratios for age 5 -11 class - There should be 1 adult for every 12 children

#### **H. Discipline Policy**

- a. Discipline begins by being clear on classroom expectations.
- b. At Grace Kids we have 3 basic rules which are... (these rules can be adapted for all ages)
  - 1. Respect God and His Word**
  - 2. Respect Teachers**
  - 3. Respect Each Other**
- c. Consequences for breaking rules are:

- i. Warning - correct the behavior and help them move to something else
  - ii. Time Out - correct the behavior, make sure they know what they did wrong, have the child sit away from the other children for 2 minutes, then go remind the child what they did wrong, talk about repentance and have them rejoin the other kids.
  - iii. Tell Parents - When parents arrive to collect their children, make sure they know of any discipline issues you had during the class. Remind the kids again as they leave of the rule and tell them you look forward to having them in your class again.
- d. Volunteers are encouraged to apply these steps consistently and patiently.
- e. Under **NO CIRCUMSTANCES** should any sort of physical punishment (spanking, swatting, etc.) be used while children are in our care at Grace Kids.
- f. If a behavior is consistent and is causing a distraction to the rest of the class, the volunteer should call/SMS the parents and ask them to come and remove their child from the class.

## **I. Toilet/ Diapering Policy**

### **a. Principles**

- A minimum of three children must go on a toilet break.
- A volunteer must always accompany children to the toilet.
- Only a female volunteer can take children to the toilet and assist children if they need help.
- A male volunteer, if needed, can stand in the main door of the toilet to witness, but cannot assist children.

### **b. Practice**

- Diapers - Diapers are to be changed by female volunteers **ONLY**. Diaper changes should take place in the view of the other adults in the room.
- 0-4 yrs and 5-11 yrs. Explain at the beginning of the class that there will be only one opportunity to go to the bathroom (one toilet break for 0-4 yrs and a separate one for 5-11 yrs), which will be after Story-Time.
- After Story-Time for each separate toilet break (0-4 yrs, and separate 5-11 yrs) one female volunteer should take all of the children to the Ladies toilet and have them wait outside while the volunteer checks the toilet for anything/ anyone inappropriate.
- Make sure / wait for the toilet to be completely empty before sending any children in
- The volunteer should then stand in the doorway (with the door propped open) and allow two children at a time to go inside.

- If a child needs assistance in the toilet, a second volunteer should be called (by sending one of the children to go and get another volunteer from the room) to stand in the doorway as a witness
- If you have both boys & girls in the group, send the girls in first and once they have come out send the boys in. You should never have boys & girls in the bathroom at the same time.
- Once all children have finished then return all together to the room.

## **H. Touching/ Affection Policy**

- a. Working with small children requires some bodily contact. Gentle, casual touching on a child's head, arms, and hands is encouraged, as is holding/ rocking crying babies
- b. Kissing children in the classroom is inappropriate.
- c. Lap sitting is inappropriate for children over the age of two. Instead encourage children to sit next to you. To console a child crying uncontrollably and you are in sight of other adults; you may hold a child on your lap until the crying stops.
- d. Avoid body-to-body hugs with children over the age of 3. One arm hugs and side hugs are permissible.

## **I. Snacks/ Allergy Policy**

- a. Grace Kids will provide snacks for children in 0-4 yrs class. The snack is a simple digestive biscuit.
- b. Parents are requested not to provide snacks from home as they will not be served in class for the protection of the many children with allergies.
- c. If a child has an allergy to NUTS, EGGS, DAIRY OR WHEAT, parents are asked to provide labeled snacks. Children with allergies have their allergy indicated on their nametag and are asked to wear a 'yellow allergy alert bracelet' which can be obtained from the Registration desk.

## **J. Photography Policy**

- a. Photos/ Videos of children in Grace Kids should not be taken without the permission of the Children's Ministry Co-Ordinator.
- b. If you see anyone attempting to come into any of the rooms and take pictures, please ask them to leave and ask if you can see and delete any pictures they may have taken.
- c. If you have been given permission to taken photos, please do not post them on Facebook or other social media sites without express approval of the Children's Ministry Co-Ordinator.

## **K. Wellness Policy**

- a. For the wellbeing of everyone involved, no child should be permitted into a class if they have had any of the following symptoms in the last 24 hours: (a) Fever of 100 F/ 38 C, (b) Nausea/ Vomiting, (c) Earache, (d) Sore Throat, (e) Undiagnosed Rash (f) Diarrhea, (g) Yellow/ green nose drainage, (h) Drainage from eyes, (i) Headache
- b. If a child develops one or more of these symptoms during class, notify the parents immediately and politely ask them to take their child home so as not to infect the other children present.
- c. Medications may not be administered by volunteers.
- d. A volunteer who is sick should give as much notice as possible to the Children's Ministry Co-Ordinator who will take them off duty until they are well again.

## **L. Reporting Actual or Suspected Abuse or Neglect of a Child**

- a. Child abuse is a sin and against the law. The Elders stand ready to receive information related to suspected child neglect, abuse, or molestation. They are committed to addressing all allegations in accordance with the principles of Matthew 18 and in harmony with the Grace Church covenant and the laws of the United Arab Emirates.
- b. Any children's ministry volunteer or staff member who witnesses or suspects neglect, abuse, or molestation should report their concerns immediately to an Elder.

End of Policy.