



Gymea Anglican Church

Family Engagement Policy &
Family Support Plan

1. Introduction

- a)** Gymea Anglican is strongly committed to being a Church that is welcome and accessible to every person who seeks to join us. We value this because we know and cherish that every individual bears the image of God.

This policy aims to enable every member of our church family to flourish and thrive in our ministries by establishing an inclusive, gospel-focused environment for all children and young people. The policy assists our ministry team in understanding any specific needs families may have so we can serve, support and ensure the fruitful participation of all children and young people in the life of our church. It also outlines our process for maintaining positive relationships and expectations.

- b)** Additionally, the policy assists Gymea Anglican to fulfil several diocesan and legislative obligations. Our desire is not only to fulfil our legislative obligations in terms of inclusion but most importantly, to demonstrate the inclusive nature of the gospel as enacted by Jesus in His inclusive ministry. These obligations include:

- ongoing compliance with the Faithfulness in Service code (in particular, 5.1)
- maintaining a Safe Environment (as outlined in the Safe Ministry Training program)
- implementing the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian's Child Safe Standards (notably standards 1, 4, 5 and 10)
- responsibilities arising from the NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- responsibilities arising from the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- continuing learnings from the Disability Royal Commission.

2. Our commitment to an inclusive Ministry where everyone is welcome

a) The primary tool we use to facilitate this is the *Family Support Plan* (FSP).

i) *What is a Family Support Plan?*

The FSP helps to facilitate discussion by seeking answers to practical questions about any needs a child or young person may have, to enable them to thrive in the ministry environment. It seeks to learn about any support structures in similar environments (for example at home or school) and records other helpful information (such as hobbies and interests).

The information gained from the FSP allows the ministry team to consider how the child or young person is included in the ministry environment.

Lastly, the FSP helps to establish and maintain fruitful pastoral relationships between the family and the ministry team and acts as a mechanism to periodically check in and manage any matters as they arise.

ii) *How is it created?*

A FSP is created between the ministers and the family. The plan is completed together and shared only with those who are in a leadership position with the child or young person and their family. All families are encouraged to consider completing a FSP with the ministers if they feel it will help to improve a person's overall experience in the ministry environment.

iii) *Families may request adjustments to ministry arrangements*

Within the FSP process, families are welcome to discuss how Gynea Anglican could facilitate its ministries for the child or young person.

iv) *The ministry team will consider any requests*

The ministry team will take any requests into account having regard for the ministry as a whole and the resources available or required to fulfil the request. Please note that it is not guaranteed that every request made in an FSP will be implemented.

The ministry team will provide all reasonable accommodations to ensure children and young people can participate on an equal basis, as we seek to maintain a welcoming and inclusive environment, as well as meet our legislative obligations.

v) *Families are welcome to include therapists*

Some forms of therapy see improved results when therapists work on the ground in everyday situations. Families are welcome to consider engaging a therapist if they feel it would assist in improving participation and relationships in the ministry environment (e.g. speech or occupational therapists, psychologists or support staff).

vi) *Review and renew*

The FSP is completed for a period agreed upon between the family and the ministers. Once this period expires, families are encouraged to review and renew the plan, so that current strategies are assessed and any additional goals or strategies can be discussed.

You can view the Family Support Plan in **Attachment A**.

3. Encouraging positive behaviour and expectations

a) *Our Ground Rules*

Children and young people are encouraged to model themselves based on that which Paul affirms in 1 Thessalonians 5 and Colossians 3 - behaviour which seeks to love, build each other up and respect one another. This is primarily delivered through the three ground rules of 'Respect for People, Place and Program'.

b) *How we encourage positive behaviour and expectations*

The primary way we encourage positive behaviour and expectations is by affirming examples of it in the course of ministry activities. If required, we provide opportunities for children and young people to maintain positive behaviour by offering small informal breaks and rest time. We also have available resources to establish a calm-down space as well as calming aids. These resources can be implemented when developing a Family Support Plan.

c) *How we equip our ministry team*

The ministry team is appropriately screened and trained in accordance with Diocesan legislation and regularly debriefs to ensure positive behaviour and the environment that enables it.

4. Working towards positive behaviour and expectations when required

a) *Our process for managing boundary-crossing*

As children and young individuals undergo the natural process of growth, testing and pushing boundaries is a common occurrence. This phenomenon is not exclusive to the ministry environment; it is observed in schools and homes as well. Our structured approach equips the ministry team to effectively navigate and address various forms of behavior. The implementation of these processes will be a thoughtful choice made by the ministry team, and families will be kept informed at suitable intervals (Faithfulness in Service 5.41-5.44).

i) *Our Ground Rules*

The ministry team will seek to affirm the need for positive behaviour in the first instance by reminding children and young people of the Ground Rules. Reminders are given flexibly and in a variety of ways depending on the circumstance - for example, given personally or generally broadcast across the whole group if applicable.

Reminders are given clearly and repeated if necessary - for example, the ministry team will often seek to understand if the child or young person is having trouble understanding a request and may offer to explain it again. Reminders for specific children or young people that relate to serious behaviour matters are never delivered in a group setting. These are completed in a sensitive way to avoid embarrassment.

The basis for working towards positive behaviour is open dialogue between the ministry team member and the person. By seeking to understand why the person is behaving in a certain way through a conversation, the ministry team members will provide opportunities for informal breaks or rest time to enable the best possible chance for a reset. They may also seek to encourage the person to switch to a different activity.

On rare occasions, a short break (similar to a time-out) will be required where a child or young person will be asked to separate physically from an activity for a short period. This is always managed by a minimum of two leaders. Please note that this is never initiated as a punishment or consequence of behaviour - its purpose is to facilitate conversation to return to normal ministry activities. The measures outlined here are not generally communicated to parents and are seen as part of the ordinary process in which the ministry team engages in working towards positive behaviour.

ii) Leader and Buddy pairing

From time to time, a leader will be paired with a child or young person and work with them either individually or in the group they are interacting with. Leaders will seek to affirm positive behaviour and seek to prevent any matter from escalating.

iii) Check-in and out with family

The ministry team may perform an informal check-in with the family as to how the child or young person's week was and if there is anything to note. A check-out may follow to give feedback.

iv) Use of Incident Reports and other tools

Under Safe Ministry requirements, Incident Reports and other tools may be completed. Families are informed of any incident which requires a report upon collection.

v) Ministers may seek advice or assistance from outside Gymea Anglican

Periodically, the ministry team may actively seek guidance beyond Gymea Anglican to enhance their strategies for addressing various matters. This may involve consulting external entities such as the Anglican Diocese Of Sydney - ODSM, The Office of The Children's Guardian, Youthworks, or Ministry Consultants, ensuring a comprehensive approach to continuous improvement.

b) *Early Collection and Take a Break provisions*

If the processes outlined in 4. a) have not enabled a return to positive behaviour and expectations, the minister may decide to use the Early Collection and Take a Break provisions of this policy in certain circumstances.

i) *Early Collection provision*

An early collection takes place as a matter of last resort when the ministry team cannot ensure that the ministry is not unreasonably disrupted or if the well-being and safety of ministry participants cannot be guaranteed. The family will be notified that the child or young person needs to be collected from the ministry event for specific reasons. The minister will communicate with the family.

ii) *Behaviour that results in Early Collection*

Examples include high-level challenging behaviours that endanger others and/or repeated refusal to engage constructively with the ground rules or ministry team. Acts of violence towards any person, intoxication or drug-affection and extreme or offensive language result in an automatic early collection.

iii) *Take a Break provision*

The minister may inform the family that the child or young person is to take a break from ministry participation for a period. This provision refreshes each term and is specific to each ministry - i.e. if a child or young person is to take a break during the course of a school term, they may return to the ministry at the beginning of the next school term.

iv) *Behaviour that results in Take a Break*

If early collection takes place on more than three occasions during a school term, the person will Take a Break for the rest of the term.

v) *Decision makers in these matters*

Early collections are decided on a case-by-case basis by the minister in consultation with the ministry team. The taking of breaks is decided by this policy. The minister will concur with the Rector throughout this period and the decisions of the ministers are to be respected.

5. Establishing when additional support is needed

a) *Ministers may request additional support*

With the agreement of the Rector, ministers may request the family develop an FSP to enable a child or young person to continue to engage in the ministry environment if this has not already taken place. Ministers must demonstrate that additional support is required. If a child or young person has had to Take a Break (4. b) iii)), ministers may seek to request support from the family.

b) *Participation pause*

Ministers may pause the participation of a child or young person if an unforeseen serious risk or incident occurs. The purpose of the pause is to allow the ministers to receive appropriate advice and to meet with the family to discuss any relevant adjustments to the FSP or participation in ministry in the future.

c) *Lack of agreement to meet*

If there is no agreement on the part of the family to complete or renew an FSP with the ministers under 5. a), the child or young person is placed on an indefinite break from the ministry event until the family agree to meet and engage in the Family Support Plan process. This step is taken only as a last resort when all pastoral and communication avenues have been exhausted.

6. Agreement with this policy as a condition of enrolment

a) *Enrolment condition*

Families acknowledge their agreement with this policy as a condition of enrolling their child/ren in the ministry events on an annual basis. This request will come as a question on the annual enrolment form.

Attachment A

Family Support Plan

Thank you for taking the time to complete a Family Support Plan with us.

We look forward to meeting and talking together so that we can best support your family to flourish and thrive as members of our church community. Please note that whilst the information collected is considered by the ministry team, It is not guaranteed that ministry activities can be adjusted in every circumstance.

The ministry team will endeavour to provide all reasonable accommodations to ensure children and young people can participate on an equal basis, as we seek to maintain a welcoming and inclusive environment, in conjunction with meeting our legislative obligations. See Section 2 a iii-iv of the Family Engagement Policy for more information.

Above all, our ministry staff team and volunteers are enthusiastic to work together as a demonstration of the inclusive nature of the gospel as enacted by Jesus in His inclusive ministry.

- Name of Child or Young Person
- Name/s of Parents or Carers
- Date of Birth
- School Year
- **Ministries Attending** | *Select all applicable*
 - 10:00 am
 - 5:00 pm
 - Playtime
 - Dropzone
 - BTX
 - Pupil Free Day
 - Fuse Camp
 - Other: _____
- **Disability Information** | *May we have some information about the child or young person's disabilities so we can help support you at church? You do not need to submit any documentation.*
- **Health and Medical Matters** | *Are there any medical, food, allergy or medication information that would be helpful for us to know?*
- What are their strengths?

- In your opinion, what would enhance the ability of the child or young person to participate more fully in the church?
- **Areas of Concern** | *Does the child or young person have any areas of concern such as challenging or repetitive behaviours, self-harm, aggression towards others, impulse control, emotional regulation etc? If so, may we have some information about them?*
- **Triggers** | *Does the child or young person have any particular triggers? Triggers include things that might cause a child to become distressed, anxious, worried, or experience sensory overload. If so, may we have some information about their particular triggers, how we can avoid those triggers, and/or how we can support them if they are triggered in the course of programs”?*
- **Hobbies and Interests** | *May we have some information about the child or young person’s hobbies and interests to assist our leaders in relationship building?*
- **Dislikes** | *May we have some information about the child or young person’s dislikes to assist our leaders in managing these topics?*
- **Self-Care** | *May we have some information about any self-care requirements, such as any mobility, toileting or feeding supports that may be needed?*
- **Communication and Social Settings** | *May we have some information about the child or young person's level of communication and any challenges they may have in social settings?*
- **Communal Eating Arrangements** | *There are occasions when as a community we share meals, prepared by volunteers who do their very best to ensure as many people can enjoy them as possible. If a meal does not suit the child or young person, what arrangements should be in place? e.g. freezer or pantry space for meals to be served as required, or pre-prepared meals given by the family to be served alongside the meal.*

- **External Support Structures** | *Are there any support structures outside of the church that we may use when appropriate? For example, do you have any specific methods to manage matters like behaviours of concern that have been put in place by the family or therapists?*
- **Internal Support Structures** | *Are there any support structures inside of the church that we may use when appropriate?*
 - *Calm Down Spaces*
 - *Calming Aides e.g. noise cancelling headphones or favourite toys*
 - *Leader and Buddy Pairing*
 - *Check-in and out with family*
 - *Alternate Activities*
- **Affirmation of Behaviour Management Processes** | *This is an opportunity to discuss and affirm the processes in sections three and four of the Family Engagement Policy that will apply to the child or young person if required.*
- **Adjustments to Ministry Arrangements** | *Are there any requests you would like to make to ministry arrangements for the ministry team to consider?*
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us?
- Review and Renew
- Signatures
- Date

