



Special Educational Needs Policy

1. Purpose and Commitment

Waringstown Presbyterian Church is committed to creating a welcoming, inclusive and supportive church environment where all children, young people and adults can participate fully in the life and ministry of the Church regardless of ability, or additional need.

This policy has been developed in line with the safeguarding principles, procedures and best practice guidance of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, including PCI Safeguarding Children (NI) Procedures, Adult Safeguarding Procedures, Codes of Behaviour and guidance relating to inclusion, accessibility and pastoral care.

The Church recognises that individuals with Special Educational Needs (SEN), disabilities or additional support needs may require reasonable adjustments, additional support or adapted approaches to help them engage safely, confidently and meaningfully within church life.

Waringstown Presbyterian Church believes that every person is created in the image of God and has equal worth, dignity and value. We are committed to promoting participation, belonging, safety and respect for all.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all church-related activities, organisations and ministries including:

- Sunday School
- Youth organisations and youth fellowship
- Children's ministries
- Holiday Bible Clubs and outreach programmes
- Uniformed organisations
- Worship services and church events
- Pastoral activities
- Residentials, trips and events
- Online and digital ministry activities

The policy applies to ministers, elders, employees, volunteers, leaders, helpers and members of the congregation.

3. Definition of Special Educational Needs and Additional Needs

For the purposes of this policy, Special Educational Needs or Additional Needs may include, but are not limited to:

- Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)
- ADHD
- Dyslexia or dyspraxia
- Learning disabilities
- Speech and language difficulties
- Physical disabilities or medical conditions
- Sensory impairments
- Social, emotional or behavioural difficulties
- Mental health needs
- Communication difficulties
- Anxiety-related conditions
- Any condition requiring additional support or reasonable adjustment

The Church recognises that needs may be visible or non-visible and may vary significantly between individuals.

4. Core Principles

Waringstown Presbyterian Church is committed to:

- Treating every individual with dignity, compassion and respect
- Promoting inclusion and participation in church life
- Listening carefully to children, young people, adults and families regarding support needs
- Providing reasonable adjustments wherever possible
- Supporting leaders and volunteers through safeguarding and inclusion training
- Maintaining safe environments in line with PCI safeguarding procedures
- Working in partnership with parents, carers and professionals where appropriate
- Preventing bullying, exclusion or discrimination of any kind

This policy should be read alongside:

- PCI Safeguarding Children (NI) Procedures
- PCI Adult Safeguarding Procedures
- Church Anti-Bullying Behaviour Policy
- Online Usage and Social Media Policy
- Leader Code of Conduct
- Health and Safety Policies
- Relevant risk assessments and consent forms

5. Inclusion and Participation

Waringstown Presbyterian Church will seek to ensure that individuals with additional needs are supported appropriately within church activities wherever reasonably possible.

This may include:

- Adapting activities or teaching approaches
- Providing visual supports or clear routines
- Offering quieter spaces or sensory breaks
- Allowing additional adult support where appropriate
- Using inclusive communication methods
- Adjusting expectations to support participation
- Carrying out individual risk assessments where necessary

The Church recognises that inclusion may look different for different individuals and that flexibility and understanding are important.

6. Responsibilities of Leaders and Volunteers

Leaders and volunteers are expected to:

- Treat all individuals with patience, dignity and respect
- Follow PCI safeguarding procedures at all times
- Respect confidentiality and sensitive information
- Listen carefully to parents, carers and participants regarding support needs
- Raise concerns appropriately where safety or wellbeing may be affected
- Challenge bullying, exclusion or discriminatory behaviour
- Work within agreed support plans or risk assessments where applicable
- Maintain appropriate safeguarding training and AccessNI checks in accordance with PCI policies and procedures

7. Partnership with Parents and Carers

The Church values partnership with parents and carers and recognises their expertise regarding their child or family member's needs.

Parents and carers are encouraged to:

- Share relevant information that may assist leaders in providing appropriate support
- Inform leaders of medical, behavioural or communication needs
- Update the Church regarding changes in support requirements
- Participate in planning arrangements where appropriate

Information shared will be treated sensitively and only shared on a need-to-know basis in line with safeguarding and data protection responsibilities.

8. Safeguarding and Risk Management

The Church recognises that some individuals with additional needs may be more vulnerable to bullying, abuse, exploitation or misunderstanding.

All safeguarding concerns must be managed in line with PCI safeguarding procedures.

Where appropriate, the Church may:

- Complete individual risk assessments
- Develop support or care plans
- Increase supervision arrangements
- Adapt environments or activities
- Seek advice from PCI safeguarding personnel or relevant professionals

Any concerns relating to abuse, neglect, bullying or inappropriate behaviour must be reported promptly to the congregation's Designated Person.

9. Training and Awareness

Waringstown Presbyterian Church is committed to supporting leaders and volunteers through:

- PCI safeguarding training
- Refresher safeguarding training
- Awareness of inclusion and additional needs
- Guidance on communication and behaviour support
- Ongoing review of best practice

The Church recognises that understanding and supporting additional needs is an ongoing process requiring compassion, learning and flexibility.

10. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly by Kirk Session alongside PCI safeguarding guidance, legislative developments and best practice recommendations.

Waringstown Presbyterian Church is committed to continually improving accessibility, inclusion and participation across all areas of church life.

This policy is to be implemented under the authority of Holy Scripture and in accordance with the Confessional Standards of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Policy Approved By: Kirk Session of Waringstown Presbyterian Church

Date of Approval: June 2026

Next Review Date: June 2027