



DISCOVERY ZONE HANDBOOK

Welcome to Discovery Zone

Discovery Zone is the children's ministry of Vineyard Network Church Birmingham. We believe that children are not just the church of tomorrow but the church of today too. Discovery Zone encompasses groups for children from birth until school year 6 and aims to provide a positive and stimulating environment where children are encouraged to pursue a relationship with Jesus.

No matter what age a child is, we believe that they can respond to the Spirit of God. We see in the Bible that John the Baptist jumped inside the womb of his mother Elizabeth when Mary, who was pregnant with Jesus, came to stay. The Bible tells us to look after children, to treasure them and even to become like them. These points together form the foundations of our work with the children.

Without members of the church giving up their Sunday morning and coming along to be with the children, Discovery Zone wouldn't happen. So I want to thank those of you that serve for getting up early instead of having a Sunday morning lie in and making a difference in the lives of our children.

Vineyard Network Church Birmingham has a Safeguarding Policy which covers everyone working with children. Every adult member of the team has read and signed this as well as completing a Criminal Records Bureau check. A copy of the Safeguarding policy is available from the church office or the website.

This handbook contains:

- The Vision
- The Parent Partnership Agreement
- Under 5s Information
- 5-11s Age Information
- Discovery Zone Policies
- Safeguarding Policy: Principles of good working practice

I, Zara Llewellyn, oversee Discovery Zone. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to be in contact with me. I am usually around on a Sunday.

Zara Llewellyn (Children's Pastor)

What is the Vision for Discovery Zone?

The Vision is;-

We aim to be:

- Putting Jesus first (*point up*)
- Getting to know God better together (*thumbs up*)
- Showing our friends how to live God's way (*open hands*)
- Living a life full of God's power (*jazz hands*)

We aim to achieve this through:-

- Teaching Biblical foundations about God's character and all aspects of following Jesus.
- Modelling worship as a way of life as well as encouraging them to express their worship through music and creative arts.
- Encouraging the children to develop lasting friendships both with other children and with people of all ages in our church family.
- Clearly and regularly presenting examples of how to follow Jesus each day and allowing time for them to respond to God in an age appropriate way.
- Showing the children that following Jesus is a life long journey, and that we as their leaders learn with them as they grow.
- Praying for the children and their families, and showing them how to pray for others in the power of the Holy Spirit.

How is Discovery Zone organised?

Discovery Zone program works on a monthly basis.

- Week 1 – All Age Service/ Team 1 (Alternate Months)
- Week 2 – Team 2
- Week 3 – Team 3
- Week 4 – No Discovery Zone (Community Sunday)

When there are five Sundays in a month, one of the teams serves an extra time on a rotational basis. Discovery Zone runs from the beginning of the morning service, 10:30am (Sign in from 10:20am), to the end of the service at approximately 12noon.

Week 2 tends to have less children attending compared to weeks 1 & 3 as some of the Cell Communities meet on this Sunday as well as on a week 4.

The children are divided into groups which are designed to help the children by placing them with others of a similar age and involving them in activities that are fun, relevant and inspiring.

Although the groups are roughly based on age, some flexibility is allowed to ensure that groups stay at a manageable size and that children's friendships are encouraged to develop and grow. This point is particularly applicable to the transition between the under 5s and over 5s which usually happens between starting reception and moving into year one.

The transition between the over 5s and youth tends to happen at Easter time when the child is in school year 6. This gives the child time to settle in youth before they move to Secondary School.

The All Age Celebration

The All Age Celebration is a gathering of the whole church family to celebrate and learn together. It usually happens on alternate first Sundays of the month and the children are very much included and encouraged to participate along with their families. There are no other children's groups during the All Age Celebration.

The Parent Partnership Agreement

We are very aware that you as parents and carers have the privilege and responsibility of raising your children in such a way, that they will actively follow Jesus. We want to partner with you in encouraging this to happen however we can. Therefore, we commit to:

- **Pray** for you and your children
- **Practically** follow the vision of Discovery Zone
- **Personally** treat your children as individuals and to learn their needs, desires and giftings
- **Praise** God and your children

Our prayer is that every child chooses to follow Jesus and that they never turn back on that decision. We ask you to:

- **Pray** for us
- **Practically** find out what has happened for your child(ren) in Discovery Zone
- **Personally** let us know the ups and downs of your children's lives
- **Praise** God for the blessing your children are

Guidelines for Parents and Carers

In order to facilitate a smooth and enjoyable session for children and workers, we would be very grateful if parents would consider and apply the following guidelines when dropping children in a Discovery Zone group. We would be grateful if parents would:-

- a) Sign children in between 10.20 and 10.30am. (Being on time helps the children settle in to the group and helps the workers plan activities.)
- b) Collect children promptly at 12.00 noon or at the end of the service.
- c) Make sure children have visited the toilet before bringing them to the group.
- d) Make sure children are wearing suitable clothes for craft activities (i.e. not best clothes).
- e) Encourage children to give a proportion of their pocket money to Yefry, who is the Discovery Zone sponsored child. A donations tin is in F1 every week.
- f) Refrain from bringing children into Discovery Zone within 24 hours of them being ill – 48 hours if they have had diarrhoea and vomiting.
- g) Try to remember to encourage the team with a smile or appreciative comment. 😊
- h) Photographs may be taken, in keeping with the Safeguarding Policy,

Your children's health is our utmost concern. In order for us to make the necessary precautions, please go to the Discovery Zone page on our website www.vineyardnetworkchurch.com and enter the information requested on the form. Please note that this form also includes an opt out policy for photographing your children.

May we politely remind everyone that whilst children are in the care of Discovery Zone, we will do everything in our power to look after them and ensure their safety. This will be done by following our strict Safeguarding Policy. Can we please remind parents that Network House is a public building and once a child is signed out from Discovery Zone, responsibility is handed back to parents/carers. Thank you. 😊

Under 5s

Parent & Baby Room: (0 – Approx 18 months)

Parents or carers are welcome in the Parent & Baby Room for all or part of the morning. The room has a television link to the main service for parents to view at their leisure. There are age appropriate toys for the children to play with as well as a time for worship, prayer and friendship building.

Launch Pad: (Approx 18 months – 3 years)

Sunday mornings usually start with free play involving a selection of toys and play-doh. New parents are encouraged to join in for a few minutes to help their children settle. Later there are more structured activities including a story, crafts and worship, which are all communicated at an age appropriate level. The children are actively encouraged to join in and participate.

Rockets: (Approx 3- 5 years)

Rockets is aimed at children of a pre-school age who are becoming used to more structured tasks. The morning follows a clear theme each week which is strongly communicated throughout the session. The group usually starts with games, followed by a story in which the children are encouraged to participate in. Then there is a craft activity that links in and helps reinforce the teaching. The children are encouraged to worship and pray using songs, actions, shakers and other props etc.

5-11s

Alternate Week 1s: Pray and Play

Prayer is how we communicate with God and we can do this at any age. In Pray and Play we **pray games** and we **play games**. We use creative ways to pray that shows that prayer is a conversation with God and that it can be fun.

We try to have extended times of worship and ministry to allow the children to journey deeper into the presence of God and to allow time for God to release more of the gifts, including spiritual gifts, which he has for them.

Weeks 2 and 3

These weeks are what we call Curriculum Sundays and tend to follow a theme for the term. We usually follow this structure

Autumn Term	Old Testament
Spring Term	New Testament
Summer Term	Holy Spirit

We have a mixture of up front teaching, worship, ministry and games as well as more age-specific activities. The worship time has a mixture of upbeat and quiet reflective songs and an opportunity to respond to God.

The teaching material will sometimes be similar to the adults and other times it may not be. We may use our own material, or use resources written by others. After teaching, the children move into three age-related groups:

Explorers: Years 1 and 2 (Sometimes includes Reception aged children)

G Force: Years 3 and 4

Voyagers: Years 5 and 6

Group time varies from week to week and is age appropriate. Activities include drama, craft, teaching-related discussions, games and prayer. The children will normally get a drink and a biscuit during this time.

Guidelines for Discovery Zone Workers

What is expected of a Discovery Zone Worker?

Character:

- A Christian who loves Jesus and has a stable, Godly lifestyle.
- Someone who can model prayer, worship and ministering to others.
- Someone who is teachable, trustworthy and willing to be accountable.
- Someone who can work with others in an open, honest and non-defensive way.

Commitment:-

- Someone who is a regular small group member or (if a student) is a member of a Christian group on campus.
- Someone who demonstrates ownership of the vision and values of VNC and is supportive of the church leaders.
- Someone who is willing to give time and energy towards serving the children and other workers.
- An agreed commitment of one Sunday per month for a six month time period.

Specific Responsibilities: Team Member

- Read the email you receive from your Team leader about the Sunday morning and do what it asks you to do. If you don't receive an email be proactive and contact your team leader.
- Arrive at church by 9.45am on the given Sunday to help the team set up, pray and get ready for the morning.
- Give your full attention to the children and enjoy!
- After the group has finished, stay behind to help tidy up, set down the room and have a team debrief.
- Attend the team training events.
- **IMPORTANT:** if you are unable to serve on your allotted week, it is your responsibility to arrange a swap with another team member **AND INFORM YOUR TEAM LEADER OF THE CHANGE.**

Specific Responsibilities: Team Leader

In addition to the above;-

- Plan and lead the children's activities according to the curriculum.
- Communicate with all members of your week's Discovery Zone team in the week prior to you serving.

- Communicate with all Discovery Zone team members for your age group in the week after your Sunday serving to keep them in the loop about what happened. Please include Zara Llewellyn in this. Try to include things that worked well, things that didn't work well and testimonies.
- Delegate planning and preparation of certain activities where appropriate.
- Attend regular meetings (usually one per term) with other group leaders to ensure continuity across the weeks, plan the curriculum and discuss any other issues arising.
- Discuss any problems with Zara Llewellyn.

Specific Responsibilities: Worship Leader

- To prepare well, by looking at the teaching material, praying and practising the songs you are going to sing.
- To be communicating with the team leader as to length and direction of the worship
- To set an example to the children by worshipping as you lead
- To show that sung worship can be a fun experience
- To sing relevant and accessible songs that help all ages to worship
- To engage and involve the children in worship, which will mean knowing actions for songs and using them
- To allow the Holy Spirit to use you to lead the children to a place of intimacy with Him
- To frequently be looking out for people to train up and take your place

Guidelines & Expectations for working "hands on" with the children.

We aim to create a safe, happy, welcoming environment for the children in our care. In order to encourage this, we ask that all workers follow these guidelines:-

- Help the rest of your team members by being on time to set up the rooms in the morning and assisting in the clearing up afterwards. PLEASE do not leave until you have 'de-briefed' with the team leader.
- Be Proactive: watch out for children who aren't involved in games or who look unsettled and try to engage them in conversation or involve them in an activity.
- Pray for children as you play and chat with them.

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- During worship and prayer, be a role model – sitting with the children, joining in the actions and worshipping. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT AS CHILDREN LEARN BY WATCHING!
- Let your team leader know in advance if you would be happy to prepare or take part in a Bible story, craft activity, worship or prayer time.
- If you see a child behaving badly, do not ignore it; take action in accordance with the Discovery Zone discipline policy.
- If any child has an accident follow the Discovery Zone Accident Policy
- Pray for the children during the week.
- If for any reason you have to miss a Sunday when you are due to serve, it is your responsibility to arrange a swap with another team member and notify the Team Leader of the change.

Discovery Zone Policies

Special Needs Children

In our church we have the privilege of looking after children with special needs. Each child is an individual and we try to cater to their specific needs. At times this can include having a designated special needs worker looking after the child(ren). Each child with special needs has an information sheet that is available to team workers, about how to best to look after their needs.

Contact Zara Llewellyn or Kay Hemming for more information.

Behaviour Management

Our aim in Discovery Zone is always to provide a secure environment within which children can have fun and grow in their faith. In the unlikely event that one child's actions or behaviour are upsetting others, there are 3 clear steps that will be taken to deal with the problem and ensure everyone's enjoyment:-

1. The worker who is nearest to that child will explain that we must play/work together and try to distract the child to another activity.
2. If bad behaviour persists, i.e. they repeat the bad behaviour twice more, the Team Leader for the morning will be notified. He or she will notify the child that if the behaviour continues their parents will be called out of the service. With the 5-11s children this is called a yellow card.
3. If bad behaviour persists further, the parent will be called, the problem explained and we will discuss how to improve the situation. In the 5-11s this is called a red card and could result in the child not being allowed into Discovery Zone the following Sunday.

There are times when there are children in Discovery Zone with behavioural issues. These children will be known to the team leader and their parents will normally have given specific instructions to the team on how to manage their behaviour.

Please remember that behaviour includes the good as well as the bad. If a child has been particularly well behaved please commend the child for their behaviour and the way they are setting an example.

Accidents and Emergencies

Every effort is made to ensure the safety of children in Discovery Zone by planning and supervision. However, from time to time accidents do happen.

If any child has a minor accident and is comforted without needing to call their parent, this will be noted in the accident book, and the parent will be notified when they come to pick up their child. The parent will be asked to sign the accident book to show they have been notified.

If a child has a more serious accident, the parent will be called from the service and then appropriate action will be decided upon between the team leader and the parent.

There is a small first aid kit in the Discovery Zone cupboard which is available for use if necessary.

Toilet Policy

1. Where a child requires the toilet the following should apply:-
 - Nappies will not be changed by workers - only by the child's parent or carer.
 - Children under 5 who need to be assisted in the toilet will be taken by 2 adults in or in a group.
 - Children (5-11) cannot visit the toilet by themselves during Discovery Zone times because all our toilets are open to the general public. They must go in groups accompanied by an adult of the same sex who should stand outside to monitor.
2. Always ensure a second adult is present where removal of a child's clothing is essential (e.g. soiling of clothes – or a medical accident).

Group Ratios

Children's groups should be staffed according to the following widely recognised minimum ratios of adults to children:-

Age 0-2 yrs: 1 adult to 3 children

Age 2-3 yrs: 1 adult to 4 children

Age 3-5 yrs: 1 adult to 8 children

Age 5-8 yrs: 1 adult to 8 children

Therefore in Discovery Zone:

Group Name	Ratio
Parent & Baby Room and LaunchPad	1 adult to 3 children
Rockets, Explorers, G-Force and Voyagers	1 adult to 8 children

Fire Action Plan

If you see a fire...

- Sound the alarm verbally by shouting FIRE, FIRE, FIRE.
- Remove anyone in immediate danger.
- Sound the fire alarm at the nearest call point. (Call points are located on all floors in the stairwells at both ends of the building).
- Ring 999 to call the fire brigade.
- Leave the building by the exit nearest to you.

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- Do not delay or deviate to collect personal belongings.
- Close all doors behind you.
- Go to the Fire Assembly Point which is the car park opposite Network House.
- Do not return to the building for any reason until authorised to do so by a Fire Marshal.
- If you have children registered in Discovery Zone DO NOT attempt to collect them, they will be evacuated from the building by the Fire Wardens and Discovery Zone Workers.
- If you have been designated as a Fire Warden or Discovery Zone Fire Helper follow your Fire Sweep Instruction Plan

If you hear the fire alarm...

- Immediately the fire alarm sounds you must evacuate the building via the nearest exit ensuring that all doors are closed behind you.
- Ensure you follow instructions from the Fire Marshal and Fire Wardens who will be identified by their high visibility tabards.
- Do not run or panic and do not delay or deviate to collect personal belongings.
- Do not open or touch a door beyond which you know or can see there is a fire.
- Go to the Fire Assembly Point which is the car park opposite Network House
- Do not return to the building until you have been told it is safe to do so by the Fire Marshal.
- If you have children registered in Discovery Zone DO NOT attempt to collect them, they will be evacuated from the building by the Fire Wardens and Discovery Zone Workers.
- If you have been designated as a Fire Warden or Discovery Zone Fire Helper follow your Fire Sweep Instruction Plan.

Safeguarding Policy Principles of Good Working Practice:

All volunteer workers are strongly advised to adhere to these principles of good working practice outlined below wherever possible:-

1. Treat ALL children/young people with warmth, respect and dignity relevant to their age.
2. Be aware of your own language style, voice tone, body language, and dress and how the individual child/young person might perceive this.
3. Ensure that you are never alone with a child where your activity cannot be seen. This may mean leaving doors open, or two groups working in the same room.
4. Keep all physical contact public e.g. hugs.
5. Touch should be related to the child's needs, not the worker's.
6. Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the worker. (N.B. In the case of babies, they will initiate the need for a cuddle, usually by crying)
7. Team members should support one another in the area of physical contact. They should be free to help each other by pointing out anything that could be misconstrued.
8. Under no circumstances should physical punishment be used.
9. No person under 16 years of age should be left solely in charge of any children of any age.
10. Children or young people attending a group should not be left alone at any time.
11. Mobile Phones should not be used for personal calls or taking photos during sessions. All photographs / video of children should be taken on a designated camera with the permission of the Group Leader. Photographs should only be taken of children for whom you have permission to photograph.
12. Any internet use during a session should be safe, appropriate and closely monitored.
13. Serious concerns about a colleague's behaviour should always be reported to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator.
14. A full and up to date version of our Safeguarding Policy can be found on the Discovery Zone page of our website.

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