

**::12.18 WORKING WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS**

All children are special to God and so His church should be a place where all children, no matter what their abilities, are welcome and included. Every child should be treated with respect and dignity. The Bible clearly teaches that despite our differences we are all special to God.

**Planning your programme**

- :: Focus on what a child can do, rather than what they can't do.
- :: Aim to be inclusive, think about how the activities can be amended to include a child who has special needs within the group.
- :: Try teaching to different learning styles e.g. a drama or DVD instead of reading.
- :: Children who have special needs may interact well with action songs, puppet ministry, instruments, visual and audio stimuli.
- :: Be age appropriate.

**Extra help**

- :: Ask the expert – the child's parents or carers to find out how the child's needs are best met at home or school. For example, do they use pictures or Makaton to communicate?
- :: Consider appointing a one to one leader for a child with Special Needs who works with the child each week and liaises with the parents/carers.
- :: Research conditions/circumstances to find out about how you can best support the child in the group.

**Personal Care**

- :: If a child needs help with toileting or more intimate care, respect their dignity.
- :: Try to have the same leader involved in helping them.
- :: Draw up a personal care plan (see Section 12).

**Think about!**

- :: Children with disabilities and special needs should be with children in the same age group.
- :: Consider using a reward system to encourage a child.
- :: Check if there are any triggers for behaviour problems e.g. loud noises or eating/drinking problems.

There is a lot more information on working with children who have special needs available from the Taking Care Office. Please contact us to find out about the resources available.

