**Age-level characteristics of children**

### Age 4-5

**Overall characteristic:** Questioning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children of this age:</th>
<th>Teaching tips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are constantly on the move but tire easily</td>
<td>Provide thick (jumbo) crayons for art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start to draw recognisable pictures</td>
<td>Effort is more important than perfection - comment positively</td>
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<td>Are still learning finger control - may struggle using scissors</td>
<td>Use action songs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Want to do things for themselves</td>
<td>Teach them rhythm by clapping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are talkative</td>
<td>Change activity often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teaching tips**

**Love them**

**Physical**

| Are constantly on the move but tire easily | Provide thick (jumbo) crayons for art |
| Start to draw recognisable pictures | Effort is more important than perfection - comment positively |
| Are still learning finger control - may struggle using scissors | Use action songs |
| Want to do things for themselves | Teach them rhythm by clapping |
| Are talkative | Change activity often |

**Mental / Emotional**

| Are curious and questioning - ask how and why | Give short, clear answers to questions |
| Interpret words and sayings literally | Don't give more than one or two instructions at a time |
| Love repeating phrases, rhymes and songs | Teach short Bible verses and explain what the verse means |
| Have a creative imagination | Use large, colourful pictures |
| Enjoy stories | Allow children to feel and handle lesson objects |
| Cannot think chronologically (place events in time order) | Love and routine provide a sense of security |
| Experience emotions intensely but those can change quickly | Use the child's name when you speak to him or her |
| Struggle to discern between fantasy and reality | |

**Social**

| Are learning to participate in small group activities | Lay down a few basic rules and explain the reason for them |
| Seek adult approval | Acknowledge each child and notice the things he or she does |
| Are confident | When talking with a child, stoop to his or her level |
| Want to please | Eye contact is important when answering a question |
| Dislike a change of routine / venue / people | Encourage group play |
| | Ensure that there is a familiar face (teacher) in the classroom |

**Spiritual**

| Can learn to pray simple prayers | Teach about God, creation, doing wrong, forgiveness, Jesus |
| Understand that disobedience is sin | Avoid the abstract and symbolic (e.g. fishers of men) |
| Are not able to make moral decisions | Allow children to pray after you (let them repeat the sentence) |
| Believe everything they are told without question | Memory: use part of a verse or a phrase (e.g. God loves me) |
| See God as a super-parent with human features | |

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<tr>
<th>Age 6-8</th>
<th>Teaching tips</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overall characteristic: Activity</td>
<td>Vary the program every 10 to 15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notice them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Physical
- Have better coordination which enables them to play sport
- Understand rules and the consequences of breaking them
- Want to help adults
- Are growing in their skills and abilities
- Learn more by doing than by listening
- Plan activities that allow for movement at regular intervals
- Use activities such as writing, drawing, cutting and gluing
- Make them feel useful (like holding something for you)

#### Mental / Emotional
- Are eager to learn
- Learn by repetition
- Cannot really understand the distant past or the future
- Become easily discouraged
- Enjoy organised games but are poor losers
- Like action stories and enjoy silly humour
- Are likely to carry scars from emotional trauma into adulthood
- Encourage children to memorise verses / books of the Bible
- Let them repeat stories / tell of their own related experiences
- Use pictures and maps to explain time and place concepts
- Avoid long or difficult tasks
- Include problem solving to teach principles and application
- Let children use pencils and have an eraser at hand

#### Social
- Have a growing need for approval
- See winning and being first as important
- Enjoy organised games but are poor losers
- Desire to have a pet - something to care for
- Are increasingly influenced by what the teacher says
- Develop distinct personalities (recognisable traits)
- Have empathy for poor and suffering people
- Let children take turns to respond, recite, help and play
- Promote fairness and treat each child equally
- Allow them to help you with certain tasks
- Take time to listen - you may be one of the few who do
- See each child as unique - be aware of personality traits
- Teach them to pray for the needs of others

#### Spiritual
- Sense the greatness and the love of God
- May struggle to understand the non-physical nature of God
- Have great faith
- Are trusting
- Teachers are a role model; be trustworthy, loving and fair
- Let the children look up Bible verses and read them
- Use songs, games, crafts etc. related to the Bible story
- Explain Bible terms such as sin, grace, salvation and worship
- Encourage short-sentence prayers in the group

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### Age-level characteristics of children

#### Age 9-11

**Overall characteristic:** Energy

**Children of this age:**

**Physical**
- Enjoy hobbies
- Want to go places and do things (they love adventure)
- Are more independent
- Enjoy the outdoors and nature

**Teaching tips**
- Be creative in planning the lesson time

**Trust them**
- Involve them in mini dramas, singing, preparing and tidying up
- Movement is a natural way of dealing with growing pains
- Arrange special events and outings for your group
- Point out the marvels of God's creation / how special they are

**Mental / Emotional**
- Are able to remember well and concentrate
- Develop reasoning skills
- Like to make lists
- Like to collect things
- Are creative
- Read well - they may start reading novels
- Are interested in facts and true stories
- Tend to worry more
- Are concrete thinkers (no longer fantasy, not yet abstract)

**Teaching tips**
- They need affirmation and encouragement - come alongside
- Explain the meaning and significance of symbolism in the Bible
- Ask rather than instruct them to do something
- Avoid embarrassment - allow the slow and weak to succeed
- Encourage a high standard (the best they can do)
- Use more involved actions with songs and explain the actions
- Encourage them to memorise a short passage of scripture
- Relate more easily to Jesus (as a friend) than to an unseen God

**Social**
- Place greater importance on friends and group approval
- Form close friendships
- Can do projects and work in a group
- Have a strong sense of fairness and justice
- Start taking responsibility and like to be trusted
- Look to adults for role models
- Become self-aware and are critical of themselves
- Usually have a hero (with superhuman qualities)
- Compare themselves to their peers

**Teaching tips**
- Trust them
- Encourage them to help the younger ones to complete a task
- Live what you teach - they can spot inconsistency
- Point to Jesus as the One who is superhuman, and a friend
- Encourage them to choose good friends
- Don't talk down to them
- Setting boundaries for the group shows that you care

**Spiritual**
- Are most easily lead to Christ at this age
- Relate Bible stories to their own experience
- Can participate in meaningful worship
- Can understand basic doctrinal principles (truths)
- Want their leaders and role models to be good people

**Teaching tips**
- Encourage them to read the Bible and pray (daily devotions)
- Let them voice their worries and concerns; pray with them
- Teach about worship and facilitate worship experiences
- Apply the lesson to their everyday lives
- Explain the way of salvation
- Provide regular opportunities for children to accept Christ
- Your role as a teacher is more than merely teaching a lesson
- Let them suggest things to pray for - then pray in small groups

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## Age-level characteristics of children

### Age 12-14

**Overall characteristic:** Change

- **Physical**
  - Are growing fast (disproportionally)
  - Have spurts of energy that are followed by fatigue
  - Feel awkward and are embarrassed about it
  - Have a sense of humour

- **Mental / Emotional**
  - Are quick to learn - get bored with the same old 'stuff'
  - Have a sense of humour
  - Are very moody - feelings of elation, sadness and rebellion
  - Overreact emotionally
  - Often daydream
  - Can follow multiple instructions and the steps of a process

- **Social**
  - Have a great need to feel accepted
  - Are easily influenced by their peers
  - Can become more loyal to those at school than at home
  - Begin to notice and be attracted to the opposite sex
  - Start to look to older young people for values
  - Enjoy competition

- **Spiritual**
  - Ask deeper spiritual questions as they gain understanding
  - Question previously accepted aspects of the faith
  - Have a general sense of guilt (conviction)

**Teaching tips**

- Challenge on all levels - lead by example
- **Believe in them**
  - Notice their strengths and give them tasks they can do well
  - Show interest in that which interests them
  - Keep the lesson interesting and challenging
  - Encourage and affirm to help build a positive self-image
  - Facilitate discussions to determine how and what they think
  - Children at this age need to know that they matter
  - Teach about choices and making good decisions
  - Talk about appropriate / inappropriate behaviour
  - Be open to discuss their pressures and related feelings of guilt
  - Encourage a practical project to reach out to others
  - Teach about setting one's own boundaries
  - Provide opportunities for them to use their gifts and abilities
  - Encourage involvement in church and youth activities
  - Teach them to use God's Word to guide them
  - Point out that even godly people in the Bible weren't perfect
  - Challenge them regarding their relationship with the Lord
  - Be in a position to mentor and guide them
  - Have a time when they can pray for each other (small group)

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