

Intimate Care Policy
and
Guidelines Regarding Children
In
St Oliver Plunkett Nursery and Primary
School



Introduction

The pastoral care of our children is central to the aims, ethos and teaching programmes in St Oliver Plunkett Nursery and Primary School and we are committed to developing positive and caring attitudes in our children. Our Intimate Care Policy is part of our collective pastoral care policies.

This policy is in line with multi-agency guidance as found in the Area Child Protection Committees' (ACPC) Regional Policy and Procedures (2005).

It is our intention to develop independence in each child, however there will be occasions when help is required. The principles and procedures apply to everyone involved in the intimate care of children.

In St Oliver Plunkett Nursery and Primary School the Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines Regarding Children have been developed to safeguard children and staff. They apply to everyone involved in the intimate care of children.

Special Needs and disabled children can be especially vulnerable. Staff involved with their intimate care need to be sensitive to their individual needs.

The Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Area Child Protection Committee's Regional Policy and Procedures April 2005.

DEFINITION

Intimate care may be defined as any activity required to meet the personal care needs of each individual child. Parents have a responsibility to advise staff of the intimate care needs of their child, and staff have a responsibility to work in partnership with children and parents. (9.26, ACPC Regional Policy and Procedures). In school this may occur on a regular basis or during a one-off incident

Intimate care can include

- Feeding
- Oral Care
- Washing
- Dressing/Undressing
- Toileting
- Menstrual Care
- Photographs
- Treatments such as enemas, suppositories, enteral feeds
- Catheter and stoma care
- Supervision of a child involved in intimate self-care

PRINCIPLES OF INTIMATE CARE

The following are the fundamental principles upon which the Policy and Guidelines are based:

- Every child has the right to be safe.
- Every child has the right to personal privacy.
- Every child has the right to be valued as an individual.
- Every child has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Every child has the right to be involved and consulted in their own intimate care to the best of their abilities.
- Every child has the right to express their views on their own intimate care and to have such views taken into account.
- Every child has the right to have levels of intimate care that are as consistent as possible.

Assisting a child to change his / her clothes

This is more common in our Nursery and Foundation Stage. On occasions an individual child may require some assistance with changing if, for example, he / she has an accident at the toilet, gets wet outside, or has vomit on his / her clothes etc. Staff will always encourage children to attempt undressing and dressing unaided. However, if assistance is required this will be given.

Staff will always try to ensure that they have a colleague in attendance when supporting dressing/undressing and will always give the child the opportunity to change in private, unless the child is in such distress that it is not possible to do so. However this may not always be possible and in such instances where there is only one member of staff they will alert the teacher in charge regarding the need to change a child and keep a door open so that they can call for assistance if need be. .

Changing a child who has soiled him/herself

If a child soils him/herself in school it is appropriate that they are changed in school. In either circumstance the child's needs are paramount and he/she should be comforted and reassured throughout. The following guidelines outline our procedures but we will also seek to make age-appropriate responses.

- The child will be given the opportunity to change his / her underwear in private and carry out this process themselves.
- School will have a supply of wipes, clean underwear and spare uniform for this purpose. (A supply of clean underwear and spare uniforms are available in the Nursery and Foundation Year 1 room).

- In the Nursery if a child is not able to complete this task unaided, school staff will change or assist the child. Written agreement to do so, is sought at Nursery Induction meetings.
- In Foundation school staff will assist, supervise the child to change themselves. In cases where they cannot do so, written permission is sought at Y1 induction meetings.
- In the case of an older child having difficulties, and emergency number will be contacted .If the emergency contact is able to come to school within an appropriate time frame, the child will be accompanied and supported by a staff member until they arrive. This avoids any further distress and preserves dignity.
- If the emergency contact cannot attend, school will seek verbal permission for staff to change the child. If none of the contacts can be reached the Principal is to be consulted and the decision taken on the basis of loco-parentis and our duty of care to meet the needs of the child.
- The member of Staff who has assisted a pupil with intimate care will complete **Child Protection/Safeguarding Guideline**
- Ensure that the action you are taking is necessary. Get verbal agreement to proceed **CARE – CONCERN – COMMUNICATE.**

Pastoral Care Procedures

Ensure the child is happy with who is changing him / her.

Be responsive to any distress shown.

Basic hygiene routines

Always try to wear protective disposable gloves and wash hands thoroughly before and after changing.

Seal any soiled clothing in a plastic bag for return to parents.

In the case of Nursery and Foundation Stage children, in order to avoid any unnecessary distress, a member of staff may assist the child, unless a parent has requested otherwise or if the child is reluctant. Parents will be contacted as soon as it is practical to do so.

Providing comfort or support to a child:

There are situations and circumstances where children seek physical comfort from staff (particularly children in Early Years). Where this happens staff need to be aware that any physical contact must be kept to a minimum. When comforting a child or giving reassurance, staff must ensure that at no time can the act be considered intimate. If physical contact is deemed to be appropriate, staff must provide care which is professionally appropriate to the age and context.

If a child touches a member of staff in a way that makes him/her feel uncomfortable this can be gently but firmly discouraged in a way which communicates that the touch, rather than the child, is unacceptable. If a child touches a member of staff, as noted above, this should be discussed, in confidence with the Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

Assisting a child who requires a specific medical procedure and who is not able to carry this out unaided.

Our Administration of Medications Policy outlines arrangements for the management of the majority of medications in school.

Parental permission must be given before any medication is dispensed in school.

A small number of children will have significant medical needs and in addition to the arrangements included in our Administration of Medications Policy will have an Individual 'Care Plan'. This Care Plan will be formulated by the relevant medical body. If required, school staff will receive appropriate training.

Swimming

Our Primary 6 and Primary 7 classes participate in a swimming programme at Omagh Leisure Centre. Children are entitled to respect and privacy when changing their clothes however, there must be the required level of supervision to safeguard young people with regard to health and safety considerations and to ensure that bullying, teasing or other unacceptable behaviour does not occur.

Omagh Leisure Centre is organised on a village style changing basis. This supports effective and discrete supervision and privacy for our children when changing. Where a child needs additional support for changing parental permission will be sought and a personal care plan will be drawn up so as to maintain dignity but increase independence.

Residential Trips

Residential educational visits are an important part of our Primary 7 school experience. Particular care is required when supervising pupils in this less formal setting.

As with Extra-Curricular Activities, although more informal relationships in such circumstances tend to be usual, staff are still guided by our Child Protection procedures, Pastoral Care and Positive Behaviour Policies. Some specific Intimate Care issues may arise in a Residential context.

Showering

Children are entitled to respect and privacy when changing their clothes or taking a shower. However, there must be the required level of supervision to safeguard young people with regard to health and safety considerations, and to ensure that bullying, teasing or other unacceptable behaviour does not occur.

This means that staff should announce their intention of entering changing rooms, avoid remaining in changing rooms unless pupil needs require it, avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress and avoid any visually intrusive behaviour.

Given the vulnerabilities of the situation, it is strongly recommended that when supervising children in a state of undress, another member of staff is present. However, this may not always be possible and therefore Staff need to be vigilant about their own conduct, e.g. adults must not change in the same place as children or shower with children.

It is best practice in our school that when an incident has taken place that has necessitated a member of staff to be present when children are changing that an incident report is made.

Night Time Routines

It is established practice that the children's bedrooms are private spaces and anyone else wanting to enter the room should knock and announce their intention to enter. At bedtime, children are given a set amount of time to change and prepare for bed and will be told when the supervising teachers will visit the rooms to check all is okay and switch off the lights. A reciprocal arrangement is in place in the mornings.

There are occasions when incidents take place during the night and the need arises to:

1. Assist a child to **change his / her clothes**
2. **Change a child** who has soiled him / herself
3. **Provide comfort** to an upset or distressed child
4. Assist a child who requires a specific **medical procedure** and who is not able to carry this out unaided. Guidance as above will be followed with the support of an additional member of staff in attendance.

School Responsibilities

All members of staff working with children are vetted by the Education Authority (formerly WELB). This includes students on work placement and volunteers who may be left alone with children. Vetting includes criminal record checks and two references.

Only those members of staff who are familiar with the intimate care policy and other Pastoral Care Policies of the school are involved in the intimate care of children.

Where anticipated, intimate care arrangements are agreed between the school and parents and, when appropriate and possible, by the child. Consent forms are signed by the parent and stored in the child's file.

The Principal must ensure that all staff undertaking the intimate care of children are familiar with, and understand the Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines together with associated Policy and Procedures e.g. ACPC Regional Policy and Procedures 2005, Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007.

All staff will fully understand the Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines within the context of their work.

Intimate care arrangements must be agreed by the Agency, parents/carers and child (if appropriate).

Only in emergency would staff undertake any aspect of intimate care that has not been agreed by parents and school. Parents would then be contacted immediately.

The views of all relevant parties should be sought and considered to inform future arrangements.

If a staff member has concerns about a colleague's intimate care practice he or she must report this to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

Guidelines For Intimate Care

All children have the right to be safe and to be treated with dignity and respect. These guidelines are designed to safeguard children and staff. They apply to every member of staff involved with the intimate care of children.

Young children and children with special educational needs can be especially vulnerable. Staff involved with their intimate care need to be particularly sensitive to their individual needs.

Members of staff also need to be aware that some adults may use intimate care, as an opportunity to abuse children. It is important to bear in mind that some forms of assistance can be open to misinterpretation. Adhering to the following guidelines of good practice should safeguard both children and staff.

- **Involve the child in the intimate care.**
Try to encourage a child's independence as far as possible in his or her intimate care. Where a situation renders a child fully dependent, talk about what is going to be done and, where possible, give choices. Check your practice by asking the child or parent about any preferences while carrying out the intimate care.
- **Treat every child with dignity and respect and ensure privacy appropriate to the child's age and situation.**
Care should not be carried out by a member of staff working alone with a child.
- **Make sure practice in intimate care is consistent.**
As a child may have multiple carers a consistent approach to care is essential. Effective communication between all parties ensures that practice is consistent.
- **Be aware of your own limitations.**
Only carry out activities you understand and feel competent with. If in doubt, ask. Some procedures must only be carried out by members of staff who have been formally trained and assessed.
- **Promote positive self-esteem and body image.**
Confident, self-assured children who feel their bodies belong to them are less vulnerable to sexual abuse. The approach you take to intimate care can convey lots of messages to a child about their body worth. Your attitude to a child's intimate care is important. Keeping in mind the child's age, routine care can be both efficient and relaxed.
- **If you have any concerns you must report them.**
If you observe any unusual markings, discolouration or swelling report it immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

If a child is accidentally hurt during intimate care or misunderstands or misinterprets something, reassure the child, ensure their safety and report the incident immediately to the designated teacher. Report and record any unusual emotional or behavioural response by the child. A written record of concerns must be made available to parents and kept in the child's personal file.

Working with Children of the Opposite Sex

There is positive value in both male and female staff being involved with children. Ideally, every child should have the choice for intimate care but the current ratio of female to male staff means that assistance will more often be given by a woman. The intimate care of boys and girls can be carried out by a member of staff of the opposite sex with the following provisions:

- When intimate care is being carried out, all children have the right to dignity and privacy, i.e. they should be appropriately covered, the door closed or screens/curtains put in place;

- If the child appears distressed or uncomfortable when personal tasks are being carried out, the care should stop immediately. Try to ascertain why the child is distressed and provide reassurance;
- Report any concerns to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and make a written record;
- Parents must be informed about any concerns.
- Please refer to:

Regional Area Child Protection Committee Child Protection Procedures – April 2005
DENI Child Protection and Pastoral Care Guidance 1999
Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007

Communication With Children

It is the responsibility of all staff caring for a child to ensure that they are aware of the child's method and level of communication. Depending on their maturity and levels of stress children may communicate using different methods - words, signs, symbols, body movements, eye pointing, etc. To ensure effective communication:

- Make eye contact at the child's level;
- Use simple language and repeat if necessary;
- Wait for response;
- Continue to explain to the child what is happening even if there is no response; and
- Treat the child as an individual with dignity and respect.

This Policy will be reviewed annually.

Principal:

Chair BOG:

Appendix 1

Communication Proforma for Intimate Care How I Communicate

Name: _____

Date: _____

I communicate using words / signs/ communication book /

Communication aid / body movements.

I indicate my likes / preferences by _____

I indicate my dislikes by _____

I show I am happy by _____

unhappy by _____

If appropriate please complete the following

When I need to go the toilet I _____

When I get changed I _____

Additional Information _____

Speech and Language Therapist

Occupational Therapist

Key worker/s _____

Contact-Number/s _____

Parent / Carer signature _____

Appendix 2:

Parental permission for Intimate Care

Should it be necessary, I give permission for _____ to receive intimate care (e.g. help with changing or following toileting).

I understand that staff will endeavour to encourage my child to be independent.

I understand that I will be informed discretely should the occasion arise.

Signed: _____
Parent