



INTIMATE CARE POLICY

St. John's Primary School

Rationale

The pastoral care of our children is central to the aims, ethos and teaching programmes in St. John’s 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. It is our intention to develop independence in each child, however there will be occasions when help is required. The principals and procedures apply to everyone involved in the intimate care of children.

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.

Intimate care is any care which involves one of the following:

1. Assisting a child to change his/her clothes;
2. Changing or washing a child who has soiled him/herself;
3. Assisting with toileting issues;
4. Supervising a child involved in intimate self-care;
5. Providing first aid assistance;
6. Providing comfort to an upset or distressed child;
7. Feeding a child;
8. Providing oral care to a child;
9. Assisting a child who requires a specific medical procedure and who is not able to carry this out unaided.**

***In the case of a specific procedure only a person suitably trained and assessed as competent should undertake the procedure. Parents have the responsibility to advise the school of any known intimate care needs relating to their child.*

Principles of Intimate Care

The following are the fundamental principles upon which our policy 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 appropriate and consistent as possible.

Only appropriately trained and vetted named staff should undertake the intimate care of children.

- ❖ All staff must be trained in the specific types of intimate care that they carry out and fully understand the ‘Intimate Care’ Policy and guidelines within the context of their work.
- ❖ Intimate care arrangements must be agreed by the Principal, parents /carers.
- ❖ Intimate care arrangements for specific pupils must be recorded in the child’s personal file and consent forms signed by the parents/carers.
- ❖ Staff should not undertake any aspect of intimate care that has not been agreed between the principal, parents/carers.
- ❖ Agencies need to make provisions for emergencies i.e. a staff member on sick leave. These arrangements must be agreed between the principal, parents /carers and child.

If a staff member has concerns about a colleague’s intimate care practice they must report this to their designated teacher for child protection (S. Mc Laughlin). 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. Disabled children can be especially vulnerable. Staff involved with their intimate care need to be sensitive to their individual needs.

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 care tasks can be open to misinterpretation. Adhering to these guidelines of good practice should safeguard children and staff.

General procedures to be followed by staff undertaking the intimate care of a child

1. Assisting a child to change his/her clothes or changing a child who has soiled himself

When an accident occurs resulting in a child wetting or soiling their clothes, adults will provide facilities for the child to change themselves and parents or carers will be notified.

In the case of a child requiring direct assistance to change after a wetting or soiling incident the parent or carer of the child will be contacted to gain permission for intimate care to be given to their child. At enrolment a parental consent form is completed for changing of clothes in school. This consent form gives the options for the staff to assist the child with changing or for the parent to be contacted before changing.

Adults will not assist with any personal care task which a child or young person can undertake by themselves.

Staff should be careful to ensure the dignity of the child is maintained at all times in keeping with the school’s Intimate Care Policy. Two adults will always be involved for safeguarding reasons (one for providing intimate care and the other for supervision).

The school has a supply of wipes, clean underwear and spare uniform if required.

Staff involved in giving direct assistance will wear appropriate PPE. (gloves, aprons, visors etc.)

When intimate care is being carried out, all children have the right to dignity and privacy i.e.

- The staff will ensure there is verbal agreement to proceed: CARE – CONCERN - COMMUNICATE.
- The changing area should be appropriately covered, the door closed or screens / curtains put in place.
- If the child appears distressed or uncomfortable when personal care is being carried out, the care should stop immediately. Be responsive to any distress shown!
- Try to ascertain why the child is distressed and provide reassurance. If concerned, report concerns to the Designated Teacher and make a written record.
- Parents /carers must be informed about any instances of intimate care being given to their child.

2. Providing comfort or support to a child

These are situations and circumstances where children seek physical comfort from staff (particularly in the 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 DT for child protection.

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

Our ‘Administrations 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 the ‘Intimate Care’ policy will have an individual care plan. The care plan will be formulated by the relevant medical body. If required, school staff will receive appropriate training.

4. Swimming

Our P3-P7 classes participate in a swimming programme at Dungannon Leisure Centre. Children are entitled to respect and privacy when changing their clothes/showering 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. The staff should announce their intention of entering changing rooms, showering areas, avoid remaining in changing rooms unless pupils require it, avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress and avoid any visually intrusive behaviour.

Dungannon Leisure Centre is organised on a cubicle/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.

School responsibilities

All members of staff working with children are vetted by the Education Authority. 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 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 parents at enrolment and stored in the child’s file in the secretary’s office.

Only in emergency would staff undertake any aspect of intimate care that has not been agreed by parents and the school.

If a staff member has concerns about a colleague’s intimate care practice he or she must report this to the Principal/DT for Child Protection.

Guidelines for good practice

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. Make sure practice in intimate care is consistent.
4. Be aware of your own limitations

Only carry out activities you understand and feel competent with. Some procedures must be only carried out by member of staff who have been formally trained.

5. If you have any concerns, you must report them.

If you observe any unusual marks, discolouration or swelling, report it immediately to the principal/DT 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 DT. Report and record any unusual emotional or behavioural responses by the child. A written record of concerns must be made available to parents and kept in the child’s personal file.

Communication with the children

It is the responsibility of all staff 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 a response
- Continue to explain what is happening even if there is no response
- Treat the child as an individual with dignity and respect.

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