

Edmund Rice College



Period Dignity & Menstrual Wellbeing Policy

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Ethos

Respect is a key ideal promoted at all levels in Edmund Rice College. It is not just a term, but an integral part of everyday life in the school. It is our vision that respect becomes instilled in every student in our care. Through this vision, pupils are empowered with a sense of self-worth, and a sense of belonging which can only be beneficial to all involved within the school community. ERC has been part of the scheme to distribute period products to students since 2021.

What is period dignity

Period dignity refers to the accessibility and availability of essential care needed to support a period, in conjunction with the removal/breaking of stigma and taboo around periods. Education is a key factor in breaking the stigma surrounding periods and promoting respect, understanding and open discussions about what people may experience when menstruating.

Period poverty generally refers to poor menstrual knowledge and/or access to period products.

This policy is designed to outline how the school supports pupils who are menstruating through promoting Period Dignity and tackling period poverty.

Aims and Objectives

As a school we aim to promote period dignity, tackle period poverty and, in so doing, ensure our menstruating learners reach their potential. It is our intention to ensure that all learners within school receive education and information surrounding menstrual issues so that they leave school with important knowledge to benefit them in their everyday lives. Through this education, we aim;

- To raise awareness of the “toxic trio” of inaccessibility to period products, lack of menstrual education and period stigma.
- To provide education and awareness around Period Dignity in an inclusive and equitable manner.
- To ensure that products are available to pupils where and when they need them.
- To help reduce barriers to learning that pupils may face due to menstrual periods.
- To provide a supportive learning environment for all.
- Support good health and wellbeing.

Policy Guidance and Context

The policy has been developed whilst considering the following:

- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. This is available at www.legislation.gov.uk
- Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2022/25/enacted>
- The relevant sections of UNCRC, available at www.unicef.org.uk
- Every School a Good School <https://www.education->

[ni.gov.uk/publications/every-school-good-school-policy-school-improvement](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/every-school-good-school-policy-school-improvement)

- Together Towards Improvement <https://www.etini.gov.uk/together-towards-improvement>
- Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy <https://www.educationni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/cred-policy.pdf>
- CCEA Period Dignity resources: <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/period-dignity>
- Children and Young peoples' strategy for Northern Ireland: <https://www.educationni.gov.uk/publications/children-and-young-peoples-strategy-2020-2030>
- CCEA RSE Hub: <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/relationships-and-sexualityeducation-rse>
- Northern Ireland Curriculum: <https://ccea.org.uk/about/what-we-do/curriculum>
http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/docs/key_stage_3/statutory_curriculum_ks3.pdf <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/statutory-curriculum>

Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing Education and Learning

The education and awareness-raising around Period Dignity and menstrual wellbeing takes place through the School's preventative curriculum in an inclusive manner with age-appropriate content being delivered across the school so that our young people are equipped with the skills, attitudes and behaviours to recognise, understand and respect the different challenges and difficulties that people may experience when menstruating, irrespective of religious belief, race, disability, age or sexual orientation.

The main objective of education is to create opportunities to examine sensitive issues that can be discussed and understood by all pupils. All pupil should be aware of the school's objectives and should all have knowledge and understanding of period dignity and period poverty. Through assemblies and form classes, all pupils will receive education in mixed classes.

Where appropriate we will seek to educate pupils in mixed class settings. However, when this is deemed to be inappropriate due to the sensitivity of the content, education will be delivered in single gender settings.

All teaching of the designated topics outlined in the DE Guidance Document 2022 and in line with CCEA programmes of study the following will be covered.

Menstrual wellbeing fits into Learning for Life and Work at Key Stage 3 in the Personal Development strand under the key concept Relationships, which states that:

- *Pupils should have opportunities to explore the implications of sexual maturation, for example sexual health, fertility, contraception, conception, teenage pregnancy and childbirth.*

In Year 9 Science, pupils study the menstrual cycle under the topic of reproduction.

At Key Stage 4, menstrual wellbeing also sits under the Personal Development strand of Learning for Life and Work, which states that:

Pupils should be enabled to:

- *develop an understanding of how to maximise and sustain their own health and wellbeing; and*
- *reflect on, and respond to, their developing concept of self, including managing emotions and reactions to ongoing life experiences.*

Pupils who choose to study GCSE Biology, Double Award Science or Single Award Science will learn about the events of the menstrual cycle, including ovulation and when fertilisation is most likely to occur.

Policy formation and consultation process

This policy was developed following consultation with staff via email. Pupils were consulted via focus groups with a representative sample of students from each year group. The focus groups took place in the school library or Pastoral Office.

Products available to pupils

A selection of period products (sanitary towels and tampons; and, when available, reusable period pants) are available from key area around the school. It was agreed with staff and students through the consultation process, that period products would be accessible in the following areas:

- Main office
- Moving Image Room L15
- Library Middle Floor
- Learning Support – Middle Floor
- Business Studies - Top Floor – T1/T2
- LLW classroom – 04
- Technology TD1 & TD4
- French – 08
- Sixth form study storeroom

Students will be advised where they can access products, through assemblies and through their form teacher. Staff will be informed via email.

Products available to staff

A selection of period products (sanitary towels and tampons) can be found in staff toilets.

The role of staff

The following staff are responsible for overseeing the delivery of the period Dignity Policy.

- School Governor with oversight of period dignity and the provision of free period products - Mrs E Murphy
- Pastoral Care Lead – Mrs G Davey
- Period Dignity Key Contacts – Mrs S Boyle/Mrs Gallagher
- SENCO – Miss C Deery

- SEN staff – Miss C Deery
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Lead – Mrs G Davey
- PSD Co-ordinator & Pupil Wellbeing – Mrs A Ritchie

All staff should be aware of the importance of promoting Period Dignity. Staff are asked to be alert to signs of physical and emotional distress that a pupil may be experiencing in relation to periods, for example, discomfort, pain, lack of concentration, leaking, anxiety or being unable to sit still. Staff manage such situations sensitively in line with our school values and ethos by helping the pupil to manage the situation. Key staff roles and responsibilities:

- The Period Dignity Leads in the School is the Medical Co-ordinator and the Head of Junior School who act as liaison with the wider School community. The Period Dignity Lead is supported by the team of staff who store the period products safely and discreetly in their rooms/storerooms.
- A member of the School's Senior Leadership Team liaises with the Medical Co-ordinator and the Head of Junior School on a regular basis.
- Head of PSD/Pupil Wellbeing helps to co-ordinate Period Dignity education within the Preventative Curriculum.
- The SENCO and, where applicable, Classroom Assistants, will ensure pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) know how to access period products.

The role of parents and Carers

The School encourages our parents/carers to work in partnership with us by talking to their children about Period Dignity and menstrual wellbeing.

Relationships and Sexuality Education and the Preventative Curriculum are statutory components of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, and it is within this context that Period Dignity and menstrual wellbeing is primarily addressed.

Relevant School Policies

This policy, given the nature of its content is closely linked to:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- RSE Policy
- SEN Policy
- Anti-Bullying
- Attendance – Pupils;
- Health and Safety;
- Intimate Care;
- Relationships and Sexuality Education;
- Special Educational Needs;
- Supporting Pupils with Medication Needs