

**BALLYTOBER**



# Intimate Care Policy

Ratified: 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson, BoG

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this policy is:

- to safeguard the rights and promote the best interests of the children;
- to ensure children are treated with sensitivity and respect and in such a way that their experience of intimate care is a positive one;
- to safeguard adults required to operate in sensitive situations;
- to raise awareness and provide a clear procedure for intimate care;
- to inform parents in how intimate care is administered;
- to ensure parents are consulted in the intimate care of their children.

Please note that in this policy the term 'parent' refers to the person with parental responsibility for the child.

## **Principles**

It is essential that every child is treated as an individual and that care is given as gently and as sensitively as possible. As far as possible, the child should be allowed to exercise choice and should be encouraged to have a positive image of his/her own body.

It is important for staff to bear in mind how they would feel in the child's position. Given the right approach, intimate care can provide opportunities to teach children about the value of their own bodies, to develop their safety skills and to enhance their self esteem.

## **Definition**

Intimate care may be defined as any activity which is required to meet the personal care needs of an 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, parents and other relevant professionals.

Intimate care is one of the following:

- supporting a pupil with dressing/undressing;
- providing comfort or support for a distressed pupil;
- assisting a pupil requiring medical care, who is not able to carry this out unaided;
- oral care

- cleaning a pupil who has soiled him/herself, has vomited or feels unwell
- supervision of a child involved in intimate self-care

### **Supporting dressing/undressing**

The school considers that helping a child with an outer layer of clothing (eg. a sweatshirt or coat) is not an intimate act and therefore acceptable. Sometimes it will be necessary for staff to aid a child dressing or undressing (particularly in Foundation Stage) due to a medical condition, an accident or soiling themselves. Staff will always encourage children to attempt undressing and dressing unaided. Parents/carers are asked to sign the consent form giving permission for staff to assist in intimate care as part of the September consent pro-forma. Any specific care arrangements must be agreed with the school.

### **Providing comfort or support**

Children may seek physical comfort from staff (particularly children in Foundation Stage). Where children require physical support, staff need to be aware that physical contact must be kept to a minimum. At all times this will be child initiated and with the focus to encourage and help the child to calm or settle. When comforting a child or giving reassurance, the member of 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 suitable to the age, gender and situation of the child.

### **Medical Care**

Pupils requiring short term and long-term medical care involving intimate care will receive this care in line with the child's 'Care Plan'. The content of any 'Care Plan' will be discussed and agreed with the relevant medical body.

Parents as a first option will be asked to provide medical procedures that involve intimate care. If this is not possible, the school will seek the necessary advice from the EA, CPSS and/or the school nurse.

If it is possible for the staff of the school to provide the level of medical care required, the staff member/s will receive the appropriate training. Written permission must be received from the person with parental responsibility before a medical procedure can be carried out.

### **Soiling**

Staff will use common sense when tending to a child who has soiled themselves during the school day. If a child's underwear is changed due to a soiling incident the child will be asked and encouraged to change their underwear in private and carry out the act themselves. Help will be provided with any zips and buttons. A record of the care provided will be kept in school and the parent will be informed verbally.

If a child has a medical condition which is likely to lead to soiling and subsequent staff intervention, the parents will be asked to sign a permission form so that staff can clean and change their child if necessary.

If a parent *does not* give consent, the school will contact the parents or other emergency contact giving specific details about the necessity for cleaning the child.

If the parents or emergency contact can come within a few minutes, the child is comforted and kept away from the other children to preserve dignity until the parent arrives.

Children are not left on their own whilst waiting for a parent to arrive, an adult will stay with them giving comfort and reassurance. The child will be dressed at all times and never left partially clothed. If a parent or emergency contact cannot attend, the school will seek to gain verbal consent from parents for staff to clean and change the child. This permission will be sought on each occasion that the child soils him or herself. If the parents and emergency contacts cannot be contacted the Principal will be consulted. If put in an impossible situation where the child is at risk; staff will act appropriately and may need to come into some level of physical contact in order to aid the child. The needs of the child will be our paramount focus.

When touching a child, staff should always be aware of the possibility of invading a child's privacy and will respect the child's wishes and feelings.

If a child needs to be cleaned, staff will make sure that:

- protective gloves are worn;
- the procedure is discussed in a friendly and reassuring way with the child throughout the process using simple language
- the child is encouraged to care for him/herself as far as possible;
- physical contact is kept to a minimum in order to carry out the necessary cleaning;
- privacy is given appropriate to the child's age and the situation;
- any soiling that can be, is flushed down the toilet;
- soiled clothing is put in a plastic bag, unwashed, and sent home with the child.

### **Hygiene**

All staff must be familiar with normal precautions for avoiding infection, must follow basic hygiene procedures and have access to protective, disposable gloves. These are stored with the hygiene room.

### **Protection for staff**

Staff should at all times be mindful of their code of conduct, remembering that their actions should be beyond reproach and always child centred. They should:

- gain a verbal agreement from another member of staff that the action being taken is necessary;
- allow the child, wherever possible, to express a preference to choose his/her carer and encourage them to say if they find a carer to be unacceptable;
- allow the child a choice in the sequence of care;
- be aware of and responsive to the child's reactions.
- record details of intimate care provided "Record of Changing" (Appendix 1)
- report any concerns and provide a written "Record of Concerns" to a member of the Safeguarding Team

### **Safeguards for children**

All staff and volunteers in Ballytober Primary School must gain Access NI clearance before working in the school. Staff will be informed of and will understand the Intimate Care Policy. Individual staff will be trained as necessary in specific types of intimate care. Children's rights to privacy

will always be respected when dealing with intimate care issues. Volunteers will not be asked to carry out intimate care.

**Review**

This policy will be reviewed in June 2022 or as relevant guidance (including Child Protection / Safeguarding) dictates to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

