

POLICY ON STAY SAFE & INTIMATE CARE

Introductory Statement

The staff and management of the Holy Family School have developed and agreed this policy in line with current recommendations and guidelines relating to child abuse prevention and child protection guidelines.

This policy addresses the responsibilities of the school in the following areas:-

- (a) Prevention – curriculum provision
- (b) Procedures – procedures for dealing with concerns / disclosures
- (c) Practice – best practice in child protection

Copies of this policy document and the appended section from Department of Education and Science, Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures will be made available to all staff (policy document folder in each class). It is incumbent on all staff to familiarize themselves with 'Children First' and the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines & Procedures.

Definition of Intimate Care

Intimate care is defined as “care tasks associated with bodily functions, body products and personal hygiene which demand direct or indirect contact with or exposure of the sexual parts of the body”.

This is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure that most children carry out for themselves but which some are unable to do due to physical disability, special educational needs associated with learning difficulties, medical needs or needs arising from the child's stage of development.

Examples of Intimate Care tasks

1.	Help with eating
2.	Oral care (brushing teeth)
3.	Shaving
4.	Skin care or applying external medication
5.	Hair care
6.	Dressing and undressing (underwear and clothing)
7.	Helping someone to use the toilet
8.	Changing soiled continence pads
9.	Bathing or showering
10.	Washing intimate parts of the body i.e. genitalia
11.	Menstrual care
12.	Administering enemas
13.	Administering rectal medication
14.	Catheter or stoma care
15.	Prompting to go to the toilet or bathroom
16.	Supervision of an individual involved in intimate self-care

Aims

This policy aims to:

- Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment by valuing each child's contribution and work through praise and encouragement.
- Provide a personal safety skills education which specifically addresses abuse and prevention for all children in the school. The children in our care may not always or may not be capable of talking about their problems. All staff should observe and spend time to get to know the children and how they may hide their worries and problems.
- Develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst the whole school community.
- Put in place procedures for good practice to protect all children and staff.
- Ensure all staff members are aware of and familiar with the 'Children First' and the Department of Education and Science Guidelines and Procedures in relation to reporting concerns and / or disclosures of child abuse and bullying.
- Provide for ongoing training in this and related areas for all school staff.

Principles

This document embraces tenets of Every Child Matters.

- Every child has the right to feel safe and secure
- Every child has the right to be treated as an individual
- Every child has the right to remain healthy
- Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting his or her needs.
- Every child has the right to information and support that will enable him or her to make informed and appropriate choices.
- Every child has the right to be accepted for who they are, without regard to age, gender, ability, race, culture or beliefs.
- Every child has the right to information and procedures for any complaint or queries he or she may have regarding intimate care.

Working with parents

Partnership with parents is an important principle in any educational / care setting and is particularly necessary in relation to children needing intimate care. Much of the information required to make the process of intimate care as comfortable as possible is available from parents, including knowledge and understanding of any religious / cultural sensitivities.

Parents should be encouraged and empowered to work with staff to ensure their child's needs are identified, understood and met. For special education needs (SEN) children this may include involvement with Individual Education Plans (IEPs), health care plans and any other plans that identify the support of intimate care.

Exchanging information with parents is essential through personal contact, telephone or daily correspondence. However sensitive information concerning intimate care procedures should not be recorded in home / school books as it may contain confidential information that could be accessed by people other than the parent, staff member or child.

Prevention

The Holy Family School uses Stay Safe programme to provide education for children on abuse prevention. This programme is taught as part of schools SPHE curriculum under strand unit Safety & Protection. Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

Procedures

All staff (Teachers, SNAs, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking etc.) in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in the 'Children First' and the Department of Education and Science document, 'Child Protection Guidelines & Procedures'.

Copies of this policy document and appended section from Department of Education and skills, Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures will be made available to all staff. It is incumbent on all staff to familiarize themselves with 'Children First' and Department of Education and Skills 2017. (<https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-guidance-and-legislation/>)

The Board of Management of this school has appointed Rachel Moynagh as designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Andrea McHugh and Treassa O'Meara as deputy DLPs.

The staff and management of this school have agreed:

- All concerns / disclosures involving child protection /child welfare issues will be reported in the first instance to the DLP (Deputy DLP where appropriate).
- Each report to the DLP will be dated and signed by the person making that report.
- A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality - information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a 'need to know' basis.

The staff and management of this school recognise the children's rights and will treat them with dignity and respect by:

- Not accepting threatening, violent or degrading behaviour.
- Telling children their rights and responsibilities.
- Treating the children as individuals.
- Involving children.
- Making time for children to talk.
- The right for all non-verbal children to communicate using augmentative / alternative communication system

Stay Safe Programme

It is the policy of the school that the Stay Safe Programme is done each year with the pupils. Children are taught the content of the Stay Safe Lessons in the classroom. Teachers and parents work together to ensure that children learn the skills they need to keep safe.

- Through the Stay Safe Programme each child would be taught how to complain in ways and language they know best.
- Take away the secrecy on which abuse thrives.

- Each child be made aware of their rights and that the school will protect them and not cover up problems.
- All staff be aware of the school discipline code.
- All staff are committed to the prevention of physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children.
- Staff will remain vigilant of any physical changes that may appear on the pupils and 'body mapping' form is completed. (Appendix 1)

Guidelines for Good Practice in Intimate Care

Parents and (where age appropriate) individual should give their consent prior to the provision of intimate care. Children and young adults with disabilities can be very vulnerable and all staff involved in their care need to be particularly sensitive to their needs. These guidelines are based on the following principles and are offered so that expectations are clear and that approaches are consistent as far as possible.

The following areas have been considered by the staff and Board of Management of this school as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. Following discussion and consultation the staff and the Board of Management have agreed that the following practices be adapted.

(a) Physical Contact

While physical contact may be used to comfort, reassure or assist a child, the following should be factors in determining its appropriateness:-

- Is it acceptable to the child
- It is open and not secretive
- The age and developmental stage of the child

School personnel should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.

(b) General Care

All staff to be involved in the following aspects of general care for pupils.

- The planning and implementation of services
- Working as part of the multi-disciplinary team.
- Pupils reviews.
- General escorting duties where intimate care is not required.
- Helping pupils with social skills i.e. eating, drinking, hair-washing and grooming, teeth cleaning, showering/bathing etc.
- Dressing and undressing of outer clothing.
- The lifting and positioning of a pupil who is dressed.

(c) Privacy

Each pupil should be treated with dignity and his/her privacy ensured at all times.

Privacy is an important issue and much intimate care can be carried out on a one to one basis. Quite apart from the practical difficulties, the presence of two staff causes a loss of privacy and can imply a lack of trust in staff. Consequently, staff are supported to carry out the intimate care of pupils alone unless the task requires the

presence of two people (i.e. where the male carer of a female pupil must have a female staff present).

(d) Language

- All staff to be consistent with the terminology used with each pupil. Keep sentences short and emphasise key words.
- Accompany the language with non-verbal cues i.e. facial gesture and pointing, formal signs

(e) Independence

Involve pupils as far as possible in their own intimate care.

Staff should encourage pupils to do as much for themselves as possible. However, where a pupil is fully dependent on his carer, staff should explain their actions and give choices where possible.

(f) Self Image

At all times staff should encourage pupils to have a positive image of their own bodies.

Confident assertive people who feel their bodies 'belong to them' are less vulnerable. As well as basics like privacy, the approach that staff take to individuals intimate care can convey many messages to them about their self image. Staff attitudes to the pupils intimate care is of paramount importance.

(g) Safety

1. Staff should be careful in all aspects of care not to leave themselves open to the possibility of allegations and ensure that actions, comments or remarks cannot be misinterpreted.
2. It should be remembered that some pupils can make unfounded allegations and appropriate measures should be taken to ensure the protection of pupils and staff.
3. Although the possibility of allegations from male pupils against both male and female staff is generally less likely, staff should ensure that actions and remarks are not open to misinterpretation.
4. Staff should avoid restraining pupils, except where this is absolutely necessary to maintain safety.

Children with Specific Toileting / Intimate Care Needs

- Staff will wear protective gloves
- Where appropriate two members of staff will be present when dealing with intimate care / toileting needs.
- Where possible the pupil will be involved in identification of his/her personal requirements.
- Parents will be notified of toileting accidents if unprecedented.
- Work carried out by special needs assistants will be carried out under direction of class teacher.
- Swimming – class teacher will make appropriate arrangements for intimate care needs of their class.

- At all times there must be adequate supervision of pupils

Catheterisation

Catheterisation will be undertaken by the SNA where the child is unable to do so for themselves independently. There are several reasons why CIC may be needed:

- To become dry – some children have no bladder control and are wet all the time.
- To prevent repeated urine infections – some children who are unable to empty their bladders completely are at risk of developing kidney damage.

Who can carry out CIC in school

Catheterisation in school will be carried out by SNAs or nursing staff who are trained in the procedure. Parents will provide training for staff members who will be involved with their child.

While every effort will be made to adhere to best practice as agreed and outlines above, in the event of an emergency where this is not possible or practicable a full record of the incident should be made and reported to the principal and parents.

Links to other Policy / Planning Areas

Prevention SPHE curriculum, Strand Unit on Safety & Protection

Procedures Health & Safety Policy and Anti Bullying Policy / Child Protection Policy

Practice Policy on Outings and Intimate Care Policy

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management in two years. The Board of Management will ensure that adequate training and support is provided for all staff.

Policy adopted by the Board of Management on

30/05/2023

Signed:



Chairperson