

# **POLICY AND PROCEDURE IN RELATION TO INTIMATE PHYSICAL CARE OF STUDENTS in St. Francis Special School**

## **Introduction**

This Intimate Care policy has been developed by the staff of ST. FRANCIS SPECIAL SCHOOL in consultation with the Board of Management and Staff to ensure that the needs and rights of students and staff are maintained and that the highest standards of best practice are ensured at all times in the area of intimate personal assistance.

Each student has the right to physical care assistance in order for him or her to participate fully in school life. The level of assistance required will reflect the needs of each individual student at any given time.

## **Aims**

The aim of this policy is to ensure that

- the dignity and welfare of students and staff is respected and maintained.
- the rights of students and staff are protected.
- best practice is promoted throughout the school within the framework of the current policy.

## **Definition of Intimate Care**

Intimate care is the support provided by staff to students while involved in personal care routines such as dressing and undressing, toileting, showering/bathing and attending to menstrual needs. Where necessary, such support will involve varying levels of supervision and assistance and may involve physical contact with a student when they are partially or fully undressed.

## **Content**

The Intimate Care Guidelines are laid out as follows: Staff Guidelines, Student Welfare, Reporting and Parental Consent.

## **Staff Guidelines**

- Levels of staffing for the provision of intimate care assistance will be organised based on the individual needs of the students and availability of staff. Staffing levels should be reviewed with the relevant staff when necessary. Every effort will be made by the staff working in SFSS to provide two staff for intimate care assistance. However, there may be occasions when only one member of staff is available.
- In a situation where a staff member is obliged to undertake intimate care assistance on his or her own, other staff can be called on if further assistance is deemed necessary.
- Within current resources, staff of either gender may be required as part of their duties to attend to the intimate care needs of students both male and female. Female staff only will attend to students requiring assistance with menstrual needs. Staff will not be involved in any way in the use by students of internal sanitary protection.
- Staff should at all times follow best practice in relation to Manual Handling.
- Staff should never carry out an intimate care procedure unless they know how to do so correctly and will ask for the relevant advice when required.

- Staff should ensure supplies of toiletries, towels and fresh clothes etc. are to hand so that the student is not left unattended while items are found. If supplies run out while a staff member is using bathroom facilities then the staff member should replace the toiletries with supplies from the appropriate person/stores press in SFSS.
- Staff should at all times follow best practice in relation to infection control.
- Staff should be discreet in the use of intimate care items and these should not be visible outside of designated areas.
- Intimate care assistance will at all times take place in the designated area.

### **Student Welfare**

- Every student should be treated with dignity and have their privacy respected at all times
- Physical contact during intimate care assistance should be affirmative and supportive
- While assisting the student, staff will explain what is happening in a straightforward and reassuring way and will involve each student as far as possible in their own intimate care programme while being sensitive to their reactions and responsive to their communication (both verbal and non verbal) abilities.
- Discreet observation will be used to check if a student needs changing.
- The needs and challenges presented by individual pupils will be taken into consideration.
- Staff will check in advance that suitable facilities exist for intimate care procedures when on outings.

### **Reporting**

If during the provision of intimate care assistance...

- the student is accidentally hurt
- the student seems unusually sore, tender or bruised
- the student appears to misinterpret what is said or done
- the student has a very emotional reaction without apparent cause

...the staff member(s) involved in the intimate care assistance should **immediately** report any such incident to the class teacher. The incident should also be reported **as soon as possible** to the Principal/Deputy Principal. Parents may be contacted and an incident report may be completed if child Protection Guidelines indicate that this step is necessary. Follow up will take place as required.

The national child protection guidelines will be followed at all times.

### **Parental Consent**

Parents representatives on the BOM will be given a copy the intimate care policy and Parents are also free to read it in the school. Parental concerns and suggestions regarding the intimate care needs of their child will be taken into consideration by the school.

### **Implementation and Dissemination**

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management and will be circulated to parents' representatives on the BOM.