St Brigid's Primary School

Intimate Care Policy

Learning and Growing Together

Reviewed with Staff:
Ratified by Governors:
Signed by Chair of Governors

Introduction

The pastoral care of our children is central to the aims, ethos and teaching programmes in St Brigid'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 (2005). It is our intention to develop independence in each child, however there will be occasions when help is required. The principles and procedures apply to everyone involved in the intimate care of children.

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, dignity 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/carers as to how intimate care is administered.
- To ensure parents/carers are consulted in the intimate care of their children.

This intimate care policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies including:

- Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Procedures
- The Administration of Medicines Policy
- Infection Control Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Social Media Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Intimate Care plans
- Feeding Care plans
- Moving and Handling Guidelines
- Complaints Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy

Staff will work in close partnership with parent/carers and other professionals to share information and provide continuity of care. Pupils who require assistance with their intimate/personal care will have an individualised personal care plan (Appendix 1); this will be drawn up by the class teacher in collaboration with parents/carers and other professionals involved in the pupil's care. The views of all relevant parties, including the child (if appropriate), will be sought and considered to inform the intimate care plan.

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 any 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:

- Assisting a child to change his/her clothes.
- Changing or washing a child who has soiled him / herself.
- Assisting with toileting issues.
- Supervising a child involved in intimate self-care.
- Providing first aid assistance.
- Providing comfort to an upset or distressed child.
- Feeding a child.
- Providing oral care to a child.
- Assisting a child who requires a specific medical procedure and who is not able to carry this out unaided. *
- Self-stimulating behaviour.

  * 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 the policy is 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 express their views on their own intimate care and to have these views taken into account.
- 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 have levels of intimate care that are as consistent as possible.

Responsibilities of Staff involved with intimate care

In St Brigid's Primary School all staff are Access NI checked on application, this includes students on work placement and volunteers. Therefore, all individuals who provide intimate care will have been vetted correctly. Vetting includes criminal record checks and two references.

Only those members of 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.

Intimate care arrangements must be agreed by the school, parents/guardian and child (if appropriate) through the distribution of the school policy and by the parents signing a consent form electronically, which is issued to parents prior to the child starting school via Microsoft Forms.

Signed consent forms are kept in the child's personal file. If a parent/guardian does not return a signed consent form or requires alternative arrangements made for their child, then this will also be recorded in that child's personal file.

Only in emergency would staff undertake any aspect of intimate care that has not been agreed by parents and school. Parents would then be contacted immediately.
The views of all relevant parties are sought and considered to inform future arrangements.

If a staff member has concerns about an intimate care practice from another colleague, they must report this to their Designated Teacher for Child Protection (Mrs M Mc Conville) or the Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection (Mrs D Miller).

Guidelines for Good Practice

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.
Young children and children with special educational needs can be especially vulnerable. Staff involved with their intimate care need to be particularly 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 tasks/treatments may be open to misinterpretation. Adhering to the following guidelines of good practice should safeguard both children and staff.

Staff will involve the child in the intimate care: Staff will encourage the child to be as independent as possible with his/her intimate care. Where the child is fully dependent on the adult, staff will talk the child through what is going to be done and offer them a choice where possible.

Staff will treat every child with dignity and respect and ensure privacy appropriate to the child's age and situation: A lot of care provided can be one to one. This practice is supported unless the activity requires two persons.

Staff will ensure intimate care practice is consistent: As a child may have multiple carers, a consistent approach to care is essential. Effective communication between school and parents/carers ensure practice is consistent.

Staff will be aware of own limitations: Staff will only carry out activities that they fully understand and feel competent and confident to carry out. If in doubt, staff will ask for assistance. Certain procedures must only be carried out by trained staff who have been formally trained and assessed.

Staff will promote positive self-esteem and body image: Staff will encourage and support the child with their intimate care. Routine care should be relaxed and fun.

Staff will report any concerns: Staff will immediately report any concerns to the designated child protection teacher (Mrs Mc Conville) including unusual markings, discolourations, swelling etc. Staff should also report any unusual emotional or behavioural responses. A written record of concerns will be placed in the child's personal file. Parents/carers must be informed about any concerns.

Procedures

- Pupils who receive intimate care daily will have a clear account of procedures detailed in their intimate care plans (Appendix 3). The plan should be signed by all contributors.
- Infection control will be adhered to at all times (please refer to infection control policy and pupils' intimate care plan for details).
- The intimate care plan will be reviewed on a regular basis, every six months (in September and February) or prior to this if the need arises for review.
- A record will be kept by the school of any intimate care procedures undertaken (Appendix 1). The records should be clear who was present in every case. These records will be kept in the child's file and available to parents/carers on request. Where a daily record of intimate care is required Appendix 2 should be completed.
- Staff undertaking personal care will gain a verbal agreement from another member of staff that the action being taken is necessary.
- Allow the child, wherever possible, to give verbal consent to the person assisting them.
- Under no circumstance should ICT equipment be used during the toileting process. Where required, other visual timers for example must be used. Alternate transition objects should be embedded instead of for example iPads.
- Parents are responsible for providing appropriate protection for their child depending on their age and level of need and a change of clothing. A change of clothing can be borrowed from school if necessary and parents are informed.
- Should intimate care be required when a pupil is off site, staff must ensure a suitable area is selected to maximise pupil privacy.

- Whenever possible, the same pupil will not be cared for by the same adult on every occasion; there will be a number of staff known to the child who will take turns in providing care. This will ensure, as far as possible, that over-familiar relationships are discouraged from developing, while at the same time, guarding against the care being carried out by a succession of completely different members of staff.

Working with children of the opposite sex

There is positive value in both male and female staff being involved with children. Ideally, every child should have the choice for intimate care but the current ratio of female to male staff means that assistance will more often be given by a woman. The intimate care of boys and girls can be carried out by a member of staff of the opposite sex with the following provisions:

- The delivery of intimate care will be by trained staff and governed by their professional code of conduct and in accordance with the school's policy and procedures.
- Staff who are not governed by a professional code of conduct must follow policy and procedures and under the direction and agreement of the designated Child Protection Teacher (Mrs M Mc Conville).
- When any intimate care is being carried out, all children have the right to dignity, privacy and respect. i.e. they should be properly covered and the door closed over etc;
- If the child appears distressed or uncomfortable when personal care tasks are being carried out, the care should stop immediately. Try to ascertain why the child is distressed and provide reassurance.
- Report any concerns to designated Child Protection teacher and a written record will be made.
- Parents/carers must be informed about concerns.

The individual child's safety, dignity and privacy are of paramount importance.

Communication with Children

It is the responsibility of all staff caring for a child to ensure that they are aware of the child's method and level of communication. To ensure effective communication, staff will: Ascertain how the child communicates through liaison with child/ parents/ teacher/external agencies eg Speech and Language therapist.

- Make eye contact at the child's level.
- Use simple language and repeat if necessary.
- Wait for a response.
- Explain to the child what is happening, even if there is no response.
- Treat the child as an individual with dignity and respect.

Intimate Care Arrangements

Supporting dressing/undressing

Sometimes it will be necessary for staff to aid a child in getting dressed or undressed particularly in Foundation Stage. Staff will always encourage children to attempt undressing and dressing unaided.

Providing comfort or support

Children may seek physical comfort from staff particularly in Foundation Stage. At St Brigid's we advocate a **positive touch** approach towards our children identifying the need to promote nurture, care and wellbeing in our children. Our staff are also aware that when children require physical support that staff will keep this to a minimum and be child initiated. When comforting a child or giving reassurance, the member of staff's hands should always be seen and a child should not be positioned close to a member of staff's body which could be regarded as 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. 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.

Medical Conditions

If a child has a medical condition which is likely to lead to soiling and subsequent staff intervention, specific medical advice may be sought from outside agencies and 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 are able to come promptly, the child is comforted and kept away from the other children to preserve dignity until the parent arrives. If parents/guardians cannot be contacted - staff will decide on the most appropriate care to minimise any stress, discomfort or anxiety the child may be experiencing.

Soiling

Staff from St Brigid's Primary School will work together in partnership with parents to support each child towards independent use of the toilet.

If tending to a child who has soiled themselves during the school day staff will respond sensitively and professionally. If 'accidents' occur the child will change themselves into dry clothing, and wet items will be sent home for washing. The child's independence will be encouraged as far as possible in his/her intimate care and reassurance given. (School will have a supply of wipes, clean underwear and spare uniform for this purpose.) A record of

the incident will be kept in school and the parent will be informed (by a note home, verbally at home collection time or phone call) and requested to return the borrowed items of clothing when laundered.

If there is an occurrence of heavier soiling or vomiting, this may require staff to provide care at a more personal level. Staff will follow set procedures for this intimate care:

- If possible, the child will be removed to a less public place to maintain dignity and avoid a feeling of humiliation.
- If appropriate, the child will be encouraged, through guidance and assistance, to clean themselves to make them more comfortable.
- Parents should be contacted as soon as possible.

Staff will provide further intimate care in the following situations:

- If parents/guardians cannot be contacted **- staff will decide on the most appropriate care to minimise any stress, discomfort or anxiety the child may be experiencing.**
- If the parents/guardians are unable to come to school.
- If the child is very distressed or suffering unduly.

Intimate care will only be provided to older children in extreme circumstances. It is anticipated that older children will be able to manage any circumstances given guidance or assistance.
If staff are providing intimate care two members of staff will be in the vicinity at all times e.g. the second staff member could be in the adjacent room with the adjoining door open.
If incidents of soiling is a regular occurrence then a pupil care plan will need to be put in place after consultation between the school, the pupils' parent's/guardians and if appropriate, other outside agencies.

Please note: The well being and dignity of the child will remain paramount at all times during any incident requiring intimate care.

Hygiene

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

Massage (including aromatherapy)

Massage is commonly used with pupils who have complex needs in order to develop sensory awareness, tolerance to touch and as a means of relaxation. Massage undertaken by school staff is confined to parts of the body such as the hands, feet and face in order to safeguard the interest of both adults and pupils. Any adult undertaking massage for pupils must be suitably qualified and/or demonstrate an appropriate level of competence. Parents must give consent for pupils to avail of timetabled massage.

Swimming

Our Primary 5, 6 and Primary 7 classes participate in a swimming programme at The Down Leisure Centre. Children are entitled to respect and privacy when changing their clothes however, there must be the required level of supervision to safeguard young people with regard to health and safety considerations and to ensure that unacceptable behaviour does not occur.

This means that staff should announce their intention of entering changing rooms, avoid remaining in changing rooms unless pupil needs require it, avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress and avoid any visually intrusive behaviour.

Given the vulnerabilities of the situation, it is strongly recommended that when supervising children in a state of undress, another member of staff is present. However, this may not always be possible and therefore Staff need to be vigilant about their own conduct.

Where a child needs additional support for changing parental permission will be sought and a personal care plan may be drawn up to maintain dignity but increase independence.

MENSTRUAL WELL-BEING AND PERIOD DIGNITY

St Brigid's Primary School has a Period Dignity Policy which was written in consultation with parents, staff and governors. (Please refer to Period Dignity Policy).

Aims of the Period Dignity Policy:

- Create a culture where periods are understood, accepted and normalised. Periods are not a choice and periods products are not a luxury.
- Ensure the dignity and access to good quality, safe products to people who need them.
- Enable learners to achieve their potential by reducing any barriers they may experience due to periods, having a positive impact on pupil confidence, well-being, and attendance.
- Reduce stigma/taboo in relation to periods by providing all pupils with relevant, age-appropriate information on periods.
- Enable learners to understand how to deal with period issues, hygiene and disposal of period products.

Protection for staff

Members of staff need to be aware of the potential danger of allegations being made against them and take precautions to avoid this risk.

These should include:

- If staff are providing intimate care two members of staff will be in the vicinity at all times e.g. the second staff member could be in the adjacent room with the adjoining door open.

- Gaining a verbal agreement from another member of staff that the action being taken is necessary.
- Allow the child, wherever possible, to give verbal consent to the person assisting them.
- Allow the child a choice in the sequence of care.
- Be aware of and responsive to the child's reactions.

Staff Professional Development

- Staff will receive training in working practices which comply with Health and Safety.
- All staff will receive Safeguarding /Child Protection training as part of Whole School training.
- Staff will receive Manual Handling training where appropriate.
- The school will keep a dated record of all training undertaken.
- Newly appointed staff will be closely supervised until competency has been established.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or earlier if necessary.

For further information, please refer to:

Regional Area Child Protection Committee Child Protection Procedures – April 2005
Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007

Agree Date	Review Date	Amendments
Nov 2017	Nov 2019	Policy to reflect working with children of the opposite sex. Communication with Children. Medical care removed to be reflected in Medication Policy.
	October 2020	Addendum added to reflect the management of intimate care during the Covid 19 pandemic.
	January 2022	To take account of change in staff. To reflect the changes in how permission is gained for intimate care. To reflect changes in managing Covid within the school context. To include intimate care that may be needed at swimming lessons.
	September 22	Addendum to reflect opening of SLD Specialist Provision.
	September 24	To reflect the Period Dignity Programme.

APPENDIX 1

Record of Intimate Care Provided

St. BRIGID's PRIMARY SCHOOL **INTIMATE CARE RECORDING FORM**	
CHILD'S NAME:	
DATE:	**TIME:**
NATURE OF INCIDENT	
ACTION TAKEN	
SIGNED:	**ROLE:**

INTIMATE CARE RECORD

Pupil Name: _____ Month: _____ Year: _____

Date	Time	Nature of Care Provided	Notes/Comments	Staff Present

Appendix 3

School Toileting/Intimate Care Plan

Child's name: **D.O.B:** **Review date:**

Class staff:

(Please note that in the case of absence or other factors, staff from other rooms or supply staff may assist with intimate care. Staff of either gender are involved in carrying out intimate care.)

Timing of toileting routine including arrangements for working towards independence and communication: (e.g. taking child to toilet at timed intervals, using sign or symbol, toilet routine cue.)	
Arrangements for changing: (e.g. location, arrangements for privacy).	
Explanation of the routine (e.g. hoist/sling information, number of staff needed, undressing, dressing, hand washing, level of prompting required and development of independence where applicable inc. use of visuals, menstruation board, how to support hand washing, reward charts etc).	
Infection control: (e.g wearing disposable gloves, nappy/pad disposal)	
Sharing Information: (e.g. record keeping, who has to notify if child has rash or any marks)	
Resources needed: (e.g. creams, change of clothes, gloves)	

Plan developed by _____(class teacher) Date:_____

Signed by: Parent/Carer:_____ Date: _____

Pupil (if appropriate): _____ Date: _____

Classroom assistants: _____ Date: _____

Other professionals: _____ Date: _____