Intimate Care Policy

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Holy Family Primary School,

Teconnaught Downpatrick

**Rationale**

It is our intention to develop independence in each child, however there will be occasions when help is required. Our Intimate Care Policy has been developed to safeguard children and staff. It is one of a range of specific policies that contribute to our Pastoral Care Policy. The principles and procedures apply to everyone involved in the intimate care of children.

Children are generally more vulnerable than adults and staff involved with any aspect of pastoral care need to be sensitive to their individual needs.

Intimate care may be defined as any activity that is required to meet the personal needs of an individual child on a regular basis or during a one-off incident. Such activities can include:

* feeding;
* oral care;
* washing;
* changing clothes;
* toileting;
* first aid and medical assistance; and
* supervision of a child involved in intimate self-care.

Parents, carers and guardians have a 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 of intimate care upon which our policy guidelines are 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 be treated with dignity and respect;
* all children have the right to be involved and consulted in their own intimate care to the best of their abilities;
* all children have the right to express their views on their own intimate care and to have such views taken into account; and
* every child has the right to have levels of intimate care that are appropriate and consistent.

**School Responsibilities**

All staff working with children are vetted by Access NI. This includes students on work placement and volunteers. 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.

Where anticipated, intimate care arrangements can be agreed between the school and parents, carers and guardians and, if appropriate, by the child. Consent forms are signed by the parents, carers or guardians and stored in the child’s file. Only in an emergency would staff undertake any aspect of intimate care that has not been agreed by parents, carers or guardians and school. Parents, carers or guardians would then be contacted immediately.

Intimate care arrangements should be reviewed annually. The views of all relevant parties should be sought and considered to inform future arrangements.

If a staff member has concerns about a colleague’s intimate care practice he or she must report this to the Designated Teacher (DT) for Child Protection.

**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 forms of assistance can be open to misinterpretation. Adhering to the following guidelines of good practice should safeguard children and staff. No child is excluded from participating in our school who may, for any reason, not yet be toilet trained or who may still be wearing nappies or the equivalent. We make necessary adjustments to our provision to accommodate children who are not yet toilet trained. We do however encourage parents to do their very best to ensure pupils are toilet trained before starting school or as soon as possible thereafter.

Staff should keep a balance between respecting the child’s need for privacy and ensuring their safety when they are required to change children, change nappies or support children with toileting. It is important that there is a trust and confidence between the member of staff, child and family and therefore only adults who are familiar and known to the child should change nappies or support with toileting needs. Adults need to be Access NI checked and students, short-term or agency staff will not be asked to carry out these duties.

Staff will always praise and encourage children for appropriate behaviour and use only positive language towards the child. Children should never be told off for having an accident. Children should never be left in soiled or wet clothes. If children are left in wet or soiled clothing this may constitute neglect and may result in a disciplinary matter. We have a ‘duty of care’ towards children’s personal needs.

Parents are requested to complete a form with their child’s teacher agreeing consent for school staff to assist their child with toileting needs when required. This form must be completed before the child is admitted to Primary 1. Parents will be expected to ensure each child is toilet trained and will be asked to assist with changing children when appropriate. Only in the absence of a parent will a member of school staff assist in the changing of a child. Pupils will be expected to be as independent as possible when being assisted. Children should be changed in the toilet area within the P1 classroom which is conducive to pupil privacy but also accessible to school staff when required. At all times, due respect needs to be given to the privacy of the child. Staff must wear latex gloves when changing children and baby wipes are available to use unless the parents request otherwise. All soiled items disposed of in the bin. The cleaner will empty the bin each day.

**Toilets**

Many young children require support with using toilets independently. They are encouraged to use toilets appropriately and independently without over reliance on an adult. All children need to be taught the importance of hygiene. They are encouraged to use toilet paper, flush the toilet after use and wash and dry their hands thoroughly.

**Changing children following an accident**

Assigned Classroom Assistants should change children who accidently wet or soil themselves in school, only when consent is given and in the event of a parent being unable to attend school to assist themselves. This needs to be done in a calm manner and the minimum of fuss. Staff will wear latex gloves to remove soiled items and provide the child with clean clothes. Soiled clothes need to be placed in a hygiene bag.

**Involve the child in the intimate care**

Try to encourage a child’s independence as far as possible in his or her intimate care. Where a situation renders a child fully dependent, talk about what is going to be done and give choices where possible.

Check your practice by asking the child or parents, carers or guardians about any preferences while carrying out the intimate care.

**Treat every child with dignity and respect and ensure privacy appropriate to the child’s age and situation.**

Care should not be carried out by a member of staff working alone with a child.

**Make sure practice in intimate care is consistent.**

As a child may have multiple carers a consistent approach to care is essential. Effective communication between all parties ensures that practice is consistent.

**Be aware of your own limitations**

Only carry out activities you understand and feel competent with. If in doubt, ASK. Some procedures must only be carried out by members of staff who have been formally trained and assessed.

**Promote positive self-esteem and body image.**

Confident, self-assured children who feel their body belongs to them are less vulnerable to sexual abuse. The approach you take to intimate care can convey lots of messages to a child about their body worth. Your attitude to a child’s intimate care is important. Keeping in mind the child’s age, routine care can be both efficient and relaxed.

**If you have any concerns, you must report them.**

If you observe any unusual markings, discolouration or swelling, report it immediately to the DT for Child Protection.

If a child is accidentally hurt during the intimate care or misunderstands or misinterprets something, reassure the child, ensure their safety and report the incident immediately to the DT.

Report and record any unusual emotional or behavioural response by the child. A written record of concerns must be made available to parents, carers or guardians and kept in the child’s personal file.

**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:

* When intimate care is being carried out, all children have the right to dignity and privacy, i.e. they should be appropriately covered, the door closed or screens/curtains put in place;
* If the child appears distressed or uncomfortable when personal tasks are being carried out, the care should stop immediately. Try to ascertain why the child is distressed and provide reassurance. (It may be advisable to call the parent, carer or guardian to change or collect their child so as to avoid undue distress);
* Report any concerns to the DT for Child Protection and make a written record; and
* Parents, carers or guardians must be informed about any concerns.

**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. Depending on their maturity and levels of stress children may communicate using different methods - words, signs, symbols, body movements, eye pointing, etc.

To ensure effective communication:

* make eye contact at the child’s level;
* use simple language and repeat if necessary;
* wait for response;
* continue to explain to the child what is happening even if there is no response; and
* treat the child as an individual with dignity and respect.

**Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually.

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**PARENTAL CONSENT FORM**

Please sign and return to school:

I have read and agree to the Intimate Care Policy of Holy Family Primary School. I give Holy Family Primary School staff consent to carry out the personal care of my child\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(child’s name) if he/she has a toileting accident, in line with this policy.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature of Parent/Guardian)