



## Intimate care policy – 2023-24

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 Safeguarding of pupils. 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 must be sensitive to their needs.

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

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

Parents are responsible for advising 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;
- personal privacy;
- be valued as an individual;
- be treated with dignity and respect;
- be involved and consulted in their own intimate care to the best of their abilities;
- express their views on their own intimate care and to have such views considered; and
- have levels of intimate care that are appropriate and consistent.

### School Responsibilities

All members of staff working with children are checked and vetted to ensure they are safe to do so. Only those members of staff who are familiar with the intimate care policy and all school safeguarding documentation are involved in the intimate care of children.

Anticipated intimate care arrangements which are required on a regular basis, are agreed between the school and parents and, when appropriate and possible, by the child.

In such cases, consent forms are signed and stored in the child's file. (Appendix 1 & 2)

Intimate care arrangements for any pupil who requires this support on a regular basis will be reviewed at least every six months.

The views of all relevant parties should be sought and considered to inform future arrangements. Any amendments to the arrangements should be recorded and made available for all parties involved.

Only in an emergency would staff undertake any aspect of intimate care that the parents have not agreed upon. This act of intimate care would be reported to a member of staff and parents at the earliest possible time following the event.

If a staff member has concerns about a colleague's intimate care practice, he or she must report this to the Designated Senior Lead for Safeguarding – Mr. M. Rodgers

### **Guidelines for Good Practice**

All children have the right to be safe and 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 must be particularly sensitive to their needs.

Staff members also need to be aware that some adults may use intimate care as an opportunity to abuse children. It is important to remember that some forms of assistance can be open to misinterpretation.

#### **1. Involve the child in the intimate care**

Encourage a child's independence as far as possible in intimate care. Where a situation renders a child fully dependent, talk about what will be done and, where possible, give choices.

Check your practice by asking the child or parent about preferences while carrying out intimate care.

#### **2. 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.

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

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

#### **4. 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.

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

Confident, self-assured children who feel their bodies belong to them are less vulnerable to sexual abuse. Your approach to intimate care can convey many messages to a child about their body's worth. Your attitude to a child's intimate care is important. Considering the child's age, routine care can be efficient and relaxed.

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

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

If a child is accidentally hurt during intimate care or misunderstands or misinterprets something, reassure the child, ensure their safety and report the incident immediately to the designated teacher. Report and record any unusual emotional or behavioural response by the child. A written record of concerns must be made available to parents 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;
- report any concerns to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and make a written record;
- parents must be informed about any concerns.

### **Communication with Children**

It is the responsibility of all staff caring for a child to ensure they know the child's method and level of communication. Depending on their maturity and stress levels, 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 a response;
- continue to explain to the child what is happening even if there is no response;
- treat the child as an individual with dignity and respect.