

# INTIMATE CARE POLICY



**St Patrick's Comprehensive**

**Shannon**

**Co Clare**

## **Introduction**

The Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines regarding children have been developed to safeguard children and staff. They apply to everyone involved in the intimate care of children.

All staff members and parents/guardians will be made aware of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement along with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools published by the Department of Education and Skills. Circular 0081/2017 outlines the Publication of new "Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017". The Children First Act, 2015 operates side-by-side with the Children First National Guidance 2017.

Children's dignity will be preserved and a high level of privacy, choice and control will be provided to them. All staff will be required to familiarise themselves with the Child Safeguarding Statement and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools published by the DES.

This guidance is based on good practice and practical experience of those working with children and young people requiring intimate care.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with other school policies e.g.

- Special Needs Education Policy
- Child Protection & Welfare Statement
- Health & Safety Statement
- Anti-bullying Policy

## **Definition of Intimate Care**

Intimate care<sup>1</sup> 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 any 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.

Table 1: Examples of intimate care tasks

	Intimate Care Task
1.	Help with eating
2.	Oral care (brushing teeth)
3.	Skin care or applying external medication
4.	Hair care
5.	Dressing and undressing (underwear and clothing)
6.	Helping someone to use the toilet
7.	Changing soiled continence pads
8.	Washing intimate parts of the body i.e. genitalia
9.	Menstrual care
10.	Prompting to go to the toilet or bathroom
11.	Supervision of an individual involved in intimate self-care

Please note: The list in Table 1 is not meant to be definitive and may need adjusting as the needs of our students emerge. The term child/children will be used to refer to children and young people. The term parent/s is used to refer to parents, carers and legal guardians.

*1 Cambridge and Carnaby (2000) Making it Personal: Providing Intimate and personal care for people with learning disabilities. Pavilion Publishing. Brighton.*

### **Aims**

The aims of this document and associated guidance are;

- To safeguard the dignity, rights and well-being of children and young people.
- To provide guidance and reassurance to staff.
- To assure parents that staff are knowledgeable about intimate care and that their individual needs and concerns are taken into account.

Intimate care plans will be prepared for those students who are identified as having intimate care needs and will form part of the students PPP. This intimate care plan will adhere to the following basic principles which embrace the 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 about the procedures for any complaint or query 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 work with staff to ensure their child's needs are identified, understood and met.

Exchanging information with parents is essential through personal contact, telephone, written or email correspondence. Every care will be taken when communicating sensitive information to protect the dignity and privacy of the child.

### **Basic principles when providing intimate care**

All individuals:

- have a right to feel safe and secure.
- where age appropriate, and parents should give their consent prior to the provision of intimate care.
- have the right to personal privacy.
- receiving intimate care should be respected and valued as individuals.
- should be listened to and their views taken into account.
- should be treated courteously at all times and know who is looking after them.
- have a right to be treated with dignity and respect and a professional approach from staff when meeting their needs.
- have the right to information and support to enable them to make appropriate choices.
- have the right to be involved and consulted in their own intimate care to the best of their abilities.
- have the right to be accepted for who they are, without regard to age, gender, ability, race, culture or beliefs.
- have the right to express their views on their own intimate care and to have such views taken into account.
- have the right to know how to complain and have their complaint dealt with.
- Intimate Care Needs (ICN's) plans should be designed to lead to independence (where possible).

### **Pupil Voice**

Allow the child, subject to their age and understanding, to express their views and wishes in relation to intimate care. These views and wishes will be taken into consideration subject to the limited resources available to the school.

Where there is any doubt that a child is able to make an informed choice on these issues, a member of staff makes the choice on behalf of the child following consultation with parents.

It is the responsibility of all staff caring for a child to ensure they are aware of the child's method and level of communication. Communication methods may include words, signs, symbols, body movements and eye pointing.

### **Staff Development**

Staff should receive information about and where possible training in good working practices which comply with the schools Health & Safety policy requirements.

Staff must be informed of the specific types of intimate care that they carry out and fully understand the intimate care policy and guidelines within the context of their work.

The school and individual staff will keep a dated record of all training undertaken.

### **Allegations of Abuse**

Where there is an allegation of abuse, the guidelines in the school and Child Protection procedures should be followed.

**Ratification and Communication**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2019. A copy of the policy is stored electronically in the school plan which is available to all staff. A copy of the policy is also published on the school website.

**Implementation**

This policy will take effect from May 2019.

**Review**

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis by management and staff and in light of enrolment and student needs. The policy will be reviewed along with the child protection policy annually by the board of management at the beginning of the academic year. It may be reviewed at other times of the school-year if a review is requested by one of the school stakeholders.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Principal*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Chairperson of the Board of Management*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_