



# INTIMATE CARE POLICY

This policy represents the agreed principles for ‘**Intimate Care**’ throughout the Primary School and Pre-School. This policy has been agreed by all Staff and Governors within the Primary School and Management Team within the Pre-School.

### **Introduction: -**

The aim of this policy is:

- to safeguard the dignity, rights and promote the well-being of the children;
- to ensure children are treated with sensitivity and respect, and in such a way that their experience of intimate care is a positive one;
- to provide guidance, support and safeguard staff required to operate in sensitive situations;
- to raise awareness and provide a clear procedure for intimate care;
- to inform parents in how intimate care is administered;
- to reassure parents that their children are cared for and protected.

*Please note that in this policy the term ‘parent’ refers to the person with parental responsibility for the child.*

### **Principles: -**

It is essential that every child is treated as an individual and that care is given as gently and as sensitively as possible. As far as possible, the child should be allowed to exercise choice and should be encouraged to have a positive image of his/her own body. It is important for staff to bear in mind how they would feel in the child's position. Given the right approach, intimate care can provide opportunities to teach children about the value of their own bodies, to develop their safety skills and to enhance their self-esteem. Parents and staff should be aware that matters concerning intimate care will be dealt with confidentially and sensitively and that the young person’s right to privacy and dignity is maintained at all times.

### **Definition: -**

Intimate care is one of the following:

- supporting a pupil with *dress/undress*;
- providing *comfort or support* for a distressed pupil;
- assisting a pupil requiring *medical care*, who is not able to carry this out unaided;
- cleaning a pupil who has *soiled him/herself*, has vomited or feels unwell.

### **Supporting dress/undress: -**

The school considers that helping a child with an outer layer of clothing (egg. a sweatshirt or coat) is not to an intimate act and therefore acceptable. Sometimes it will be necessary for staff to aid a child dressing or undressing (particularly in Early Years) due to an accident, soiling themselves or due to a medical condition. Staff will always encourage children to attempt undressing and dressing unaided.

If staff are concerned in any way parents will be sent for and asked to assist their child.

While it is recommended to have two members of staff assisting the child, this level of resourcing may not be available, and while the introduction of a second assistant may be perceived as providing protection against allegations of abuse, it can also further erode the child’s privacy.

### **Providing comfort or support: -**

Children may seek physical comfort from staff (particularly children in Early Years). Where children require physical support, staff need to be aware that physical contact must be kept to a minimum. When comforting a child or giving reassurance, the member of staff must ensure that at no time can the act be considered 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. If a child requires physical comfort from a member of staff, this should always be in the presence of another member of staff or adult.

### **Medical Care: -**

Pupils requiring short term and long term medical care involving intimate care, will receive this care in line with the child's 'Care Plan'. The content of any 'Care Plan' will be discussed and agreed with the relevant medical body. The school will seek the necessary advice from the E.A. and/or the school nurse. If it is possible for the staff of the school to provide the level of medical care required, the staff member/s will receive the appropriate training. Written permission must be received from the person with parental responsibility before a medical procedure can be carried out.

### **Soiling: -**

Staff will use common sense when tending to a child who has soiled themselves during the school day. Parents of Primary 1/Pre-School pupils are asked to ensure that their child keeps a 'change of clothing: pants, socks/tights' in their school bag. If a child's underwear is changed due to a soiling incident the child will be asked to change their underwear in private and carry out the act themselves. A record of the incident will be kept in school and the parent will be informed.

If a child has a medical condition which is likely to lead to soiling and subsequent staff intervention, 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 is able to come within a few minutes, the child is comforted and kept away from the other children to preserve dignity until the parent arrives.

Children are not left on their own whilst waiting for a parent to arrive, an adult will stay with them, giving comfort and reassurance. The child will be dressed at all times and never left partially clothed. If a parent or emergency contact cannot attend, the school seeks to gain verbal consent from parents for staff to clean and change the child. This permission will be sought on each occasion that the child soils him or herself. If the parents and emergency contacts cannot be contacted the Principal will be consulted. If put in an impossible situation where the child is at risk, staff will act appropriately and may need to come into some level of physical contact in order to aid the child. When touching a child, staff should always be aware of the possibility of invading a child's privacy and will respect the child's wishes and feelings.

If a child needs to be cleaned, staff will make sure that:

- protective gloves are worn;
- the procedure is discussed in a friendly and reassuring way with the child
- the child is encouraged to be as independent as possible when changing/cleaning
- physical contact between the adult and child is kept to a minimum
- privacy is given appropriate to the child's age and the situation;
- any soiling that can be, is flushed down the toilet
- soiled clothing is put in a plastic bag, unwashed, and sent home with the child.

### **Hygiene: -**

All staff should be familiar with normal precautions for avoiding infection, follow basic hygiene procedures and have access to protective, disposable gloves. These are stored in the medical bag in the school office.

### **Protection for staff: -**

The school is committed to ensuring that all staff undertake their responsibilities in such a way that the rights dignity and welfare of the children is protected.

The school is committed to ensuring that staff undertaking these responsibilities are supported by policy, training and monitoring.

All school staff receive child protection training, undertake to help children do as much as possible for themselves and develop each child's ability to achieve independence. Staff receive appropriate specialised training and are provided with facilities and equipment to ensure safety, privacy and dignity.

As staff are in the role of 'loco parentis' it is accepted that they will carry out the necessary changing routine as a parent would, provided that the parent has completed the "Parental Consent Form."

In situations where the consent form has not been completed the school will contact the parent to explain the circumstances of the situation. A record of intimate care will be kept in classroom file.

Continual accidents should be discussed with SENCO and Principal and school nurse may be contacted.

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

These should include: -

- gaining a verbal agreement from another member of staff that the action being taken is necessary
- allow the child, wherever possible, to express a preference to choose his/her carer and encourage them to say if they find a carer to be unacceptable
- allow the child a choice in the sequence of care
- be aware of and responsive to the child's reactions.

### **Safeguards for children: -**

All staff and volunteers in St Mac Nissi's Primary School must gain Access NI clearance before working in the school. Children's rights to privacy will always be respected when dealing with intimate care issues.

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

If staff observe any unusual markings, discolorations or swelling, they must report immediately to the Designated Teacher (Mr McAuley-Principal).

If during the intimate care of a child the staff member accidentally hurts them or the child misunderstands or misinterprets something, the child will be reassured and this incident will be reported immediately to the Designated Teacher (Mr McAuley-Principal).

We will report and record any unusual emotional or behavioural response by the child.

A written record of concerns must be made and kept in the child's personal file

Parents/carers must be informed about concerns.

Provision is monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure that policy and procedure is adhered to, and that children and staff remain comfortable with the school's arrangements.