



**Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Fheargus,
An Gleann,
Co. Luimnigh.**

**St.Fergus' National School,
Glin,
Co. Limerick.
Tel:(068) 34344
E-Mail : office@stfergusns.ie
www.stfergusns.ie**

St. Fergus NS Intimate Care Policy **Intimate Care Policy And Guidelines**

Introduction

Intimate care, for the purpose of this policy, encompasses any activity required to address the personal care needs of an individual child, whether on a regular basis or as a one-off requirement. It may involve tasks such as feeding, oral care, washing (including intimate body parts), dressing/undressing, toileting (including help to use the toilet and nappy changing), attending to a sick pupil, menstrual care, or supervising a child involved in intimate self-care. This Intimate Care Policy has been drawn up to safeguard both children and staff in this regard.

Some pupils may require assistance due to young age, physical difficulties, or special needs. Children may be vulnerable when intimate care is necessary, and it is essential for staff involved in any aspect of intimate care to be sensitive to each child's individual needs.

Parents are responsible for informing staff of any intimate care needs their child may have.

Rationale

It is the intention of the Board of Management and staff of St. Fergus' National School to foster independence in each child, while acknowledging that assistance may be required from an adult on certain occasions. This Intimate Care Policy has been developed to ensure the safety and well-being of both children and staff members in such instances. We are reviewing this policy in 2024, following the increase in Staff and Pupil numbers and in response to the growing need for intimate care in our School following the opening of our two ASD Classes.

The aim of this policy is to increase knowledge, enhance skills and promote good practise in this sensitive area of the work of an SNA. All staff will be made aware of the standards expected of them. Intimate care will be carried out only by permanent school staff.

Relationship to the School Ethos

All pupils and staff members have the right to feel safe and to be treated with dignity and respect. Our policy guidelines are grounded in the following fundamental principles of intimate care:

- Every child has the right to safety.
- 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 regarding their own intimate care to the best of their abilities.
- All children have the right to express their views on their own intimate care, which should be considered.
- Every child has the right to receive intimate care that is appropriate and consistent.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of this policy are:

- To ensure that the dignity and privacy of the pupil involved is paramount
- To develop a framework of procedures whereby intimate care requirements are dealt with in an appropriate manner.

Toileting “Accidents”

Teachers act “in loco parentis” and may have to deal with a toileting accident in their mainstream classroom without assistance. These types of accidents can often occur in the first few years of school or if a child is unwell. It is good practice to only provide help that is required by the pupil. The teacher should encourage the pupil to do as much for themselves as possible. A teacher must always be cognizant of his/her duty of care regarding effective supervision of all the pupils in the class when assisting a pupil with toileting.

The teacher or Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) will provide the pupil with a change of underwear, which the pupil uses to change his/herself. If necessary, the school will provide a complete change of external clothes. The teacher or SNA will assist the pupil with dressing only if absolutely necessary. If the pupil has soiled him/herself, the parents will be contacted in order to take the pupil home to change. In the event that a parent cannot be contacted, the teacher/SNA will do all that is necessary to make the pupil comfortable. Wet/soiled clothes will be put in a plastic bag and parents will be informed of what has happened when they collect their child. Parents are asked to return the clothes given to their child, washed and folded.

A record of such incidents will be kept in the teacher’s/SNA’s own notes. Parents are informed of this procedure in the Junior Infants Induction meeting prior to their pupil starting school. Changes of clothes and underwear are kept in “Lost and Found”. Infant teachers also have a change of underwear in their classrooms. Staff are required to wear protective gloves while changing a pupil.

Sanitary Towels

There is an adequate supply of sanitary bins in appropriate classroom toilets. This will be kept under review and updated by school management as necessary. Spare towels will be kept in classrooms and the School Office as necessary.

Mainstream classes:

Senior classes will be taught about menstrual periods as part of the RSE programme (with parental consent). They will also be informed about where they can get a sanitary towel if they need it.

ASD Classes:

Measures will be taken on a case by case basis, according to the level of support needed by individual pupils and with parental input.

Strategies may include:

- RSE lessons (with parental consent).
- Social stories (See book *Taking Care of Myself* Mary Wrobel)
- Visual step by step charts for removal, application and disposal of sanitary towel (e.g. twinkl.co.uk)
- A private and discreet space for training will be provided. Teachers will liaise with home re. progress and practice and support at home.

-With parental consent, pupils will be supported if necessary in the following ways:

- Reminders to change sanitary towel.
- Discreet verbal support/prompting from outside toilet door.
- If pupil is unable to change sanitary towel, staff member/s may need to go into the toilet with the pupil to assist. The pupil's dignity and privacy will be paramount at all times. The visual charts listed above may be employed to promote independence.

Responsibility of Board of Management Regarding Intimate Care:

It is the responsibility of the Board of Management of St. Fergus' NS to ensure that:

- all staff working with children have undergone appropriate vetting
- only designated staff should undertake intimate care tasks for children
- all staff undertaking intimate care are familiar with and understand this Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines, along with associated Policies and Procedures.
- Staff receive training in specific types of intimate care (e.g. catheterising) and fully comprehend the policy and guidelines within the context of their work.

Responsibilities of Staff involved in intimate care:

- Intimate care arrangements must be agreed upon by the school (in the form of the child's class teacher), parents/guardians, and child (if appropriate).
- Intimate care arrangements must be documented in the child's personal file, with consent forms signed by parents/guardians and the child (if appropriate).
- Staff should not perform any aspect of intimate care that has not been agreed upon by all relevant parties.
- All SNAs must be made available to undertake specific intimate care tasks in the event of a staff member being on sick leave.
- Intimate care arrangements should be regularly reviewed, considering the views of all relevant parties, including the child (if appropriate), to inform future arrangements.
- If a staff member has concerns about a colleague's intimate care practice, they must report this to the Designated Liaison Person.

Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians of children requiring intimate care:

- Parents/Guardians must identify any intimate care needs in their application form and make themselves available for discussion around these needs in order to inform a School Plan for their child.
- Parents/Guardians are responsible for supplying the school with resources to carry out toileting or intimate care needs. This may include, but is not limited to
 - Nappies
 - Wipes
 - Creams
 - Nappy sacks
 - Spare underwear
 - Spare clothes
 - Sanitary pads

Intimate Care/Toileting Plan

In the event that a specific intimate care/toileting plan has been identified for a child, an Intimate Care/Toileting Plan will be developed in partnership with the pupil's class teacher, SNAs assigned to the child's class and the pupil's parents/guardians.

This Care Plan will include;

- Specific care need
- Number of Staff required to meet this need for the child
- Identification of the Staff involved
- Additional resources needed
- Pupil's preferred means of communication to include agreed terminology for body parts and bodily functions
- Pupils level of ability and tasks that he/she can do themselves
- Cultural and/or religious sensitivities
- Signatures of class teacher, parents, SNAs and principal
- Date of care plan.

Toileting of pupils with Intimate Care/Toileting Plans in Mainstream/ASD Classes

It is school policy that:

- The personnel involved in intimate care needs of pupils are SNAs
- SNAs assigned to ASD Classes may act alone to meet the Intimate Care/Toileting needs of a child in their care.

Support for children in the Mainstream Classes will be provided by mainstream SNAs if needed.

- Substitute SNAs are not generally involved in intimate care but if unavoidable the change in personnel will be discussed with class teacher and the pupil if possible.

Guidelines for Good Practice:

While it is impossible to prescribe guidelines that will apply in all situations, it is important that the following elements of good practice be followed in all activities involving intimate care:

- In the case that a pupil has an Intimate Care Plan, relevant staff must be completely familiar with the plan.
- Involve the child in intimate care whenever possible, encouraging their independence. When a child is fully dependent, communicate about the care process and offer choices where feasible. Consult with parents/guardians and children about preferences during intimate care.
- Treat every child with dignity and respect, ensuring appropriate privacy according to the child's age and circumstances and allows the pupil the maximum level of privacy.
- Maintain consistent practices in intimate care, as children may have multiple caregivers. Effective communication among all parties ensures best practices.
- Ensure the child is happy with who is changing him/ her and be responsive to any distress shown.
- Staff will address the pupil by name and ensure he/she is aware of the focus of the activity.
- For pupils with limited communication, staff will use visual supports e.g. pointing at a wipe or picture board.
- Appropriate and professional language will be used. Specific language may be detailed in a care plan. Staff will *verbalize their actions* to the pupil in a reassuring way to prepare them for each procedure.
- In intimate care, the touch should be affirmative and supportive, not rough or insensitive.
- Dignity and privacy of the pupil will be respected at all times.
- Staff will have all equipment and materials to hand before commencing.
- Staff will use discreet observation to check if a nappy/pad needs changing.
- Staff will use protective gloves provided.
- All precautions will be taken when disposing of soiled material in the bin provided.
- Intimate care procedures will be carried out in a manner which treats the pupils in a dignified and respectful way.
- Report any concerns immediately, including unusual marks or emotional/behavioural responses from the child. Record concerns and make them available to parents/carers, keeping them in the child's personal file.

Providing Comfort or Support to a Child

There are situations and circumstances where children seek physical comfort from staff (particularly in early years). Where this happens, staff need to be aware that any physical contact must be kept to a minimum. When comforting a child or giving reassurance, 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 professionally appropriate to the age and context.

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 touches a member of staff, as noted above, this should be discussed, in confidence, with the DLP (Deirdre Kennelly) or DDLP (Deirdre Dillane).

Assisting a child who requires a specific medical procedure and who is not able to carry this out unaided

Policy on Administration of Medication outlines arrangements for the management of the majority of medications in school.

Swimming/Sports events Dressing Rooms e.g. GAA/Soccer etc.

Sometimes the classes of St. Fergus' National School participate in swimming lessons in public swimming pools or go on tours which involve a visit to a pool.

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 bullying, teasing or other unacceptable behaviour does not occur.

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

Showering

Children are entitled to respect and privacy when changing their clothes or taking a shower.

However, there must be the required level of supervision to safeguard young people with regard to health and safety considerations and to ensure that bullying, teasing or other 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.

It is best practice in our school that when an incident has taken place that has necessitated a member of staff to be present when young children are changing that an incident report is made.

Reporting

All toileting "accidents" involving pupils with no Care Plan must be reported to the pupils' parents. If during the intimate care of a pupil;

- a staff member accidentally hurts/injures the pupil
- observes something which raises pupil protection concerns
- the pupil seems to misinterpret what is said or done
- the pupil has an emotional reaction without apparent cause

The incident must be reported to the Mainstream/Special Class Teacher/Principal or the DLP or DDLP. DLP as appropriate.

Working with Children of the Opposite Sex:

Involvement of both male and female staff in intimate care may happen.

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, 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 DLP (Deirdre Kennelly) or DDLP (Deirdre Dillane) and make a written record.
- Parents must be informed about any concerns.

Communication with Children:

All staff caring for a child should ensure effective communication, considering the child’s method and level of communication. Utilize appropriate methods such as signs, words, symbols, or body movements, and:

- Maintain eye contact at the child’s level.
- Use simple language and repeat explanations as necessary.
- Wait for responses.
- Continue to explain events even in the absence of a response.
- Treat each child with dignity and respect.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Teachers and school management assume shared responsibility, participate in and contribute to the implementation of an effective and equitable Intimate Care and Toileting Policy.

All members of staff working with children must undertake the full Garda Vetting Procedure. This includes students on work placement and volunteers who may be left alone with children. Vetting includes criminal record checks and two references.

Only those members of staff who are familiar with the Intimate Care and Toileting Policy are involved with the intimate care of children.

Where anticipated, intimate care arrangements are agreed between the school and parents and, when appropriate and possible, by the child. Consent forms are signed by the parent and stored in the child’s file.

Only in emergency situations would staff undertake any aspect of intimate care that has not been agreed by parents and the school. Parents would then be contacted immediately. 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 s/he must report this to the DLP (Deirdre Kennelly) or DDLP (Deirdre Dillane).

Success Criteria

The school evaluates the success of the policy through:

1. Participation of all staff in the policy
2. Safe and effective care of all pupils in our school
3. Feedback from all staff
4. Feedback from relevant parents/guardians

Ratification and Review:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Fergus’ National School at their meeting on 23rd May 2024. It will be reviewed every two years or sooner if deemed necessary.

Signed:

[Fr. Tim Curtin, Chairperson]

[Deirdre Kennelly, Principal]

30th May 2024
Date