

Stewartstown Primary School



Intimate Care Policy

May 2022

RATIONALE

It is our intention to develop independence in each child, however there will be occasions when help is required.

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.

Disabled children can be especially vulnerable. Staff involved with their intimate care need to be sensitive to their individual needs.

The Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Area Child Protection Committee's Regional Policy and Procedures April 2005.

DEFINITION

Intimate care may be defined as any activity required to meet the personal care needs of each individual child. Parents have a responsibility to advise staff of the intimate care needs of their child, and staff have a responsibility to work in partnership with children and parents.

Intimate care can include:

- Feeding
- Oral care
- Washing
- Dressing/undressing
- Toileting
- Menstrual Care
- Photographs
- Treatments such as enemas, suppositories, enteral feeds
- Catheter and stoma care
- Supervision of a child involved in intimate self-care

PRINCIPLES OF INTIMATE CARE

The principles and philosophy that underpin our work with children are those set out in the 'U.N. Convention on the rights of the child' (UK Agreement, 1991) and enshrined in the Children (NI) Order, 1995 (effective from November 1996). In particular, the principle we support is that every child has the fundamental right to be safe from harm and with proper care by those looking after them given to their physical, emotional spiritual well-being.

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Article 3

“Children have the right to have their welfare considered paramount in all decisions taken about them.”

Article 12

“Children have the right to be heard”

Article 19

“Children have the right to be protected from abuse and neglect.”

Article 29

The following are the fundamental principles upon which the Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines are based:

- Every child has the right to be involved and consulted in their own intimate care to the best of their abilities
- Every child has the right to express their views on their own intimate care and to have such views taken into account.
- Every child has the right to have levels of intimate care that are as consistent as possible.

SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff working with children must be vetted by the Education Authority. This includes students on work placement and volunteers. Vetting includes:

Access NI checks

Pre-employment checks

Two independent references

Only those members of staff who are familiar with the intimate care policy and other pastoral care policies of the school should undertake the intimate care of children.

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

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

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 care tasks / treatments can be open to misinterpretation. Adhering to these guidelines of good practice should safeguard children and staff.

Involve the child in their intimate care

Try to encourage a child's independence as far as possible in his / her intimate care. Where the child is fully dependent talk with them about what is going to be done and give them choice where possible.

Check your practice by asking the child / parent any likes / dislikes while carrying out intimate care and obtain consent.

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

The practice of providing one-one intimate care of a child alone is supported by all authorities, in Stewartstown Primary our aim will be to have two adults present when intimate care is needed or required, on occasions this may not be possible and the assigned member of staff will carry out intimate care as agreed with the parent in relation to medical needs.

Any child who requires a change of clothes, will be given the choice to change themselves, or if they ask for assistance by a member of staff, there will always be two adults present or an adult and another child when appropriate. This helps protect both the child and the adult.

Make sure practice in intimate care is consistent

As a child can have multiple carers a consistent approach to care is essential. Effective communication between parents / carers / agencies ensures practice is consistent.

Be aware of own limitations

Only carry out care activities you understand and feel competent and confident to carry out. If in doubt, ASK. Some procedures must only be carried out by 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 relaxed, enjoyable and fun.

If you have any concerns you must report them.

If you observe any unusual markings, discolourations or swelling including the genital area, report immediately to your designated teacher (Ms Bolton)

If during the intimate care of a child you accidentally hurt them, or the child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, or misunderstands or misinterprets something, reassure the child, ensure their safety and report the incident immediately to your designated teacher.

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 nursing / medical notes / personal file.

Parents / carers must be informed about concerns.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN OF THE OPPOSITE SEX

Principles:

There is a 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 to male staff means that assistance will 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, ie 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 (Ms Bolton) and make a written record; and
- Parents 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.

Children communicate using different methods depending on their maturity and levels of stress e.g. words, signs, symbols, body movements, eye pointing.

To ensure effective communication:

- o Make eye contact at the child's level.
- o Use simple language and repeat if necessary
- o Wait for response
- o Continue to explain to the child what is happening even if there is no response.
- o Treat the child as an individual with dignity and respect.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every two years

Date: _____

Signed (Principal) _____

Signed (Chair of Governors) _____

Dear Parent,

In order to safeguard your child and the staff in school, we need your permission if we are to help change your child. Your child may need his/her clothing changed for a number of reasons, for example, through toileting accidents, through play or through illness.

Alternatively we can contact you, the parent/guardian, to come to school to change your child.

All contact with children follows the school Intimate Care Policy.

Yours sincerely

K Bolton

Principal

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Please circle and sign your preferred option.

(a) I give permission for teachers, or classroom assistants to help change my child in school, if necessary.

.....Signed parent/Guardian Date.....

(b) I wish to be contacted if my child needs changing in school.

.....Signed parent/Guardian Date.....