

St. Oliver's Special School



Intimate Care Policy

Introduction

The Intimate Care Policy is designed to ensure that all children attending St. Oliver's Special School, their families and school staff feel that pupils are treated with respect and that their right to privacy and dignity is upheld and actively promoted, while also ensuring that staff feel supported and safe while working with pupils. This is particularly important when dealing with the issue of intimate care needs.

Each pupil has the right to physical care assistance in order for him/her to participate fully in school life. The level of assistance required will reflect the needs of each individual pupil at any given time.

This policy should be read in conjunction with policies on:

- Code of Behaviour
- Physical Interventions and Restrictive Practice
- Anti-bullying
- Enrolment Policy
- Communication Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Relationship and Sexual Health Policy
- Substance Misuse Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement

Aims

The aim of this policy is to ensure that:

- the dignity and welfare of pupils and staff is respected and maintained
- the rights of pupils and staff are protected
- best practice is promoted throughout the school within the framework of the current policy.

Definition of Intimate Care

Intimate care is the support provided by staff to pupils while involved in personal care routines such as dressing and undressing, toileting, showering/bathing and attending to menstrual needs. Where necessary such support will involve varying levels of supervision and assistance and may involve physical contact with a pupil when they are partially or fully undressed. In addition to this, intimate care may also include tasks such as: help with feeding, oral motor programmes and hair care.

In St. Oliver's Special School the following Principles guide all Intimate Care

Procedures:

- ✓ It is essential that every pupil with a disability is treated as an individual when intimate care is being provided and that appropriate time is taken for intimate care.
- ✓ It should enhance the quality of life of the individual receiving the care and should be provided as gently and sensitively as possible, while respecting their privacy and dignity at all times.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Parents are consulted at enrolment and on an ongoing basis about the intimate care needs of their children. The SNAs are involved in the provision of intimate care but in some situation the teachers may provide this care. Where possible a familiar member of staff will provide intimate care for a child instead of a new substitute special needs assistant, to ensure all children feels comfortable.
- Levels of staffing for the provision of intimate care assistance is based on the individual needs of the pupils in each classroom. Staffing levels are reviewed should the need arise.
- St. Oliver's Special School accepts that in general intimate care support is provided by one staff member on their own with the individual pupil for ambulant pupils and intimate care support is provided by two members of staff if the pupil has a physical disability.
- While working on a one to one basis with ambulant children can place staff in a vulnerable position, the need for privacy for the pupils must also be acknowledged. As a reasonable precaution and in keeping with best practice, a staff member will, where possible, make their intention and purpose known to another staff, before commencing a procedure involving intimate care and will also leave the bathroom door slightly ajar for the child's safety and to protect staff, except in exceptional cases bases on an individual child's needs.
- Pupils are treated with dignity and have their privacy respected at all times. To achieve this, staff adopt the least invasive approach to the provision of intimate care using, where possible verbal/visual prompts in preference to physical contact. Staff should remain at a discreet distance from the pupil if this is appropriate.

Practice in intimate care

- Before commencing to assist the person, explain what is happening in a straightforward and reassuring way. In this way the person is prepared for and can anticipate your assistance. Initially approach the person from the front, make eye-contact, use their name, speak in a low discrete tone and maintain privacy.
- Address the person by name so that she/he is aware of being the focus of the activity.
- Use actions, comments and remarks that are normal in the circumstances.
- Intimate care must not be undertaken if a student is presenting with behaviours that challenge. Staff should follow individual behaviour management strategies/programmes in this instance.
- As a general guideline physical contact will not be undertaken while a pupil is sexually aroused.
- In intimate care, the touch will be affirmative and supportive, not rough or insensitive.
- Where the person has very limited communication, give a visual clue such as a schedule picture or object of reference to signal intention to wash, change or use the toilet.
- Provide facilities which afford privacy and modesty, e.g., adequate screening. Have towels, clothing and toiletries to hand before commencing.
- Have a knowledge and understanding of any religious or cultural sensitivity related to aspects of intimate care for this individual.
- Use discrete observation to see if a pad needs changing.
- Change, or toilet pupils, one at a time. Ensure supplies of fresh clothes are to hand so that the person is not left unattended while items are found.
- Provide sufficient space, resources, heating and ventilation to ensure the person's safety and comfort.
- Have access protective clothing, such as gloves and disposable aprons, and ensure they are used where necessary.
- Take special precautions when disposing of soiled material.
- Check in advance where possible, that suitable facilities exist for intimate care procedures when on outings, school tours, etc.
- Do not allow a pupil assist another pupil with his or her intimate care needs.
- Internal sanitary protection must not be used except in situations where the pupil can independently attend to their own menstrual needs.
- Pupils are assisted where necessary to dress and undress for swimming. In Coral Leisure pupils are assisted to undress and dress in communal changing rooms. As pupils grow and become more independent private cubicles are used. In keeping with the least invasive approach verbal direction is given, if required, to these pupils. Many pupils may also need physical assistance. In this instance staff may step inside the cubicle to assist the pupil while keeping the door slightly ajar.

- Volunteers and persons on placement are never asked to provide intimate care to pupils.
- The pupil's dignity will be respected when wetting/soiling incidents take place in the school or on outings. When dealing with such incidents the pupil's stage of development is taken into consideration, a toilet training programme is in place, nappies are changed if and when needed, times are allocated daily for toileting but pupils are changed immediately if an accident occurs.

Reporting

If during the provision of intimate care assistance a pupil:

- is accidentally hurt (incident report form)
- seems unusually sore, tender or bruised (a body chart is used to pinpoint location of injuries)
- appears to misunderstand or misinterpret what is said or done
- has a very emotional reaction without apparent cause

the staff member should furnish a report as soon as possible to the class teacher or school principal who can indicate an appropriate response.

Parental Consent

Parents are given a copy of the intimate care policy on enrolment. Parental concerns and suggestions regarding the intimate care needs of their child are addressed at parent/teacher meeting and case reviews.

Review:

The Board of Management will review its Intimate Care Policy on a bi-annual basis.

Ratification and Communication:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 6th June 2018. The policy will be made available to all school staff and to parents/guardians of children in the school on request. Arrangements are made to communicate the policy to all parents/guardians on successful enrolment in St. Oliver's Special School.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Principal

Date of next review: _____