

Intimate Care Policy

November 2023

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. The Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines should be read in conjunction with Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. In Naíscoil & Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir Alicia O’Kane, Deirdre Crabtree-Bailie, Mary Nic Ailín and Nicole Rabbett are responsible for the co-ordination of the provision of Intimate Care which is viewed as an integral part of Pastoral Care.

CONTEXT

The UN convention of the Rights of the Child (1991) states:

“Children have the right to be as healthy as possible, live and play in a safe, healthy, unpolluted environment and benefit from preventative health care and education”.

AIMS

The aim of this policy is to work in partnership with parents to help children to develop a healthy interest in; and understanding of; how to look after their own personal needs. We also wish also to discuss and agree the health and safety and child protection issues between the staff of the school and you, the parent, in the case of the need arising for a member of staff to undertake duties of an intimate care nature with your child during the school day.

Incidents covered by this policy

Incidents when a child needs to be changed or cleaned as a result of sickness, toileting or wetness during water play or outdoor play.

BACKGROUND

Here in Naíscoil & Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir, we aim to foster a good level of understanding and independence in our pupils with regards to personal hygiene practice; such as hand-washing before eating and after using the toilet. In the same context, we encourage children to recognise and to indicate if they wish to use the toilet and to be able to carry out toileting and cleaning tasks independently.

On entry to Naíscoil it is a reasonable assumption that most children are toilet trained and are beginning to become more independent in relation to personal care.

On entry Rang a 1, it is a reasonable assumption that most children are toilet trained and can carry out tasks relating to personal care without assistance, even in the case of toiletry accidents or wetness due to water play or sickness.

However, we recognise that there may be exceptions to this, where specific medical, developmental or educational needs are identified.

In the case of specific medical or educational needs, we ask that parents ensure that they provide us with the relevant information, prior to the child’s commencement or at the relevant time during the school year. The case of each individual child will be discussed by parent and teacher and any specific intimate care procedures agreed, in the form of an Individual Care Plan (Appendix 1). It will be our utmost priority to maintain the privacy, comfort and dignity of your child at all time

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

- Every child has the right to be safe.
- 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.
- 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.

SCHOOLS RESPONSIBILITIES

- All staff working with children must be vetted by the School. This includes students on work placement and volunteers.
- Vetting includes:
 - Access NI Checks
 - Pre Employment Checks
 - Two independent references

- **Only** named staff identified by our School should undertake the intimate care of children
- Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers must ensure that all staff undertaking the intimate care of children are familiar with, and understand the Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines together with associated Policy and Procedures e.g. Child Protection Policy.
- All staff must be trained in the specific types of intimate care that carry out and fully understand the Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines within the context of their work.
- Intimate care arrangements must be agreed by the parents/carers and child (if appropriate).
- Intimate care arrangements must be recorded in the child's personal file and consent forms signed by the parents / carers and child (if appropriate).
- Staff should not undertake any aspect of intimate care that has not been agreed between the parents / carers and child (if appropriate).
- The school needs to make provisions for emergencies i.e. a staff member on sick leave. Additional trained staff should be available to undertake specific intimate care tasks. Do not assume someone else can do the task.
- Intimate care arrangements should be reviewed at least six monthly. The views of all relevant parties, including the child (if appropriate), should be sought and considered to inform future arrangements.
- If a staff member has concerns about a colleague's intimate care practice they must report this to their designated teacher.

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.

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

PROCEDURES

During the school day, children have independent use of toilet facilities and will be encouraged to carry out all tasks of a personal and intimate nature independently.

The Naiscoil toilets are located in the main classroom. The children can access the toilets at all times and are visible to staff. The Foundation Stage toilets are directly beside the Rang 1 and Rang 2 classrooms and the children can self-register their names on the chart at the class-room door, to indicate that they are at the toilet. The Rang 3 – 7 toilets are located beside their classroom. Rang 4 pupils can access toilet in school hall.

In the case of toiletry accidents / sickness / wetness through water play where a child needs to be cleaned / clothes need to be changed, the following procedures will be put into place, so long as the staff have received a signed parental permission slip permitting them to do so (Naíscoil – Rang 2)

Supervisory Arrangements

It is our policy that two members of staff to be present when possible if a child requires assistance of an intimate care nature. If not possible one member of staff always ensures that another member of staff is aware what is happening. The following supervisory arrangements will be in place for all incidents of a personal care basis:

In the case of a child who can carry out their personal care independently:

- In our school the teacher / assistant will undertake all duties of an intimate care nature.
- For children with educational statement the allocated assistant will undertake duties of an intimate care.
- The class teacher will inform the class-room assistant that an ‘intimate care’ incident has arisen and ask her to supervise the remainder of the children whilst the teacher attends to the child in question.
- If a child is fairly independent, the teacher will simply provide the child with the necessary equipment e.g. wipes, change of underwear / change of clothes. The child will be encouraged to carry out the cleaning and/or changing process independently, according to their ability to do so.
- The child will carry out these cleaning and changing tasks in the toilet with the door closed. The teacher or assistant will wait outside and periodically re-assure the child verbally from the hallway.
- Soiled clothing will be put in a plastic bag, sealed and discreetly given to parent at end of that day.
- The parent will be discreetly informed of any such incident.

In the case of a child who is unable to carry out their personal care independently:

We recognise that circumstances may arise when a child who is usually independent is unable to clean / change himself / herself or when a child has identified medical/educational needs and is unable to cater for their personal care independently. In these circumstances, so long as we have received written permission from the parent and in order to preserve the comfort and dignity of the child, an adult will intervene and assist the child. If an incident arises where a child needs direct assistance with cleaning / changing, the following procedures will be followed:

- The class-teacher will ask for the class-room assistant to supervise the rest of the class.
- The class-teacher / assistant will accompany the child to the toilet.
- The class-teacher / assistant will encourage the child to remain in the toilet with the door closed over, to preserve the dignity of the child from the open doorway,

but not locked. The teacher will wait outside the toilet door on the child and will provide the child with wipes/alternative clothing and will only offer direct assistance where the child is unable to manage independently.

- The class-teacher / assistant will re-assure and instruct the child on what they need to do to ensure their personal hygiene and comfort, however the **teacher will not usually directly or physically clean the child** on a skin to skin basis, unless this is unavoidable and to prevent the child being in further distress.
- When the child is settled, all soiled clothing will be put in a plastic bag, sealed and discreetly given to parent at the end of the day.

Where a child has had to be physically cleaned by a member of staff, the parent will always be phoned, as soon as possible and given the option to come and collect the child. The parent will be asked to sign incident form.

If the class teacher deems that the above procedures are not sufficient to enable the child to spend the rest of the school day at school in a clean, comfortable and non-distressed state, the parent will be phoned and asked to come into the school as soon as possible and to cater for their child / take them home. If the child is experiencing discomfort and the parent is unable to come to the school within a 10/15 min period, we will ask for the parent to nominate another responsible adult, to collect the child and to attend to them.

Health and Safety Precautions

- Baby wipes will be used to clean children unless they have a known allergy. Please inform us of any such case.
- Any staff member involved in intimate care procedures or in handling soiled clothing, will wear disposable gloves to ensure the health and safety of the children and themselves.
- All used wipes and gloves will be disposed of in a sealed plastic bag.
- After these procedures staff and child should use a recommended hand wash for health and safety reasons.

Parents are reminded that the out-workings of this policy are discretionary and tasks of an Intimate Care nature will only be carried out by staff who are willing to do so. If a member of staff feels that they would prefer not to do so, the parents will be contacted immediately to come into the school and to attend to the needs of their child. If you prefer to be contacted immediately in the case of such incidents and prefer that staff do not directly assist your child, please indicate this on the Permission Slip attached. Please ensure that the school staff hold the correct contact details for you, so that you can be contacted as soon as possible, so as to lessen your child's discomfort when wet or soiled.

NB: Please send a few extra pairs of pants, socks and a spare pair of trousers in a plastic bag to your child's class teacher at the beginning of the school year.

Please refer to:

- *DENI Child Protection and Pastoral Care Guidance 1999*
- Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005)

WORKING WITH CHILDREN OF THE OPPOSITE SEX

a. Principles:

- There is a positive value in both male and female staff being involved with children.
- Ideally, every child should have the choice of carer for all their intimate care.
- The individual child's safety, dignity and privacy are of paramount importance.

The practical guidelines set out below, are written in the knowledge that the current ratio of female to male staff means we are far less likely to be able to offer the choice of same sex carer to male children.

b. General Care

Male and female staff can be involved with children of either sex in:

1. Working with the children in class/group setting.
2. Co-ordinating of and contribution to a child's review.
3. Meeting the development, emotional and recreational needs of the children.
4. Escorting the children between sites, on outings.
5. Intimate Care
6. Wherever possible, boys and girls should be offered the choice of carer and second carer. Where there is any doubt that a child is able to make an informed choice on these issues, the child's parents are usually in the best position to act as advocates.
7. It may be possible to determine a child's wishes by observation of their reactions to the intimate care they receive. Do not assume that a child cannot make a choice.
8. The intimate care of boys/girls can be carried out by a member of staff of the opposite sex with the following provisions:

The delivery of intimate care by professionally qualified staff will be governed by their professional code of conduct in conjunction with school policy and procedures.

Staff who are not governed by a professional code of conduct must follow policy and procedures in operation within our school and direction and agreement must be provided by the Designated Teacher/Principal.

9. When intimate care is being carried out, **all** children have the right to dignity and privacy i.e. they should be appropriately covered, the door closed or screens/curtains put in place.
10. If the child appears distressed or uncomfortable when personal care tasks are being carried out the care should stop immediately. Try to ascertain why the child is distressed and provide reassurance.
11. Report concerns to your Designated Teacher and make a written record.
12. Parents/carers must be informed about 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 e.g. words, signs, symbols, body movements, eye pointing.

To ensure effective communication:

- Ascertain how the child communicates e.g. consult with child, parent/carer and if appropriate, communication needs must be recorded (please refer to Appendix 1, Communication Proforma for Intimate Care: How I communicate). If further information is required, please consult with the child's Speech and Language Therapist.
- Make eye contact at the child's level.
- Use simple language and repeat if necessary.
- Wait for response.
- Continue to explain to the child what is happening even if there is no response.
- Treat the child as an individual with dignity and respect.

5. PUBERTY.

School staff, in collaboration with health professionals, will complete this unit of work with pupils in Rang 6/7, as part of PDMU and parental consent will be sought. This will be done in a caring sensitive manner. This short programme allows them to discuss the changes that occur during puberty. Children leave these sessions much better informed and better prepared for changes in their bodies, which will have an effect on their own lives. Parents are given the opportunity to choose whether their child attends these talks. However, we do strongly recommend these sessions to all our Primary 6 & 7 children.

Sanitary towels are not actually available in any of the children's toilets.

However, the following procedures have been put in place regarding this issue.

- a. Children will in many instances bring in their own.
- b. Our "Bosca na gcailíní" is kept in Rang 5 – 7 classrooms where there are sanitary towels, wipes and fresh pants available for each girl.

- c. Any girl who is experiencing their period will be advised to use the toilet where the sanitary bin is placed.
- d. Primary 6/7 girls and their parents will be made aware that the person who deals with periods (Class teacher, Moira Armstrong & Alicia O'Kane) can be approached and they will sensitively advise and help out where there is a need.
- e. Children may also approach the Child Protection designated teacher (Alicia O'Kane / Nicole Ní Chléirigh (NÉM)).
- f. On all occasions a record will be kept and the children's parents will be informed.

Appendix 1

Communication Performa for Intimate Care How I Communicate

Name: _____

Date: _____

I communicate using words / signs/ communication book / communication aid / body movements.

I indicate my likes / preferences by

I indicate my dislikes by

I show I am happy by

unhappy by _____

If appropriate please complete the following

When I need to go the toilet I

When I get changed I

Additional Information

Speech and Language Therapist:

Occupational Therapist:

Key worker/s:

Contact Number/s:

Parent / Carer signature_____

Catering for Toileting Needs and following Intimate Care

Name: _____

Date: _____

I, _____ parent of _____ in Naíscoil / Gaelscoil
Éadain Mhóir give the following staff

_____ permission to
help my child _____ with his/her toileting needs due to
_____.

My child _____ will try and assist him/her self while at the toilet and
in the case of any toileting accidents (both wet and soiled), I give my
permission for the above named staff to assist in changing and if needed
cleaning my child.

Any other comments:

Signed by Parent: _____

Signed by Staff:

Signed by Principal: _____

Dated: _____

Toileting Record

Name of child	
Date	
W V S	
Staff present	
Assistance given	
Persons informed	
Signatures	

PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM

**Please read policy carefully before signing or ticking yes/no.
If you have any questions about any points please ask staff.**

I have read, understand and agree with the Intimate Care Policy of Naíscoil & Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir.

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I would prefer to be contacted immediately, instead of staff carrying out any of the above mentioned personal and intimate care tasks.

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I am in agreement that a member of the teaching staff will provide my child with wipes and alternative clothing and if necessary directly assist them in the changing / cleaning process.

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I am aware that I will be contacted and asked to come into the school, on occasions where my child remains in discomfort and would not be able, in the opinion of the class teacher, to remain at school as a result.

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I am aware and in agreement that if my child requires frequent assistance of an intimate care nature, that I will be asked to come into school and to agree an Individual Care Plan for my child, with the class teacher. This plan will also be agreed with the Designated Governor for Child Protection and Safeguarding.

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature of parent/carer..... 2023