



Intimate Care Policy

Review of Policy	March 2025
Ratification of Policy by the Board of Governors	June 2025
Next Review Date	September 2027

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to provide a supportive and inclusive learning environment where every child is encouraged to achieve their best, both academically and personally. We place a child's happiness and excellent standards of teaching, learning and leadership at the heart of all we do.

We are committed to fostering curiosity, resilience and respect while promoting strong connections with our local community. Through collaboration with families, staff, and the wider community, we aim to inspire our pupils to become responsible, caring, and active citizens who contribute positively to society.

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
- ❖ Supervision of a child involved in intimate self-care

STATEMENT OF INTENT

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 to discuss and agree the health & safety and child protection issues between the staff of the school and you, the parent / guardian, 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.

BACKGROUND

At St. Mary's Cabragh, we aim to foster a high level of independence in our pupils with regard to personal hygiene practices. Children are encouraged to go to the toilet before morning break and before lunch/dinner time. At other times during the school day they have independent use of toilet facilities and are encouraged to indicate if they wish to use the toilet. They will be encouraged to undertake basic hygiene practices such as cleaning themselves and washing their hands after using the toilet. They will be encouraged to wash their hands if they are dirty and before eating food. Children will also be encouraged to change/dress independently for PE or Swimming (Primary 4 - 7 only).

On entry to P1, 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 at St Mary's. 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. It will be our utmost priority to maintain the privacy, comfort and dignity of your child at all times.

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.
Only appropriately trained and vetted staff should undertake the intimate care of children.
- ❖ All staff must be trained in the specific types of intimate care that they 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 Principal parents / carers and child (if appropriate).
- ❖ All staff must be trained in the specific types of intimate care that they carry out and fully understand the Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines within the context of their work.
- ❖ 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 principal, parents / carers and child (if appropriate).
- ❖ Agencies need to make provisions for emergencies i.e. a staff member on sick leave. These arrangements must be agreed between the principal, parents / carers and child (if appropriate)

If we have reason to believe a child may be wet or soiled the Class Teacher / Classroom Assistant will discreetly check for signs of this. Your child will be asked if they need to change and the adult's actions will be explained to them. When it has been determined that an accident has occurred resulting in a child wetting or soiling, adults will provide facilities for the child to change themselves. Parents will be notified. In the case of a child requiring direct assistance to change and a parent not being readily available, the child will be assisted by a member of staff in the presence of a colleague. Staff should be careful to ensure the dignity of the child is maintained at all times.

If a staff member has concerns about a colleague's intimate care practice they must report this to their designated teacher. 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. 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 can be open to misinterpretation. Adhering to these guidelines of good practice should safeguard children and staff.

PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF UNDERTAKING THE INTIMATE CARE OF A CHILD

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 Foundation Stage toilets are directly beside the Primary 1 and Primary 2 classrooms.

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:

- Only female members of staff will carry out intimate care.
- Two members of staff will be present on all occasions where a child requires assistance of an intimate care nature.
- Each child will be treated respectfully and sensitively.
- Matters involving intimate care will be dealt with confidentially
- Children will be encouraged to do as much for themselves as possible. **Adults should not assist with any personal care task which a child or young person can undertake by themselves.**
- 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. Children will have privacy to change appropriate to their age and situation.
- Children will be consulted in their own intimate care and where possible be given choices in how it is carried out.
- Care will stop immediately if the child appears distressed or uncomfortable when intimate care is being carried out. Staff will try to ascertain why the child is distressed and provide reassurance. The designated teacher must be informed in this instance.
- If any concerns arise as a result of providing intimate care they must be reported immediately to the Designated Teacher.
- Parents will be informed of the nature of intimate care verbally or via a note home. (Appendix 1)

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

- The class teacher will undertake all duties of an intimate care nature. If the class teacher is absent / on a training course, the classroom assistant will undertake these duties, leaving the substitute teacher in charge of the remainder of the class.
- The class teacher will inform the classroom 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. A second member of staff will be called to assist the class teacher.
- 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 will wait outside and periodically reassure the child verbally from the hallway.
- Soiled clothing will be put in a plastic bag, sealed and discreetly given to the parent at the end of that day.
- The parent will be discreetly informed of intimate care incidents.

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, the class teacher and a second staff member 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 classroom assistant to settle the remainder of the class into a seated position.
- The class-teacher and the second staff member will accompany the child to the toilet.
- The class-teacher and second staff member 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 will reassure 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 the parent at the end of the day.
- Where a child has had to be changed or 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.

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.

Safeguards for children.

- All staff are vetted by the Education Authority.
- Intimate care procedures will not be carried out by volunteers or students.
- Staff involved in intimate care must be familiar with this policy, the Child Protection Policy and Pastoral Care Policy.

Safeguards for staff.

Staff need to be aware they are placing themselves in a vulnerable position when providing intimate care. They can take safeguarding measures including:

- Gaining a verbal agreement from another member of staff that the action being taken is necessary.
- Allow the child to do as much for themselves as possible.
- Allow the child a choice in the sequence of care.
- Be aware of and responsive to the child's reactions.
- Provide reassurance to the child during intimate care.
- Record and report any incidents immediately to the Designated Teacher.

Health and Safety Precautions

- Non- allergenic baby wipes will be used to clean children unless they have a known allergy. Parents should inform the class teacher of any such allergy and discuss alternatives.
- 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 antibacterial 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 with the parent / guardian's agreement. 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.

Permission

Permission to support children with intimate care will be obtained at the beginning of the school year. (Appendix 2)

Appendix 1

St. Mary's Primary School Cabragh



In line with the school's Intimate Care Policy this letter is to inform you that your child received help with intimate care today.

Child's Name: _____

Date: _____

Please contact the school if you have any questions: 028 8776 7356

Signed: _____

Appendix 2

St. Mary's Primary School Cabragh



Intimate Care Permission Form.

Please read the Intimate Care Policy carefully before signing.

If a child wets or soils themselves whilst they are in school, it is important that measures are taken to have them changed and cleaned as quickly as possible. Staff undertaking the intimate care of a child will involve the child in their intimate care and try to encourage a child's independence as far as possible. In some circumstances it may be necessary to contact the parent/carer to come to school, so it is essential that three emergency contact numbers are given to the school.

St Mary's Primary School has an Intimate Care Policy which is available to view on our website or a copy can be obtained from the school office.

Please complete the reply slip below.

Reply Slip

I _____ confirm that I have received, read and understood the Intimate Care Policy.
(Insert parent/carer name)

I will advise the school of any medical issues which impact on the intimate care of my child.

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.

Please tick as appropriate:

I give permission to the school to assist my child with hygienic toileting routines and if necessary a change of clothing.

I **do not** give permission to the school to assist my child with hygienic toileting routines. The school will contact me or my emergency contact and I will organise for my child to be cleaned and changed. I understand that in the event that I or my emergency contact cannot be contacted, the staff will act appropriately and may need to come into some level of physical contact in order to aid my child.

Name:

Signature:

Relationship to child:

Date:

Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing in Education.

The teaching of Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing supports the school's ethos and reflects moral and religious principles of parents/carers and school management by promoting not only the intellectual, but also the moral, personal and social development of the child.

The teaching of Period Dignity is inclusive and focuses on equality, health and hygiene, self-esteem, respect and understanding. It complements St. Mary's ethos through encouraging the provision of a safe learning environment to assist all children, including menstruating pupils to reach their full potential.

The Period Dignity Programme is a whole school initiative involving pupils, parents, staff and governors. The Period Dignity policy is available on our website and paper copies available on request via the school office.

Intimate Care Policy Addendum

This additional section of the school policy for 'Intimate Care' will deal with incidents when older female students may experience menstruation, either for the first time, or on a monthly basis, during the school day.

Pastoral Support

Please reassure your daughter that the school staff will deal with them in a caring, understanding and discreet manner at all times. We understand that the onset of menstruation is a difficult time for girls of this age and we will do all we can to support them at school. Please let us know if your daughter experiences her first period, so that we can support her accordingly.

Education and Awareness

We have noticed that some girls are experiencing menstruation as young as Primary 5. We encourage parents / guardians to talk with their daughter openly about menstruation and about puberty in general and to encourage them to ask questions. If any parent / guardian is struggling to access accurate information on the area of menstruation, that is age appropriate, please speak with Mrs Louise Quinn, the school principal, and she will provide you with an information leaflet, which may help to facilitate the discussion.

School Provision

Please make your daughter aware that provision is in place in the school to support girls during menstruation. Girls in P6 are encouraged to use the adult toilet in the main school building and girls in P7 have access to a female toilet in the P7 mobile. Each are equipped with a box of sanitary products and a special grey hygiene bin for disposal of female hygiene products. The P6 teacher, Mrs McCann and / or P6 female classroom assistant and the P7 female classroom assistant can also provide sanitary towels discreetly to any girl who may need them during the school day.

First experience of menstruation

We ask parents and guardians to reassure their daughters that they will be cared for in a caring, compassionate and discreet manner if they commence menstruation for the first time at school. If this occurs, they should ask to speak quietly with their class teacher and explain the situation, or ask if they can leave the classroom to speak with school principal, Mrs Louise Quinn or Miss Lauren Cush, who will gently reassure them and provide them with the necessary female hygiene products. She will then make contact with the child's parent / guardian and agree on the next step - the child may wish to go home or they may be comfortable enough to remain at school.

Monthly Menstruation

If your daughter has already begun menstruating on a monthly basis, we advise that they should bring in a small bag with extra pants, wipes and sanitary products, so that they can manage their personal

hygiene at school. This bag can be left in the cloakroom / storeroom of their classroom and accessed when needed. Period products will be available at all times in the female staff toilet in the main school building and in the P7 girls' toilet.

PLEASE SEE THE 'PERIOD DIGNITY POLICY' FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Appendix 3

Parental Partnership - Key Stage 2 Intimate Care Agreement.

Please read and complete the parental partnership agreement below and return to your child's class teacher. (Please tick as appropriate)

1. I have already talked to my daughter about menstruation.

Yes

No

2. I would like to access an information leaflet to help me to talk to my daughter about menstruation.

Yes

No

3. If my daughter's first period arrives during the school day, I give my permission for a designated member of school staff Mrs Louise Quinn / Miss Lauren Cush to discuss with my daughter what is happening & to provide her with the necessary sanitary products.

Yes

No - I would prefer to be contacted.

4. Mrs Louise Quinn and Miss Lauren Cush plan to have a short chat with the girls in Primary 6 & 7 in Term 1 to show them where the period products and sanitary bins are located. Are you happy for your daughter to take part in this discussion?

Yes

No

Name of child: _____

Parent's signature: _____

Date: _____