**Bunscoil na Toirbhirte**

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**INTIMATE PHYSICAL CARE OF STUDENTS POLICY**

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Bunscoil na Toirbhirte is committed to ensuring that all staff responsible for the intimate care of pupils will undertake their duties in a professional manner at all times. We acknowledge that there is a need to treat all pupils with dignity and respect when intimate care is given. No pupil should be attended to in a way that causes distress or pain. The pupil’s dignity and wellbeing are of paramount importance. The right to privacy will be respected. The individual/parents’ views will be sought and listened to with regard to every part of this policy.

**Introduction**

This Intimate Care policy has been developed by the staff of Bunscoil na Toirbhirte in consultation with the Board of Management and Parents Association to ensure that the needs and rights of students and staff are maintained and that the highest standards of best practice are ensured at all times in the area of intimate personal assistance. The policy was reviewed in 2022.

Each student has the right to physical care assistance in order for him or her to participate fully in school life. The level of assistance required will reflect the needs of each individual student at any given time. Specific instructions about intimate care will be discussed with parents during the IEP formulation consultation time each year.

**Reference to other policies**

* Child Protection Policy
* Manual Handling Policy
* Communication’s Policy

**Aims**

The aims of the policy and associated guidelines are:

* To safeguard the dignity, rights and well-being of all student’s
* To ensure a consistently of care among pupils when they experience intimate personal care in two or more settings.
* To provide guidance and reassurance to staff.
* To ensure that parents are involved in planning the intimate care of their child and are confident that their concerns and the individual needs of their son/ daughter are taken into account.
* To reassure parents that the individual that staff members are knowledgeable about intimate care.

**Definition of Intimate Care**

Intimate care is the support provided by staff to students while involved in personal care routines such as dressing and undressing, toileting, showering/bathing, swimming and attending to menstrual needs. Where necessary, such support will involve varying levels of supervision and assistance and may involve physical contact with a student when they are partially or fully undressed.

**Protecting students and Staff Members**

All Intimate Care must be carried out with two adults. One staff member should never attend to a child in an intimate care setting.

**Pupils**

When delivering personal care to a student staff members should explain what they propose to do and ask the pupil if it is in order to proceed. If it is not, the pupil must be asked whether s/he would like someone else to help him/her e.g. a staff member of the same gender.

The staff member must refer to the individual’s care plan (if appropriate) Manuel handling profile’s and current risk assessment(s).

Staff members and other carers must recognise the right of the individual to privacy and deliver care in such a way that the dignity and safety of the service users are protected.

Staff members and other carers should protect themselves from allegations and must endeavour to deliver care in a manner and an environment that is not open to misinterpretation

Before delivering intimate care of students, staff must seek permission of the student. **No intimate care is carried out without two staff present.**

Every effort should be made by staff to explain what aspect of intimate care is being delivered in appropriate language so that the individual can understand where possible and make an informed choice.

**Communication**

The delivery of personal care should be directed and guided by the pupil and staff should continually explain to the individual what they are doing and why. It is therefore essential that staff are aware of how to appropriately communicate with the people they support, are self-critical of their communication skills both verbal and non-verbal. People need to be able to communicate in order to have their needs met. The ability to communicate well helps to build good relationships with the pupil being supported. The means of communication for the pupil will be identified in their support plan.

Some of the essential principles of communication are:

* Politeness
* Patience
* Good Listening Skills
* Courtesy
* Respect
* Helpfulness
* Cultural awareness

**Non-Verbal Communication**

Some examples of non-verbal communication are:

* Touch
* Space and Positioning
* Hand Movement
* Gestures
* Eye Contact
* Physical Contact
* Facial Expressions
* Posture
* Sign Language
* Picture Cards
* Communication Boards

It is important that non-verbal communication and body language gives the same message as verbal communication. Individuals will be able to pick up feelings by observing behaviour.

**It is therefore important to:**

* Keep eye contact without staring at pupils.
* Stay in the same position – don’t shuffle or fidget.
* Hold their hand or arm, but only if you know that they find this reassuring and are comfortable with this.
* Not engage in personal conversations with other staff that will exclude the child.

**Good Record Keeping and Report Writing**

An important part of communication is record keeping and report writing. Staff are encouraged to maintain personal “intimate care” notebooks which can be shared with parents.

**Staff Guidelines**

Intimate care procedures will be carried out in a manner which treats the pupil in a dignified and respectful way and allows the pupil the maximum level of privacy. The pupil’s independence will be encouraged at all times.

The personnel involved in intimate care needs of pupils are usually SNA's but teachers may be involved.

Short term substitute staff/work experience personnel will not be involved in intimate care needs of pupils unless full training is provided.

Levels of staffing for the provision of intimate care assistance will be organised based on the individual needs of the students and availability of staff, however no intimate care will be undertaken unless two staff are present. In all cases two staff members are required.

Staff should never carry out an intimate care procedure unless they know how to do so correctly and will ask for the relevant advice when required.

Change of clothing is stored in school for pupils with imitate care needs.

Female staff only will attend to students requiring assistance with menstrual needs.

Staff should ensure the correct supplies of toiletries, towels and fresh clothes etc. are to hand prior to any intimate care procedure so that the student is not left unattended in the bathroom or changing areas. Staff are required to communicate with parents to ensure that there is a regular supply of intimate care supplies and change of clothes at School.

Staff should at all times follow best practice in relation to infection control.

Staff should always be discreet in the use of intimate care items and these should not be visible outside of designated areas.

Intimate care assistance will at all times take place in the designated toilet areas in the Junior and Senior Schools.

**Dressing/Undressing**

Pupils should be encouraged to dress/undress themselves independently where possible.

Ensure privacy before the procedure commences:

* Remove clothing from lower body first.
* Ensure lower regions are covered before removing garments from upper body.
* Encourage the individual to assist in whatever way possible.
* Refer to handling procedures for safe movement of the person and safety of staff.

**Hand Hygiene**

Good hand hygiene is the single most effective way of stopping germs from getting into our bodies and causing infection. Liquid soap is better than solid soap because it is less likely to become contaminated.

Disposable paper towels are the best option for drying hands because damp towels can harbour germs. All disposal items should be stored in a sealed bin.

Don’t assume pupils know how to wash their hands.

**Hand Washing Procedure:**

* Wet hands under warm running water.
* Apply a small amount of liquid soap.
* Rub hands vigorously ensuring soap and water is applied to all surfaces of the hands. Be sure to rub between fingers, the palms and the back of the hands. This should take about 30/40 seconds.
* Rinse hands under running water.
* Dry hands, preferably using paper towels.

**Aftercare of Equipment**

Staff need to ensure the bathroom is cleaned with an anti-bacterial solution after use and must ensure the pupil’s clothes and toiletries are taken care of.

**Observation**

If during the provision of intimate care assistance:

* A student is accidentally hurt
* A student seems unusually sore, tender or bruised
* A student appears to misinterpret what is said or done the student has a very emotional reaction without apparent cause

The staff member(s) involved in the intimate care assistance should immediately report any such incident to the class teacher who will note the occurrence in the child’s notebook. The incident should also be reported as soon as possible to the Principal/Deputy Principal. Parents may be contacted and an incident report may be completed if child Protection Guidelines indicate that this step is necessary. Follow up will take place as required.

Parental Consent

Parents are the primary educators of their children and full partners in the delivery of education and care at our school. Parents will always be consulted about the intimate care procedures about their children. Specific meeting will be conducted by the classroom teacher and SNA involved in the child’s care prior to starting school for the first time. Specific discussions about intimate care should form part of the IEP meeting with parent’s each year. Parents can request a meeting with staff about intimate care at any time.

Implementation and Dissemination

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management on the 22/09/22 and will be circulated to parents’ representatives on the BOM.

**BUNSCOIL NA TOIRBHIRTE TOILETING ASSISTANCE PERMISSION FORM**

From time-to-time pupils will require assistance when using the toilet. This assistance will depend on the individual needs of each child. Our staff will provide assistance according to the directions of the child’s family. We want to ensure that expectations at home are consistent with expectations at school. Assistance will include the following tasks:

• Assistance with Clothing

• Assistance with Nappy changing and/cleaning/ wiping

• Assistance with Hand Washing

Two members of staff will be present at all times during toileting assistance. The dignity of all pupils will be protected.

We will attempt to increase self-help skills of pupils. All children are encouraged to take care of the above tasks on their own, where possible.

In this case, please sign the form below and indicate specific needs in the comment section of this form.

Additional Comment from Parents:

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Thank you.

I give permission for my child, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to be assisted with toileting.

(Parent/Guardian Signature) (Parent/Guardian Signature)

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(Date) Date

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