

BELLAGHY PRIMARY SCHOOL

INTIMATE CARE POLICY

SCHOOL ETHOS AND MISSION STATEMENT

Bellaghy Primary School strives to provide, in partnership with parents, a broad quality education so that all the pupils can reach their full potential within a caring, secure environment promoting self-discipline, motivation and individuality.

RATIONALE

At our school, the safety of our children is paramount, and this applies to dealing with the intimate care of a child. As a staff, we are aware of the sensitivity around this area and all staff and those with parental responsibility will be fully briefed on this policy.

WHAT IS INTIMATE CARE

Intimate care is any assistance that involves touching a child while carrying out a procedure that most children can do for themselves, but some are unable to manage without help. This may involve help with eating, drinking, dressing and matters of personal hygiene such as washing and toileting. In some instances, more specialised intimate assistance may be needed for children with physical or medical difficulties.

This policy aims to:

- Safeguard the dignity, rights and well-being of children;
- Provide guidance, support and protection to staff;
- Reassure parents that their children are cared for and protected.

THE CHILD

The child has the right to assistance that respects his/her dignity, and to feel safe when being moved or handled.

The child has the right to feel comfortable with the adult's assisting him/her, and to make it known if this level of comfort is disturbed.

The child should be encouraged to engage in the care procedure, to know what is happening, and give permission at each stage.

The child should be encouraged to work towards independence and helped to do so as much as possible for him/herself.

PARENTS

Parents have the right to information regarding school policy and procedures designed to meet the needs of their child. The school should work closely with parents to ensure that all aspects of the care procedure are shared and understood.

Parents have a responsibility to ensure that all relevant information is provided to help the school assist their child in an appropriate way. Parents should meet the adult/s who will provide intimate care to the child and be informed of the school's arrangements in the event of this person/s being absent.

The school should gain written permission from parents when an intimate care plan is necessary.

SCHOOL STAFF

The school is committed to ensuring that all staff undertake their responsibilities in such a way that the rights, dignity and welfare of the children is protected.

The school is committed to ensuring that staff undertaking these responsibilities are supported by policy, training and monitoring.

All school staff receive child protection training, undertake to help children do as much as possible for themselves and develop each child's ability to achieve independence. Staff receive appropriate specialised training (if necessary) and are provided with facilities and equipment to ensure safety, privacy and dignity.

An intimate care plan is drawn up for each child requiring such assistance and is carefully planned and agreed in consultation with parents and child.

Provision is monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure that policy and procedure is adhered to, and that children and staff remain comfortable with the school's arrangements.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information regarding agreed procedures must be treated confidentially and recorded/held only in the child's school file. Information should not be disclosed or discussed with any adults other than those with responsibility for the child's personal care and should not be referred to in the presence of other children.

Care should be provided at agreed times, at the child's request or in response to an agreed signal. Staff should make themselves familiar with the child's manner of communication, whether verbal, sign or eye contact.

Appropriate terminology for parts of the body and bodily functions should be clarified between the child, parents, and his/her assistant/s.

WRITING AN INTIMATE CARE PLAN

The plan should have the child's safety, privacy, and dignity as paramount.

The plan should include:

Clear information regarding the assistance to be provided;
The method of communication to be used by the child;
The named person/s with responsibility to assist the child;
The timetable, if possible, when assistance will be provided;
Arrangements in the absence of the named assistant/s;
Arrangements for school events and activities;
The means by which the arrangement will be monitored;
Strategies to prevent or deal with questions/comments from other pupils;
The maintenance of a record of assistance.

While it is recommended to have two members of staff assisting the child, this level of resourcing may not be available, and while the introduction of a second assistant may be perceived as providing protection against allegations of abuse, it can also further erode the child's privacy.

- If the plan has been agreed and signed by parents, staff, and child if appropriate, it is acceptable to have one assistant unless there are implications regarding safe handling.
- Two persons are required to assist if a hoist is being used. In this case the second person should be identified and made known to the child and parents.
- Alternative arrangements must be in place in the absence of one or both of the named staff. However, the school should be aware that the introduction of other staff to the care context without prior arrangement can increase the vulnerability of the child and adults.
- The plan should specify the assistance to be provided as clearly as possible e.g. undressing/cleaning the child, changing a nappy, holding child in position, etc. The assistant/s should talk to the child throughout the procedure e.g. "I am going to help you undress", "I am using a wipe to clean your bottom". The assistance should be rehearsed in the bathroom with the parent/s present to ensure clarity. Following this there should be no change to what has been agreed.
- Teachers should be made aware of the care timetable, particularly if the child needs to be absent from class and should be aware of the approximate time the procedure should take. The assistant/s should ensure their return to the classroom is noted.
- The plan should be signed by all contributors and reviewed on a regular basis.

TRAINING AND RESOURCES

- Guidance/advice may often be provided by the child's parent.
- All staff providing personal care must have received child protection training. Specialised training may be required if the child uses a wheelchair, hoist, colostomy bag or requires an invasive procedure such as rectally administered medication. This training may be arranged through the Children and Young Peoples Services Directorate of the EA and the Health Trust School Health Teams.
- It is recommended that the school's arrangements in the absence of named assistants should involve only members of staff who have undergone appointment procedure including background scrutiny. Casual substitute staff should not provide intimate care in the school setting.
- The school must provide appropriate accommodation that ensures privacy for the child and is sufficiently spacious to accommodate any other equipment the child may need, such as a changing bench or hoist. The provision of appropriate accommodation and equipment should be arranged in conjunction with the Children and Young Peoples Services Directorate of the EA.
- The school should provide resources to ensure that procedures are carried out hygienically. This may include disposable aprons, gloves, wipes and medicated hand washing products.
- Additional requirements may include labelled bins for the disposal of soiled waste; items such as needles, catheters, etc., and arrangements for the collection of such waste. This can be arranged through the Operations and Estates Directorate of the EA and the District Council.
- Schools should ensure that the assistant has a means of attracting attention and assistance in an emergency.

VULNERABILITY TO ABUSE

- Children should be encouraged to recognise and challenge inappropriate assistance, and behaviour that erodes their dignity and self-worth.
- However, the following factors may increase a child's vulnerability:
 - Experience of multiple carers;
 - The inability to distinguish between assistance and abuse;
 - The inability to communicate.
- While adults are protected by their adherence to procedure, the following factors may increase their vulnerability:
 - The possibility of accidents;
 - The possibility of misunderstanding or misinterpretation;

-The possibility of the child becoming aroused.

- The school should ensure that the programme of assistance is monitored and both child and adult given the opportunity to report any concerns that they may have. The school's designated teacher for child protection will undertake this responsibility.

PROCEDURES IN THE EVENT OF A CHILD REQUIRING A CHANGE OF CLOTHES

(one off incident)

Every endeavour will be made to have two members of staff attending to the child where intimate care is necessary but in the event of this not being possible, staff must report to another member of staff before taking a child to be changed.

In the event of a child having an individual health care plan, there will be a designated person who will deal with that child's intimate care.

Staff will always respect the child's privacy and will encourage independence and good standards of hygiene.

Any concerns will be reported to the Principal.

A child's clothes will only be changed if they:

- become wet playing with water/messy play
- fall in mud or in a puddle outside
- have a toilet accident
- are physically sick

At the close of the school day, a member of staff will notify the parent in person or via a written or online note, as to why the child has been changed.

The school has a small selection of spare clothing, which will be used in these events, and parents are asked to return these to school promptly.

On occasion, a child may have to go home following a toilet accident. This will be at the discretion of the Principal.

PARENTAL CHOICE

In the event of a one-off incident, if parents make the decision that they do not want their child changed by a member of staff, this request must be in writing, addressed to the Principal of the school. The written note from the parent will be kept in that individual child's file.

RECORD KEEPING

Where a child requires a change of clothes due to a one-off incident, there is no requirement to maintain a record of this.

Where a child has an intimate care plan, specific records will be kept. These will include the plan itself, consulted on by all involved with the child – parent, teacher and assistant, consent from parent and a daily record of intimate care.

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

- Child Protection
- Health and well being
- Health and safety
- Staff Code of Conduct

*Policy Reviewed – September 2024
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