



## **Intimate Care and Toileting Policy for Athea National School**

### **Introduction**

Intimate care is any caring procedure which involves attending to a pupil when he/she is undressed or partially dressed, washing (including intimate parts), helping to use the toilet, changing nappies or carrying out a procedure that requires direct or indirect contact with an intimate area of a pupil, or any procedure carried out while the pupil is in a state of whole or partial undress. The supervision of pupils while they are dressing and undressing will also be considered as intimate care. This policy and related procedures have been developed bearing in mind that all physical contact between staff and pupil:

- Should be aimed at meeting the needs of pupils
- Should respect the dignity of each pupil
- Should be consistent with professional integrity of staff members.

### **Policy Rationale**

The aim of the policy is to increase knowledge, enhance skills and promote good practice in this sensitive area. All staff will be made aware of the standards expected of them. Intimate care will be carried out only by regular school employees.

### **Relationship to the School Ethos**

All pupils and staff members have the right to feel safe and be treated with dignity and respect.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The aims of this policy are:

- To ensure that the dignity and privacy of the pupil involved is paramount
- To develop a framework of procedures whereby intimate care requirements are dealt with in an appropriate manner.

## **Staffing Levels**

### Toileting “Accidents”

As teachers, we act “in loco parentis” and can deal with a toileting accident without assistance. It is good practice to only provide help that is required by the pupil. The teacher should encourage the pupil to do as much for themselves as possible. A teacher must always be cognisant of his/her duty of care regarding effective supervision of all the pupils in the class when assisting a pupil with toileting.

The teacher/ Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) will provide the pupil with a change of underwear, which the pupil uses to change his/herself. If necessary, the school will provide a complete change of clothes. The teacher/SNA will assist with pupil with dressing only if absolutely necessary. If the pupil has soiled him/herself, the parents will be contacted in order to take the pupil home. In the event that a parent cannot be contacted, the teacher/SNA will do all that is necessary to make the pupil comfortable.

Wet/soiled clothes will be put in a plastic bag and parents will be informed of what has happened when they collect their child. Parents are asked to return the clothes given to their child, washed and folded.

A record of such incidents will be kept in the Incident Book in the classroom.

Parents are informed on this procedure in the Junior Infants Induction meeting prior to their pupil starting school.

Changes of clothes and underwear are kept in the staff room in the double cupboard. Infant teachers also have a change of underwear in their classrooms. Staff are required to wear protective gloves while changing a pupil.

### Toileting of pupils in the Special Classes

It is school policy that:

- The personnel involved in intimate care needs of pupils are SNAs
- There should be a minimum of two staff members present if at all possible. In an emergency situation, the SNA may have to act alone. Additional support will be provided by mainstream SNAs if needed.
- Substitute SNAs are not generally involved in intimate care but if unavoidable the change in personnel will be discussed with the pupil.

## **Parent Responsibilities**

Parents/Guardians need to identify any toileting needs in their application form. They should supply the school with the resources to carry out the toileting or other care needs, which may include, but not be limited to:

- Nappies
- Wipes
- Creams
- Nappy Sacks
- Spare underwear
- Spare clothes
- Sanitary pads

## **Sanitary Towels**

There is an adequate supply of sanitary bins in appropriate classroom toilets. This will be kept under review and updated by school management as necessary. Spare towels will be kept in classrooms as necessary.

### Mainstream classes:

Senior classes will be taught about menstrual periods as part of the RSE programme (with parental consent). They will also be informed about where they can get a sanitary towel if they need it.

### SEN Classes:

Senior classes will be taught about periods as part of the RSE programme (with parental consent). They will also be informed about where they can get a sanitary towel if they need it (class teacher or SNA).

Measures will be taken on a case by case basis, according to the level of support needed by individual pupils.

### Strategies may include:

- RSE lessons (with parental consent).
- Social stories – See (green) book *Taking Care of Myself* Mary Wrobel-available in ASD Room.
- Visual step by step charts for removal, application and disposal of sanitary towel (e.g. twinkl.co.uk)
- A private and discreet space for training will be provided. Teachers will liaise with home re. progress and practice and support at home.

### With parental consent, pupils will be supported if necessary in the following ways:

- Reminders to change sanitary towel.
- Discreet verbal support/prompting from outside toilet door.
- If pupil is unable to change sanitary towel, staff member/s may need to go into the toilet with the pupil to assist. The pupil's dignity and privacy will be paramount at all times. The visual charts listed above may be employed to promote independence.

## **Intimate Care/Toileting Plan**

In the event that a specific toileting need has been identified for a pupil, an Intimate Care/Toileting Plan will be developed in partnership with the pupil's class teacher, designated SNA's and the pupil's parents/guardians.

The Care Plan may include:

- Specific care need
- Number of staff required to meet the needs of the pupil
- Identification of the staff members involved
- Additional equipment required

- Pupil's preferred means of communication to include agreed terminology for body parts and bodily functions.
- Pupil's level of ability
- Cultural and/or religious sensitivities
- Signature of Class Teacher
- Signature of Principal
- Date of Care Plan

### **Elements of Good Practice for Staff**

While it is not possible to prescribe guidelines that will apply in all situations, it is important the elements of good practice be followed:

- In the case that a pupil has an Intimate Care Plan, relevant staff must be completely familiar with the plan.
- Ensure the child is happy with who is changing him/ her
- Be responsive to any distress shown
- Staff will address the pupil by name and ensure he/she is aware of the focus of the activity.
- Staff will *verbalise their actions* to the pupil in a reassuring way to prepare them for each procedure.
- For pupils with limited communication, staff will use visual supports e.g. pointing at a wipe or picture board.
- Appropriate and professional language will be used. Specific language may be detailed in a care plan.
- In intimate care, the touch should be affirmative and supportive, not rough or insensitive.
- Dignity and privacy of the pupil will be respected at all times.
- Staff will have all equipment and materials to hand before commencing.
- Staff will use discreet observation to check if a nappy/pad needs changing.
- Staff will use protective gloves provided.
- All precautions will be taken when disposing of soiled material in the bin provided.
- Intimate care procedures will be carried out in a manner which treats the pupils in a dignified and respectful way and allows the pupil the maximum level of privacy.
- The pupil's independence will be encouraged.

### **Providing comfort or support to a child**

There are situations and circumstances where children seek physical comfort from staff (particularly in early years). Where this happens staff need to be aware that any physical contact must be kept to a minimum.

When comforting a child or giving reassurance, staff must ensure that at no time can the act be considered intimate. If physical contact is deemed to be appropriate, staff must provide care which is professionally appropriate to the age and context.

If a child touches a member of staff in a way that makes him/ her feel uncomfortable this can be gently but firmly discouraged in a way which communicates that the touch, rather than the child, is unacceptable. If a child touches a member of staff, as noted above, this

should be discussed , in confidence, with the DLP (Margaret Watters) or DDLP (Maura Mulvihill).

### **Assisting a child who requires a specific medical procedure and who is not able to carry this out unaided**

Policy on Administration of Medication outlines arrangements for the management of the majority of medications in school.

### **Swimming**

Throughout the year the classes of Athea National School participate in swimming lessons in Coral Leisure Centre, Askeaton.

Children are entitled to respect and privacy when changing their clothes. However, there must be the required level of supervision to safeguard young people with regard to health and safety considerations and to ensure that bullying, teasing or other unacceptable behaviour does not occur.

Where a child needs additional support for changing, parental permission will be sought and a personal care plan will be drawn up so as to maintain dignity but increase independence.

### **Showering**

Children are entitled to respect and privacy when changing their clothes or taking a shower. However, there must be the required level of supervision to safeguard young people with regard to health and safety considerations and to ensure that bullying, teasing or other unacceptable behaviour does not occur.

This means that staff should announce their intention of entering changing rooms, avoid remaining in changing rooms unless pupil needs require it, avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress and avoid any visually intrusive behaviour.

Given the vulnerabilities of the situation, it is strongly recommended that when supervising children in a state of undress, another member of staff is present. However, this may not always be possible and therefore staff need to be vigilant about their own conduct.

It is best practice in our school that when an incident has taken place that has necessitated a member of staff to be present when young children are changing that an incident report is made.

### **Reporting**

All toileting “accidents” involving pupils with no Care Plan must be reported to the pupils’ parents.

If during the intimate care of a pupil;

- a staff member accidentally hurts/injures the pupil
- observes something which raises pupil protection concerns
- the pupil seems to misinterpret what is said or done
- the pupil has an emotional reaction without apparent cause

the incident must be reported to the Special Class Teacher/Principal or the DLP or Deputy DLP as appropriate.

## **Working with children of the opposite sex**

There is positive value in both male and female staff being involved with children. Ideally, every child should have the choice for intimate care but given the current ratio of female to male staff means that assistance will more often be given by a woman. The intimate care of boys and girls can be carried out by a member of staff of the opposite sex with the following provisions:

- When intimate care is being carried out all children have the right to dignity and privacy, they should be appropriately covered, the door closed or screens/ curtains put in place.
- If the child appears distressed or uncomfortable when personal tasks are being carried out, the care should stop immediately. Try to ascertain why the child is distressed and provide reassurance
- Report any concerns to the DLP (Margaret Watters) or DDLP (Maura Mulvihill) and make a written record
- Parents must be informed about any 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. Depending on their maturity and level of stress children may communicate using different methods- words, signs, symbols, body movements, eye pointing etc. To ensure effective communication:

- 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

## **Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

Teachers and school management assume shared responsibility, participate in and contribute to the implementation of an effective and equitable Intimate Care and Toileting Policy.

All members of staff working with children must undertake the full Garda Vetting Procedure. This includes students on work placement and volunteers who may be left alone with children. Vetting includes criminal record checks and two references.

Only those members of staff who are familiar with the Intimate Care and Toileting Policy are involved with the intimate care of children.

Where anticipated, intimate care arrangements are agreed between the school and parents and, when appropriate and possible, by the child. Consent forms are signed by the parent and stored in the child's file. Only in emergency situations would staff undertake any aspect of intimate care that has not been agreed by parents and the school. Parents would then be contacted immediately. The views of all relevant parties should be sought and considered to inform future arrangements.

If a staff member has concerns about a colleague's intimate care practice s/he must report this to the DLP (Margaret Watters) or DDLP (Maura Mulvihill).

### **Success Criteria**

The school evaluates the success of the policy through:

1. Participation of all staff in the policy
2. Safe and effective care of all pupils in our school
3. Feedback from all staff
4. Feedback from relevant parents/guardians

### **Ratification and Implementation**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 18/05/21

### **Review**

It will be reviewed every three years, with next review due in 2024.

**Signed:** *Marie Gleeson*

**Date:** 18/05/21

**(Chairperson B.o.M)**

## Appendix 1

### Letter of Permission from Parents for Intimate Care



Athea National School,

Athea,

Co. Limerick.

Tel: 068 42333

V94 F226

Email: [atheans.ias@eircom.net](mailto:atheans.ias@eircom.net)

Website: <https://www.atheans.ie/>

Roll No. 15685T

Should it be necessary,

I / we give permission for \_\_\_\_\_ to receive intimate care (e.g. help with changing or toileting, showering and grooming).

I / we understand that staff will endeavour to encourage our child to be independent.

I / we understand that I / we will be informed by the class teacher in advance of showering and grooming lessons should any occasion arise in the school whereby my child needs assistance with toileting or cleaning of an intimate nature.

I / we understand that there will be two staff present at all times, where possible.

I / we understand that the ultimate aim is to enable our child to be more independent.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Parent 1) Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Parent 2) Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 2**

**Record of Intimate Care**



Athea National School,  
Athea,  
Co. Limerick.  
Tel: 068 42333  
V94 F226

Email: [atheans.ias@eircom.net](mailto:atheans.ias@eircom.net)  
Website: <https://www.atheans.ie/>  
Roll No. 15685T

<i>Name of Child</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Staff Involved</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Signatures</i>

