**Intimate Care and Toileting Policy**

**Rationale:**

We have updated this policy following a series of staff discussions in 2021. Changes were required to our previous policy from 2018, as new advice was received from the National Council of Special Education. This is an issue of upmost importance for staff as we strive to ensure that we are always engaging in best practice and with the best interests of the child to the fore.

**Introduction:**

Intimate care is any caring procedure which involves attending to a student when he/she is undressed or partially dressed:

* washing (including intimate parts)
* helping to use the toilet
* changing nappies or pull-ups
* carrying out a procedure that requires direct or indirect contact with an intimate area of a student,
* any procedure carried out while the student is in a state of whole or partial undress, including when pupil has removed own clothing during a tantrum or meltdown
* supervision of students while they are dressing and undressing

For the purposes of this policy we are also including the following related activities:

* Wiping soiled faces or hands
* Massage, brushing, head pressure
* Hand-holding for safety, security reasons
* Hand-over-hand gross or fine motor skills’ practice
* Any physical engagement with OT activities eg assisting pupil to do gym ball or climbing frame exercises
* Engaging with a pupil through verbal and visual cues to moderate inappropriate touching eg touching private parts

**Policy rationale:**

This policy and related procedures have been developed bearing in mind that all physical contact between staff and students:

* Should be aimed at meeting the needs of students
* Should respect the dignity of each student
* Should be consistent with professional integrity of staff members
* Should be consistent with Child Protection standards

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 students 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 student involved is paramount
* To develop a framework of procedures whereby intimate care requirements are dealt with in an appropriate manner.

**1. Toileting Accidents**:

Teachers act ‘in loco parentis’ and can deal with a toileting accident without assistance. An SNA can assist with a toileting accident at the direction of a teacher.

It is good practice to only provide help that is required by the pupil. Teacher/SNAs 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 students in the class when assisting a pupil with toileting.

* In the case of a toileting accident, parents will be contacted when necessary and requested to bring in a change of clothing for their child, if this has not already been supplied.
* Where accidents are likely to occur, parents will be requested to provide daily changes of clothes and a toileting care plan will be put together
* Parents will be notified of any toileting accident which occurs during the school day.

**Toileting and the Playground:**

Teachers and SNAs should encourage children to use the toilet before leaving the classroom for outdoor breaks. Children needing to come in from the yard during break time to use the toilet should, therefore, be the exception rather than the norm.

In the event that a child needs to use the toilet while on playground, a teacher or SNA will accompany the child to the designated indoor toilet. This should be in the classroom nearest the playground and if possible offering a view of the playground. The teacher on yard duty must be informed before the child leaves the playground and immediately upon return.

The staff member should remain outside the toilet, then, ensure that the child returns safely to the playground.

Should a child require assistance in the toilet, the staff member will call on a colleague before providing assistance. The dignity and privacy of the child will be respected at all times.

**Showering:**

In the case of a toileting or vomiting incident which requires a complete change of clothes, the school staff will act in “loco parentis” and will shower the child where necessary. Two members of staff will be present when a child who needs assistance must be showered. The dignity and privacy of the child will be respected at all times. The promotion of self-care will be encouraged.

**Challenging Behaviour:**

In the case of challenging behaviour where a child refuses toileting, dressing or intimate care assistance, parents will be contacted immediately and will be requested to come to the school in the best interest of the child’s dignity, health and safety.

**Child Protection:**

Child Protection procedures will be adhered to at all times, in accordance with the School’s Child Safeguarding Statement. All members of staff carrying out intimate care needs have been Garda vetted.

If a child makes an allegation about a member of staff, this will be investigated in accordance with agreed procedures.

**2. Children with Specific Toileting/Intimate Care Needs:**

**Toileting of students in the ASD Classes**

It is school policy that:

* The personnel involved in intimate care needs of students are usually SNAs but teachers may be involved.
* **At the recommendation of the DES in its 2018 Review of SNA procedures, only one member of staff should be present. This is to ensure the dignity of the child.**
* When a child has additional, more complex care needs, these will be identified as part of a care plan and two staff members may be allocated to toileting in this instance.
* No substitute SNA or teacher should be involved in the toileting of a student unless sanctioned by the Principal

**Parent Responsibilities**

Parents/Guardians need to identify any toileting needs when their child enrolls in the school.

* On enrolment, the school procedures in this policy will be outlined to parents, and they will be asked to submit in writing specific wishes regarding toileting accidents
* A supply of clean underwear, wipes, track-suit bottoms etc will be kept in the school
* In the first instance, the pupil will be offered fresh clothing to clean and change themselves
* If, for any reason, the child is unable to clean or change themselves, the procedures outlined in this policy and agreed by parents will be followed.
* Parents will be notified of toileting accidents
* A record of the incident should be kept
* For children who repeatedly need assistance with toileting, parents will be asked to participate in an agreed care plan to be followed by school staff

Parents should furnish the school will a replenished set of 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

**Intimate Care/Toileting Plan**

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

The Care Plan must include:

* Specific Care Need
* Number of staff required to meet the needs of the student
* Identification of the staff members involved
* Additional equipment required
* Childs preferred means of communication to include agreed terminology for body parts and bodily functions.
* Childs level of ability
* Cultural and/or religious sensitivities
* Signature of Class Teacher
* Signature of Principal
* Date of Care Plan

Any changes will be discussed with parent/guardian and pupil and noted in writing to the pupil’s file. Provision for occasions when staffs are absent will be outlined (e.g. Substitute SNA’s will not generally be involved in intimate care. Any change of personnel will be discussed with the pupil, if appropriate

As far as possible the pupil will be involved in identification of his/her personal requirements, wishes, changes etc.

A written copy of the agreement will be kept on the pupils file. Parents will be notified of any changes from agreed procedures

**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 student has an Intimate Care Plan ensure you are completely familiar with the plan.
* Address the student by name and ensure he/she is aware of the focus of the activity.
* Verbalise your actions to the student in a reassuring way to prepare them for each procedure.
* Use visual cues for students with limited communication, e.g. pointing at a wipe or picture board.
* Use appropriate and professional language. Specific language may be detailed in a care plan.
* In intimate care, the touch should be affirmative and supportive, not rough or insensitive.
* Respect the dignity and privacy of the student at all times.
* Have all equipment and materials to hand before commencing.
* Use discreet observation if checking to see if a nappy needs changing.
* Use protective gloves/apron provided.
* Take all precautions when disposing of soiled material in the bin provided.
* Intimate care procedures will be carried out in a manner which treats the student in a dignified and respectful way and allows the student the maximum level of privacy.
* The student’s independence will be encouraged.

**Reporting**

All toileting ‘accidents’ involving pupils **with no Care Plan** must be reported to the pupil’s parents.

Toileting issues for pupil’s **with a Care Plan** must be reported to the ASD Teacher/Principal or the DLP/Deputy DLP as appropriate, if, during the intimate care of a student a staff member:

* Accidently hurts/injures the student
* The staff member observes something which raises child protection concerns
* The student seems to misinterpret what is said or done
* The student has a very emotional reaction without apparent cause the incident must be reported.

**3. Other Elements of Intimate care**

There are other elements of school-life that involved a touch from a staff member.

There may be only one member of staff present during these activities, particularly when the need to preserve a child’s dignity is a priority. Two staff members must be present when a child has more complex needs or there is an identified health and safety risk to the child or staff member.

All staff are alerted to the need to prioritise the building of independent skills where/when possible and to adhere strictly to Child Safety and Protection Policies. All teacher and SNAs are garda-vetted and undertake frequent child protection training.

It is our policy to give parents as much information as possible, in a timely manner, when any of the following activities form a regular part of a child’s care plan or general education:

* Many of our pupils with ASD require massage, brushing and deep pressure activities to help with emotional regulation and to relieve anxiety. Parents will be informed when these activities form part of their child’s care plan.
* Wiping soiled faces or hands: pupils are taught personal hygiene skills and at all times should be encouraged to engage in self-care; however, from time to time it may be necessary for staff members to assist, particularly when health and safety may be at risk.
* Hand-holding for safety or security reasons- building independence is the main focus of activity in ASD and mainstream classes. Staff will only hold a child’s hand when there is a safety risk to the child. If a child is in obvious distress, a staff member is permitted to hold the child’s hand until the child has calmed down. When a child benefits from regular hand-holding, this must form part of a care plan and parents informed.
* Hand-over-hand gross or fine motor skills’ practice- parents will be informed that these activities may take place.
* Any physical engagement with OT activities (eg assisting pupil to do gym ball exercises or climbing frame exercises) parents will be informed that these activities may take place.
* Engaging with a pupil through verbal and visual cues to moderate inappropriate touching . Parents must be informed, if this is an issue to be addressed. A clear, consistent approach must be adopted both at home and at school.

**Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

Teachers, SNAs and Principal assume shared responsibility, participate in, and contribute to the implementation of an effective and equitable ‘Intimate Care and Toileting Policy’ .

**Success Criteria**

The school evaluates the success of the policy through:

* Participation of all staff in the policy
* Safe and effective care of all students in our school
* Feedback from all staff
* Feedback from relevant parents/guardians.

**Implementation**

This policy is effective immediately.

**Ratification & Communication**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in……

**Review Timetable**

This policy will be reviewed at the end 2021 and amended as necessary by means of a whole school collaborative process.

**Evaluation**

This policy is monitored on an ongoing basis.

**St. Brendan’s NS Toileting & Intimate Care Needs Policy Permission Form**

I/we give my/our permission for our child, (name) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_‘s toileting/intimate care needs to be looked after in line with St. Brendan’s NS Primary School Toileting & Intimate Care Needs Policy.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_