# Policy for Intimate Care

## Introduction

Intimate care is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure (such as cleaning up a child after they have soiled themselves) to intimate personal areas. In most cases such care will involve cleaning for hygiene purposes as part of a staff member's duty of care.

The issue of intimate care is a sensitive one and will require staff to be respectful of the child's needs. The child's dignity should always be preserved with a high level of privacy, choice and control. There shall be a high awareness of child protection issues. Staff behaviour must be open to scrutiny and staff must work in partnership with parents/carers to provide continuity of care to children/young people wherever possible.

The following document is based on best practice in special schools. Fairlawn & Haseltine school staff will find the guidance given here useful when intimate care issues arise.

## Intimate care policy for the Fairlawn and Haseltine Federation

Fairlawn & Haseltine is committed to ensuring that all staff members responsible for the intimate care of children will undertake their duties in a professional manner at all times. Fairlawn & Haseltine recognise that there is a need to treat all children with respect when intimate care is given. No child should be attended to in a way that causes distress or pain.

## Our approach to best practice

The management of all children with intimate care needs will be carefully planned. The child who requires intimate care is treated with respect at all times; the child's welfare and dignity are of paramount importance.

Staff members who provide intimate care are fully aware of best practice. They will be supported to adapt their practice in relation to the needs of individual children, taking into account developmental changes such as the onset of puberty and menstruation. Wherever possible staff members who are involved in the intimate care of children/young people will not usually be involved with the delivery of sex education to the children/young people in their care as an additional safeguard to both staff and children/young people involved.

The child will be supported to achieve the highest level of autonomy that is possible given their age and abilities. Staff will encourage each child to do as much for him/herself as he/she can. This may mean, for example, giving the child responsibility for washing themselves.

Individual intimate care plans will be drawn up for particular children as appropriate to suit the circumstances of the child.

Each child's right to privacy will be respected. Careful consideration will be given to each child's situation to determine how many carers might need to be present when a child is toileted. Where possible one child will be catered for by one adult unless there is a sound reason for having more adults present.

Unless a care plan identifies a key adult, where possible the same child will not be cared for by the same adult on a regular basis; ideally there will be a rota of carers known to the child who will take turns in providing care. This will ensure, as far as possible, that over-familiar relationships are discouraged from developing, whilst at the same time guarding against the care being carried out by a succession of completely different carers.
Wherever possible staff should only care intimately for an individual of the same sex. However, in certain circumstances this principle may need to be waived where failure to provide appropriate care would result in negligence, for example female staff supporting boys in a primary school as no male staff are available.

The needs and wishes of children and parents/carers will be taken into account wherever possible within the constraints of staffing and equal opportunities legislation.

**The Protection of Children**
Education Child Protection Procedures and Inter-Agency Child Protection procedures will be adhered to. All children will be taught personal safety skills carefully matched to their level of development and understanding. If a member of staff has any concerns about physical changes in a child's presentation, e.g. marks, bruises, soreness etc. they will immediately report concerns to the appropriate manager/ designated person for child protection.

If a child becomes distressed or unhappy about being cared for by a particular member of staff, the matter will be looked into and outcomes recorded. Parents/carers will be contacted at the earliest opportunity as part of this process in order to reach a resolution. Staffing schedules will be altered until the issue(s) are resolved so that the child's needs remain paramount. Further advice will be taken from outside agencies if necessary.

If a child makes an allegation against a member of staff, all necessary procedures will be followed (see Inter - Agency Child Protection Procedures for details).

**Health and Safety**
Staff should always wear an apron and gloves when dealing with a child who is bleeding or soiled or when changing a soiled nappy. Any soiled waste should be placed in a polythene waste disposal bag, which can be sealed. This bag should then be placed in a bin (complete with a liner) which is specifically designated for the disposal of such waste. The bin should be emptied on a weekly basis and it can be collected as part of the usual refuse collection service as this waste is not classed as clinical waste. Staff should be aware of the school's Health and Safety policy.

Health and Safety advice for schools can be found in the Health and Safety Handbook, available to schools through the Education, Arts and Libraries (EAL) website.

**Further Guidance**

- 'Working Together To Safeguard Children', Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures.

• Circular 10/95, Protecting Children from Abuse; The Role of the Education Service. DFEE www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/guidanceonthelaw/10_95summary

• What To Do IF You're Worried A Child Is Being Abused. Summary (2003) www.doh.gov.uk/safeguardingchildren/index.htm

**Children wearing nappies**

On entry to nursery, we expect children to be toilet trained unless there is an underlying medical or SEND need. Where support is still needed around toileting, we would expect children to be in nappy pants/ pull ups so that staff can facilitate independence. The parent should provide pull ups, disposal bags, wipes, etc. and should be made aware of this responsibility. School is responsible for providing gloves, plastic aprons, a bin and liners to dispose of any waste. In the event that we do not have the facilities or the staff numbers to change soiled nappy-pants then the parent/carer will be called to support.

**Special needs**

Children with special needs have the same rights to safety and privacy when receiving intimate care. Additional vulnerabilities that may arise from a physical disability or learning difficulty must be considered with regard to individual teaching and care plans for each child. As with all arrangements for intimate care needs, agreements between the child, those with parental responsibility and the organisation should be easily understood and recorded.

Regardless of age and ability the views and/or emotional responses of children with special needs should be actively sought (with advocacy arrangements made for those who cannot express their views) in regular reviews of these arrangements.

**Guidance to safeguard children and education staff with regard to situations which may lend themselves to allegations of abuse (physical contact, first aid, showers/ changing clothes, out of school activities and photography)**

**Physical Contact**

- All staff engaged in the care and education of children and young people need to exercise caution in the use of physical contact.
- The expectation is that staff will work in 'limited touch' cultures and that when physical contact is made with children this will be in response to the child's needs at the time, will be of limited duration and will be appropriate given their age, stage of development and background.
- Staff should be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact might be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone the action is described to. Staff must therefore always be prepared to justify actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny. Physical contact which is repeated with an individual child or young person is likely to raise questions unless the justification for this is formally agreed by the child, the organisation and those with parental responsibility.
- Children with special needs may require more physical contact to assist their everyday learning. The general culture of 'limited touch' will be adapted where appropriate to the individual requirements of each child. The arrangements must be understood and agreed by all concerned, justified in terms of the child's needs, consistently applied and open to

scrutiny. Wherever possible consultation with colleagues should take place where any deviation from the arrangements is anticipated.

- Extra caution may be required where a child has previously suffered abuse or neglect. In the child's view physical contact might be associated with such experiences and lead to staff being vulnerable to allegations of abuse.
- Additionally, many such children are extremely needy and seek out inappropriate physical contact. In such circumstances staff should deter the child without causing them a negative experience. Ensuring that a witness is present will help to protect staff from such allegations.

**Children in distress**

There may be occasions when a distressed child needs comfort and reassurance which may include physical touch such as a caring parent would give. Staff must remain self-aware at all times to ensure that their contact is not threatening or intrusive and not subject to misinterpretation.

Judgement will need to take account of the circumstances of a child's distress, their age, the extent and cause of the distress. Unless the child needs an immediate response, staff should consider whether they are the most appropriate person to respond. It may be more suitable to involve the child's relative or school's counsellor.

Particular care must be taken in instances which involve the same child over a period of time.

**First Aid and intimate care**

Staff members who administer first aid should ensure wherever possible that another adult or other children are present. The child's dignity must always be considered and where contact of a more intimate nature is required (e.g. assisting with toileting or the removal of wet/soiled clothing), another member of staff should be in the vicinity and should be made aware of the task being undertaken.

Regular requirements of an intimate nature should be planned for. Agreements between the school, those with parental responsibility and the child concerned should be documented and easily understood. The necessity for such requirements should be reviewed regularly. The child's views must also be actively sought and, in particular, any discomfort with the arrangements addressed.

**Physical Education and other skills coaching**

Some staff members are likely to come into physical contact with children from time to time in the course of their duties, when participating in games or demonstrating an exercise or the use of equipment. Staff should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of misinterpretation. Where it is anticipated that a child might be prone to misinterpret any such contact alternatives should be considered, perhaps involving another member of staff or a less vulnerable child in the demonstration.

**Showers/changing clothes**

Young people are entitled to respect and privacy when changing 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 or teasing does not occur. This means that adults should announce their intention of entering changing rooms, avoid remaining in changing rooms unless a child needs require it, avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress and avoid any visually intrusive behaviour.

Given the vulnerability 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 members need to be vigilant about their own conduct, e.g. adults must not change in the same place as children or shower with children.

**Out of school trips, clubs etc.**

Employees should take particular care when supervising children in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting or after-school activity. Although more informal relationships in such circumstances tend to be usual, the standard of behaviour expected of staff will be no different from the behaviour expected within school. Staff involved in such activities should also be familiar with their school's/establishment's policy and all LA guidance regarding out of school activities.

To ensure children's safety increased vigilance may be required when monitoring their behaviour on field trips, holidays etc. It is important to exercise caution so that a child is not compromised and the member of staff does not attract allegations of overly intrusive or abusive behaviour.

Meetings with children away from the school premises where a chaperone will not be present are not permitted unless specific approval is obtained from the head teacher or other senior colleague with delegated authority. Staff members should not place themselves in a position where they are in a vehicle, house or other venue alone with a child.

If staff members come into contact with children whilst off duty they must behave as though in their professional role, and not give conflicting messages regarding their own conduct.

**Photography, videos and similar creative arts**

Staff should be aware of the potential for such mediums of teaching to be used for the wrong purposes. Additionally, children who have been previously abused in this way may feel threatened by the legitimate use of photography, filming etc. The potential for founded and unfounded allegations of abuse requires that careful consideration be given to the organisation of these activities.

The school has protocols for use of these resources. Consent to take and use photographs or images of the children which will be available outside the institution is sought from the parents/carers with an explanation of the context. Staff, however, must still remain vigilant and observant of children who appear unusually reluctant and uncomfortable around these mediums.

Reviewed by: Emily Bruggy and Ellie Whilby
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Signed: Chair of Governors: