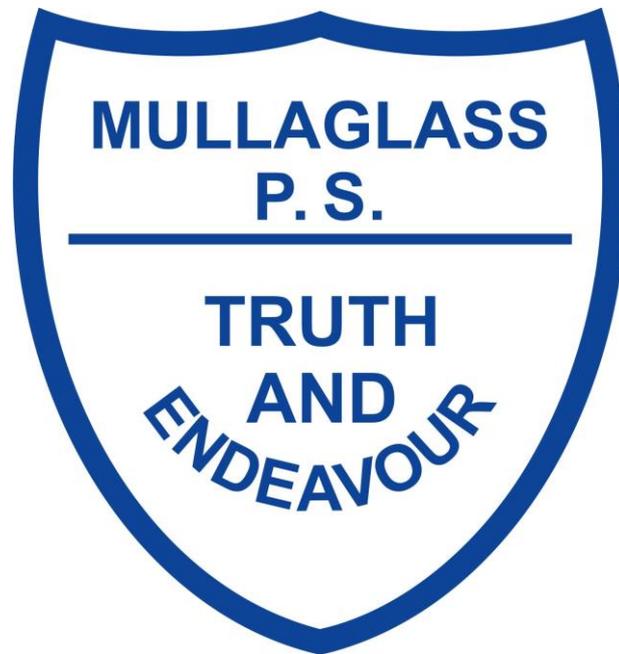


Mullaglass Primary School



# Intimate Care Policy

August 2022

# INTIMATE CARE POLICY

## Introduction

Every child in Mullaglass Primary School has the right to be safe and to be treated with dignity and respect. The guidelines in this policy are designed to safeguard children and staff.

They apply to every member of staff involved with the intimate care of children.

Disabled children can be especially vulnerable. Staff involved with their intimate care need to be sensitive to their individual needs.

Staff also need to be aware that some adults may use intimate care, as an opportunity to abuse children. It is important to bear in mind that some care tasks / treatments can be open to misinterpretation. Adhering to these guidelines of good practice should safeguard children and staff.

## Definition

*Intimate care may be defined as any activity required to meet the personal care needs to each individual child. 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.*

AT MULLAGLASS PRIMARY SCHOOL WE AIM:

- To safeguard the dignity, rights and well-being of our pupils
- To provide guidance, support and protection to staff
- To reassure parents/carers that their children are cared for and protected

Mullaglass Primary School is committed to ensuring that all staff responsible for the intimate care of children will undertake their duties in a professional manner at all times. Mullaglass Primary School recognises 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. Mullaglass Primary School is committed to ensuring that staff undertaking intimate care are supported by policy, training and monitoring. Each child's right to privacy will be respected. Careful consideration will be given to each child's situation to determine how many staff might need to be present when a child needs help with intimate care. Where possible, one child will be cared for by two adults. All staff at Mullaglass Primary receive Child Protection training. All staff receive appropriate specialised training to ensure they are skilled in fulfilling their responsibilities. Facilities, equipment and resources are provided to ensure the safety, privacy and dignity of our pupils. All staff promote the independence of our pupils

within their capabilities. As a basic principle, children 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 themselves as they can. This may mean, for example, giving the child responsibility for washing themselves. For children with medical or other needs that require intimate care on a daily basis, permission is sought from parents/carers (Appendix 1) and a Care Plan (Appendix 2) is drawn up; this is planned and agreed with the parents/carer and the child. These plans include a risk assessment to address issues such as moving and handling, personal safety of the child and the staff and health.

## PRINCIPALS OF INTIMATE CARE POLICY

The following are the fundamental principles upon which this Policy and Guidelines are based:

- Every child has the right to be safe.
- Every child has the right to personal privacy.
- Every child has the right to be valued as an individual.
- Every child has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Every child has the right to be involved and consulted in their own intimate care to the best of their abilities.
- Every child has their right to express their views on their own intimate care and to have such views taken into account.
- Every child has the right to have levels to intimate care that are as consistent as possible.

## CHANGING A CHILD WHO HAS WET OR SOILED HIM/HERSELF

If a child soils him/herself in school a professional judgement has to be made whether it is appropriate to change the child in school, or request the parent/carer to collect the child for changing. In either circumstance the child's needs are paramount and he/she should be comforted and reassured throughout. The following guidelines outline our procedures but we will also seek to make age-appropriate responses.

- The child will be given the opportunity to change his / her underwear in private and carry out this process themselves. School will have a supply of wipes, clean underwear and spare uniform for this purpose. (Supplies of clean underwear and spare uniforms are maintained in the Foundation Stage however parents are asked to send in a change of clothing).
- If a child is not able to complete this task unaided, school staff will attempt to assist the child.
- If the child is unwilling to accept adult support, the emergency contact will be contacted to come to school within an appropriate time frame. The child will be accompanied and supported by a staff member until they arrive. This avoids any further distress and preserves dignity.
- If the emergency contact cannot attend, school will seek verbal permission for staff to change the child. If none of the contacts can be reached the Principal is to be

consulted and the decision taken on the basis of loco-parentis and our duty of care to meet the needs of the child.

- The member of staff who has assisted a pupil with intimate care will complete the record and ensure that a copy is sent home.

## SWIMMING LESSONS

Our Primary 5, 6 and Primary 7 classes participate in a swimming programme. 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.

## RESIDENTIAL VISITS

Residential educational visits are an important part of our Primary 7 school experience. Particular care is required when supervising pupils in this less formal setting. As with extra-curricular activities, although more informal relationships in such circumstances tend to be usual, staff are still guided by our Child Protection procedures, Pastoral Care and Positive Behaviour Policies. Some specific intimate care issues may arise in a residential context. These will be identified and planned for through risk assessments specific for each trip.

## 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, e.g. adults must not change in the same place as children or shower with children. 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 children are changing that an incident report is made.

## NIGHT TIME ROUTINES

It is established practice that the children's bedrooms are private spaces and anyone else wanting to enter the room should knock and announce their intention to enter. At bedtime,

children are given a set amount of time to change and prepare for bed and will be told when the supervising teachers will visit the rooms to check all is okay and switch off the lights. A reciprocal arrangement is in place in the mornings. There are occasions when incidents take place during the night and the need arises to:

- Assist a child to change his/her clothes
- Change a child who has soiled him / herself
- Provide comfort to an upset or distressed child
- Assist a child who requires a specific medical procedure and who is not able to carry this out unaided. Guidance as above will be followed with the support of an additional member of staff in attendance.

## WORKING WITH CHILDREN OF THE OPPOSITE GENDER

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 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 gender with the following provisions:

- When intimate care is being carried out, all children have the right to dignity and privacy, i.e. 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 Designated Teacher for Child Protection 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 levels 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

## GUIDELINES FOR GOOD PRACTICE

All children have the right to be safe and to be treated with dignity and respect. These guidelines are designed to safeguard children and staff. They apply to every member of staff involved with the intimate care of children. Young children and children with special

educational needs can be especially vulnerable. Staff involved with their intimate care need to be particularly sensitive to their individual needs. Members of staff also need to be aware that some adults may use intimate care, as an opportunity to abuse children. It is important to bear in mind that some forms of assistance can be open to misinterpretation. Adhering to the following guidelines of good practice should safeguard both children and staff.

- 1) Involve the child in the intimate care. Try to encourage a child's independence as far as possible in his or her intimate care. Where a situation renders a child fully dependent, talk about what is going to be done and, where possible, give choices. Check your practice by asking the child or parent about any preferences while carrying out the intimate care.
- 2) Treat every child with dignity and respect and ensure privacy appropriate to the child's age and situation. Care should not be carried out by a member of staff working alone with a child.
- 3) Make sure practice in intimate care is consistent. As a child may have multiple carers a consistent approach to care is essential. Effective communication between all parties ensures that practice is consistent.
- 4) Be aware of your own limitations. Only carry out activities you understand and feel competent with. If in doubt, ask. Some procedures must only be carried out by members of staff who have been formally trained and assessed.
- 5) Promote positive self-esteem and body image. Confident, self-assured children who feel their bodies belong to them are less vulnerable to sexual abuse. The approach you take to intimate care can convey lots of messages to a child about their body worth. Your attitude to a child's intimate care is important. Keeping in mind the child's age, routine care can be both efficient and relaxed.
- 6) If you have any concerns you must report them. If you observe any unusual markings, discolouration or swelling, report it immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

If a child is accidentally hurt during intimate care or misunderstands or misinterprets something, reassure the child, ensure their safety and report the incident immediately to the designated teacher. Report and record any unusual emotional or behavioural response by the child. A written record of concerns must be made available to parents and kept in the child's personal file.

## SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

All members of staff working with children are vetted by the Education Authority. This includes students on work placement and volunteers who may be left alone with children. Vetting includes criminal record checks (Access NI) and two references. Only those members

of staff who are familiar with the intimate care policy and other Pastoral Care Policies of the school are involved in the intimate care of children.

#### MONITORING AND REVIEW

Provision of intimate care is monitored and reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that policy and procedure is followed and that pupils and staff remain comfortable with arrangements provided at Mullaglass Primary School.

Appendix 1: Permission for Intimate Care

## Mullaglass Primary School

### Permission for Intimate Care

Child:	
DoB:	
Parent/guardian:	
<p>I/we give permission for the assistance detailed overleaf to be provided to my/our child, and will advise the school of any change that may affect this provision.</p> <p>Signed:</p> <p>Date:</p>	

**Appendix 2: Intimate Care Record**

**Intimate Care Record**

<b>Child's Name</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Adult signature</b>

### Appendix 3: Intimate Care Plan

Intimate Care Plan		
Pupil:	Date of Birth:	
Diagnosis:		
Assistance:		
Timetable:		
Persons Assisting:		
Alternative Arrangements:		
Location/Equipment:		

Designation	Signed	Date
Parent		
Pupil		
Assistant/s		
Class Teacher		
Principal		