



**St Louise's**  
Comprehensive College, Belfast  
A Specialist College



## **INTIMATE CARE POLICY**

### **ST LOUISE'S MISSION STATEMENT**

*"In partnership with parents, guardians, staff, governors and students  
St Louise's promotes excellence in learning and teaching within a  
Catholic, Vincentian, Comprehensive ethos"*

## **Definition**

Intimate care may be defined as any activity required to meet the personal care needs of each individual child. Parents have a responsibility to advise staff of the intimate care needs of their child, and staff have a responsibility to work in partnership with children and parents.

Intimate care can include:

- Feeding
- Oral care
- Washing
- Dressing/undressing
- Toileting
- Menstrual care
- Treatments such as enemas, suppositories, enteral feeds
- Catheter and stoma care
- Supervision of a child involved in intimate self-care

## **Principles of Intimate Care**

- 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 ability
- Every child has the 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 of intimate care that are as consistent as possible

## **Responsibilities of Staff involved with intimate care**

All staff working with children must be vetted. Volunteers and guests in school will be supervised by a vetted member of staff. Only named identified staff should undertake the intimate care of children. The Principal/Designated teachers for child protection must ensure that all staff undertaking the intimate care of children are familiar with, and understand the Intimate Care Policy together with associated Policy and Procedures.

All staff must be trained in the specific types of intimate care that they carry out and fully understand the Intimate Care Policy and guidelines within the context of their work.

Intimate care arrangements must be agreed by the school, parents/guardian and child (if appropriate).

Intimate care arrangements must be recorded in the child's personal file and consent forms signed by the parents/guardian and child (if appropriate).

Staff should not undertake any aspect of intimate care that has not been agreed between the school, parents/guardian and child (if appropriate).

Intimate care arrangements will be reviewed regularly. The views of all relevant parties, including the child (if appropriate), will be sought and considered to inform future arrangements.

If a staff member has concerns about a colleague's intimate care practice they must report this to their Principal.

### **Guidelines for Good Practice**

Our core aim is to provide a secure, caring, happy and challenging learning environment in which all individuals are encouraged to respect others and develop to their maximum potential as members of the school and the wider community.

The following guidelines 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.
- Involve the child in their intimate care
- Treat every child with dignity and respect and ensure privacy appropriate to the child's age and situation. Make sure practice in intimate care is consistent. As a child can have multiple carers a consistent approach to care is essential. Effective communication between parents/outside agencies ensures practice is consistent.
- Be aware of own limitations
- Promote positive self-esteem and body image. Confident, self-assured children who feel their body belongs to them are less vulnerable to sexual abuse. The approach taken to intimate care can convey lots of message to a child about their body worth.

### **Concerns that need to be reported**

If any unusual markings, discolourations or swelling including the genital area, are observed, this should be reported immediately to the designated teacher(s). If during the intimate care of a child the

carer accidentally hurts them, the child should be reassured of their safety and the incident should be reported immediately to the designated teacher(s). Any unusual emotional or behavioural response by the child should be reported and recorded. A written record of concerns must be made and kept in the child's personal file.

It is important to follow the school's reporting and recording procedures.

Parents/guardians must be informed about concerns.

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

The individual child's safety, dignity and privacy are of paramount importance.

The intimate care of boys/girls can be carried out by a member of staff of the opposite sex with the following provisions:

- The delivery of intimate care by professionally qualified staff will be governed by The Professional Code of Conduct for St Louise's in conjunction with the School's policy and procedures and in agreement with the designated teacher for Child Protection/Principal
- 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 care tasks are being carried out, the care should stop immediately and an attempt made to ascertain why the child is distressed and provide reassurance
- Concerns should be reported to the Designated teacher and a written record made
- Parents/guardians must be informed about concerns

### **Changing after Accidents**

From time to time in school children with specific medical needs may need assistance with intimate care, i.e. help with changing of clothes and cleaning after a wetting, soiling or vomiting incident. It may be that they need general help or that they have had an accident and may need to change. Children of post- primary school age without specific medical needs are considered to be capable of changing themselves after a wetting, soiling or vomiting incident. Spare clothes will be provided and parents contacted as necessary.

In the situation where a child needs some assistance with intimate care, a member of staff will help but toilet doors should be left

unlocked. Another member of staff should be informed so that there is openness and shared information about what help was given.

Should children with specific medical needs wet, soil or vomit on themselves, school staff will help by providing spare clothing if available. If the child is able they will be encouraged to change their clothing, however if they need help and are willing to receive it the staff will assist. Again this assistance must not be given without another member of staff being made aware of it. If this situation does occur the parent will be informed by note or telephone that day and the school will keep a written record of the incident(s) within the Safeguarding Child Protection notes for each Year Group. This will form part of the monthly Safeguarding Report that will be tabled with the Safeguarding Team. This report will be completed by the Designated Teachers for Child Protection within St Louise's.

When helping children with intimate care, we will aim to provide them with the appropriate level of caring support whilst minimising as far as possible the level of physical contact with the child in intimate body regions. Should any member of staff have concerns about a child or a situation they should report these to a Designated Teacher or to the Principal. If a parent or carer has concerns about a child or questions about a situation in school, they should contact the Principal.

### **Specific Intimate Care Needs**

When a child in St Louise's requires specific intimate care needs, their parents/carers will be given a copy of this policy and will work with the school to complete the Intimate Care Plan. This plan will be drawn up in consultation with the parents/carers, the student, members of staff providing intimate care, SENCO and the Designated Teacher.

### **Duty of Care**

It is acknowledged that out of a duty of care, any staff member may assist a pupil who is unwell or upset. Support which is considered by definition to be 'intimate' will be carried out by trained members of staff in agreement with the student and their parent/guardian.

## **Consultation**

Key stakeholders have been consulted on this policy – (Education & Libraries Order (NI) 2003):

- students;
- parents and carers;
- all staff; and
- Board of Governors.

*This policy document takes on board:*

- *Regional Area Child Protection Committee Child Protection Procedures – April 2005*
- *DENI Child Protection & Pastoral Care Guidance 1999/10*
- *Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007*
- *Circular 03/13 Guidance for schools on the Welfare and Protection of Pupils – Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003*
- *Circular 06/06 Guidance on safer recruitment practices for education authorities (Access NI)*
- *Circular 06/07 Guidance for schools on the employment of substitute teachers (NISTR)*
- *Circular 06/08 Strand 3 Guidance for schools on the requirement for child protection training in relation to interviewing and selection panels*
- *Circular 06/09 Guidance on the vetting of paid and unpaid staff (Access NI)*
- *Circular 06/25 Guidance on the requirement for vetting of school governors (Access NI)*