



**Federation of
Westminster Special Schools
& Bi-Borough Inclusion Service**

Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines

Ratified by Full Governing Board: March 2022

To be reviewed by EHT and Nominated Governor: March 2023

1. Principles

All the pupils at Federation of Westminster Special Schools have the right to be safe and to be treated with dignity and respect in any situation. These guidelines are to safeguard both the pupils and the staff. They will apply to every member of staff involved with any aspect of the intimate care of pupils.

Intimate care can be defined as those personal, and often private, aspects of daily living that a non-disabled person would carry out independently. Some of our pupils will require assistance with toileting, dressing and undressing for swimming and P.E. and managing menstruation. All staff must be sensitive to the individual needs of each pupil.

Consistency in the planning and implementation of intimate care programmes will help the pupils understand more clearly what to expect in particular situations. No child should be attended to in a way that causes distress, embarrassment or discomfort.

This policy and its guidelines are consistent with the ethos and the aims of the Federation of Westminster Special Schools and the current legislation for safeguarding children. It is cross-referenced with the school policies on:

- PSHE and Wellbeing Framework
- Relationships and Sex Education
- Code of Conduct
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- School Behaviour and Rewards Policy
- Equalities Plan and Policy
- Moving and Handling
- Health and Safety
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions

2. Aims

We will:

- Treat every pupil with dignity and respect, ensuring the maximum amount of privacy
- Encourage the pupils to carry out as much of their intimate care as they can.
- Involve the pupil as much as is possible in the planning and implementation of their individual intimate care programmes.
- Be responsive to each pupil's reactions and concerns.
- Ensure that practice in intimate care is consistent.
- Be aware of and anticipate the needs of the pupils.
- Take gender, age, personal and cultural factors into account when planning intimate care programmes
- Encourage each pupil to have a positive image of his or her own body
- Safeguard pupils against any form of abuse.
- Safeguard staff against false allegations of abuse.

- Ensure, as far as possible, that a staff member of their own gender accompanies pupils needing assistance with particular aspects of intimate care.
- Ensure that care programmes continue to meet the individual needs of pupils by reviewing them regularly.
- Teach pupils about giving informed consent

3. Implementation of Our Aims

3.1 Communication

We will:

- Be aware of, and use, each child's preferred means of communication (e.g. PECS, verbal, symbolic) to anticipate their needs and preferences and be able to communicate our actions at a level appropriate to their understanding
- Pay special attention to the preferred communication methods for pupils with a diagnosis of autism to ensure that they understand as much as possible, thereby reducing anxiety to a minimum. It is important to remember that some pupils may have anxieties around toilet training and also have difficulties transferring skills between home and school due to the difference in environments.

3.2 Respect, dignity and privacy are paramount at all times

Respect

"Undignified care is that which renders individuals invisible, depersonalises and objectifies people, is abusive or humiliating, narrowly focused and disempowers the individual."

(Tad et al, 2011)

To respect a child's privacy and dignity requires a person-centred approach. It is important to think about the impact on the whole person when attending to their needs:

- Physical
- Psychological
- Emotional
- Social
- Spiritual
- Religious
- Cultural

Dignified care

Key elements of dignified care include:

- Respectful communication.
- Respecting privacy.
- Promoting autonomy and a sense of control.
- Supporting pupils in a respectful and sensitive manner.

- Promoting inclusivity, a sense of participation and consent
- Focusing on the individual.
- Recognising human rights (such as equality, respect and autonomy).

We will:

- Encourage the child to have a positive image of his or her own body. Confident, assertive children who feel their bodies belong to them are less vulnerable to sexual abuse. As well as basics like privacy, the approach taken to the child's intimate care can convey lots of messages to them about what their body is 'worth'. A positive, respectful attitude to the child's intimate care is therefore very important.
- Ensure that we maintain the dignity and privacy of pupils by closing toilet doors, using curtains or screens as appropriate, toileting pupils on their own if necessary, asking other staff, pupils and visitors to refrain from entering toileting or changing areas on other business whilst these areas are in use.
- ***Ensure that the focus is on the needs of the pupil at all times and that all communication is with them, not about them***
- Ensure that the language we use when referring to intimate care issues, either when talking to the child or another member of staff is positive and sensitive. ***Words like naughty, dirty, smelly etc. are offensive and unacceptable.***
- **Respect a child's dignity by ensuring that their intimate care needs are discussed discreetly and not in a public place, or in front of other pupils.**

Showers, changing clothes and toilets

Young people are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes, showering or going to the toilet. 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.

Therefore adults will:

- Announce their intention of entering changing rooms
- Avoid remaining in rooms unless the pupil's needs require it
- Avoid any physical contact when pupils are in a state of undress unless the pupil's needs require it
- Avoid any visually intrusive behaviour unless the pupil's needs require it

Given the vulnerabilities of the situation, it is strongly recommended that when supervising pupils 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 pupils or shower with pupils.**

For those exceptional circumstances where another member of staff is not available [to be present when supervising pupils in a state of undress], the member of staff should always let a colleague know where they are with the child so their whereabouts is known.

First Aid

Staff who administer first aid will ensure, wherever possible, that another adult is present. The pupil's dignity will 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 must be made aware of the task being undertaken.

Personal Autonomy

We will ensure that:

- Pupils are given the opportunity to carry out as much of their intimate care for themselves as they are able to given their age and abilities, i.e. try to avoid doing things for a pupil that he or she is able to do alone, or is able to assist with.
- If a pupil is fully dependent, we will talk through what is happening and give the pupil choices wherever possible. Individual intimate care plans will be drawn up to suit the circumstances of each child. These plans will be linked to the pupil's moving and handling plan as appropriate.
- If a pupil expresses dislike or discomfort concerning aspects of intimate care we will try to establish the cause and rectify it.

Staffing

We will: Respect each pupil's right to privacy

- Give consideration to each pupil's situation to determine how many carers might need to be present when intimate care is required
- Accept that one staff member may carry out intimate care alone with one child, unless the task requires two people inform another adult when they are going to do so
- Ensure that wherever possible staff only care intimately for an individual of the same sex. However, this principle may need to be waived where failure to provide appropriate care would result in negligence e.g. two female staff supporting boys when no suitably qualified male staff are available.
- Discuss intimate care arrangements with parents/carers on a regular basis and update the pupil's care plan accordingly. The needs and wishes of pupils and parents will be taken into account wherever possible within the constraints of staffing and equal opportunities legislation.
- Understand that pupils who have been abused may feel unsafe with only one member of staff present. Pupils in these circumstances will be asked regularly if they want one or two members of staff present.
- Allow regular agency staff to assist pupils with intimate care provided:
 - They have read the relevant school policies
 - Have received necessary training
 - They are assisting a member of the school staff; agency staff must not be asked to provide intimate care unless they are with a member of school staff
- Ensure that (*volunteer workers*) or school students (16 and younger) on placements do not assist with toileting, dressing, or undressing after swimming

- *Where possible we will try to ensure that female pupils are cared for by female staff and that male pupils are cared for by male staff although this may not always be possible.*

Safeguarding and Staff Responsibilities

- The Federation of Westminster Special Schools safeguarding procedures will be adhered to at all times and staff will carry out all planned intimate care programmes with reference to the stated aims of this policy.
- All pupils will be taught personal safety skills, and how to give consent, carefully matched to their level of development and understanding.
- If a pupil is known to have been abused, the pupil will be offered the choice of having a second member of staff present. If the pupil prefers to have only one member of staff present, then it is essential that another member of staff is aware of this and is informed of anything that is not a usual part of the pupil's care plan – e.g. if cream is being used on the genital area.

The following incidents must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding lead or any member of the Senior Leadership Team

- If a member of staff accidentally hurts a pupil whilst carrying out a part of their intimate care programme
- If a member of staff has any concerns about physical changes in a pupil's presentation, e.g. marks, bruises, soreness etc. s/he will immediately report concerns to the appropriate manager/designated person for pupil protection.
- If the pupil seems to be sexually aroused by the member of staff's actions
- If the pupil becomes sexually provocative
- If the pupil misunderstands or misinterprets an action or instruction
- If a pupil becomes distressed or unhappy about being cared for by a particular member of staff

It is essential that any incident covered by any of these categories is investigated and the outcomes recorded. Some of these areas could be cause for concern about the child. There is also the possibility that the pupil or another adult may misconstrue something that a member of staff has done.

Any adult who has concerns about the conduct of a colleague at the school or about any improper practice must report this to the Executive Head, Headteachers, Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Chair/Co-chair of Governors if the concern is about the Executive Head.

If a pupil makes an allegation against a member of staff, all necessary procedures and protocols will be followed (see Allegations of Abuse protocols). Parents/carers will be contacted and informed as part of this process in order to reach a resolution. Where deemed appropriate; staffing will be altered until the issue(s) are resolved. During this time the pupil's needs remain of paramount importance. School will seek further specialist advice from outside agencies where necessary to maximize best outcomes for the pupil.

Health and Safety

When attending to the intimate care of pupils, staff must:

- Be aware of the school's Health and Safety policy
- Always wash hands before commencing intimate care and after removing gloves.
- Always wear gloves
- Always wear an apron and gloves when dealing with a pupil who is menstruating or has soiled.
- Clean Changing beds thoroughly with antibacterial spray before and after each use.
- Place any soiled waste (urinary or faecal) should then be placed in a bin (complete with a liner) which is specifically designated for the disposal of such waste.