



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

# **Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines**

**Ratified by Full Governing Board: May 2024**

**To be reviewed by EHT and Nominated Governor: May 2025**

## **1. Principles**

All the children and young people (CYP) at the 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 (CYP) and the staff. They will apply to every member of staff involved with any aspect of the intimate care of CYP.

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 CYP 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 CYP.

Consistency in the planning and implementation of intimate care programmes will help the CYP understand more clearly what to expect in particular situations. No CYP 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 CYP with dignity and respect, ensuring the maximum amount of privacy
- Encourage the CYPs to carry out as much of their intimate care as they can
- Involve them as much as is possible in the planning and implementation of their individual intimate care programmes
- Be responsive to each CYP's reactions and concerns
- Ensure that practice in intimate care is consistent
- Be aware of and anticipate the needs of the CYPs
- Take gender, age, personal and cultural factors into account when planning intimate care programmes
- Encourage each CYP to have a positive image of his or her own body
- Safeguard CYPs 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 CYPs needing assistance with particular aspects of intimate care
- Ensure intimate care arrangements continue to meet the individual needs of CYPs by reviewing them as required
- Teach CYPs about giving informed consent

### **3. Implementation of Our Aims**

#### **3.1 Communication**

We will:

- Be aware of, and use, each CYP's preferred means of communication (e.g. PECS, verbal, symbolic) to anticipate their needs and preferences and be able to communicate our actions at an appropriate level and listen to and honour their communication with us.
- Pay attention to the preferred communication methods (expressive and receptive) or all CYP to ensure they understand as much as possible, thereby reducing anxiety to a minimum. It is important to remember that some CYPs may have anxieties around toilet training and other aspects of personal/intimate care 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 CYP'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 CYPs 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 CYP to have a positive image of their own body. Confident, assertive CYP who feel their bodies belong to them are less vulnerable to sexual abuse. As well as basics like privacy, the approach taken to the CYP's intimate care can convey lots of messages to them about what their body is 'worth'. A positive, respectful attitude to the CYP's intimate care is therefore very important.
- Ensure that we maintain the dignity and privacy of CYP by closing toilet doors, using curtains or screens as appropriate, asking other staff, CYP and visitors to refrain from entering toileting or changing areas on other business whilst these areas are in use
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### **□ Ensure that the focus is on the needs of the CYP at all times and that all communication is with them, not about them**

- We need to think about the language we use and not use negative language to describe aspects of personal care eg we need to think carefully about the use of words such as "dirty" or "smelly"; this should never be used, or able to be interpreted to be about the CYP themselves. A nappy may need to go in the bin because it is dirty, there may be a smell but that should not refer to as "smelly".
- Communication should be kept positive at all times we are dealing with normal human functions that we need to ensure do not have shame or negativity attached to them by our comments. **Words like naughty, dirty, smelly etc. are offensive and unacceptable.**
- Respect a CYP's dignity by ensuring that their intimate care needs are discussed if necessary discreetly and not in a public place, or in front of other CYP or staff.

## **Showers, changing clothes and toilets**

CYP 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 them 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 CYP's needs require it
- Avoid any physical contact when CYP are in a state of undress unless their needs require it
- Avoid any visually intrusive behaviour unless the CYP's needs require it

Given the vulnerabilities of the situation, it is strongly recommended that when supervising CYPs 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 CYP or shower with them**

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

### ***First Aid***

Staff who administer first aid will ensure, wherever possible, that another adult is present. The CYP'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:

- CYPs 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 CYP that they are able to do alone, or are able to assist with. We recognise that the level of support a CYP may vary e.g increasing in a less familiar venue or if they are dysregulated or while they are learning a new skill or extending their skills.
- If a CYP is fully dependent, we will talk through what is happening and give them choices wherever possible. Individual intimate care needs will be developed by the class team with support from parents/carers to suit the skills and needs of each CYP. These may be linked to the CYP's moving and handling needs/plan as appropriate.
- If a CYP expresses dislike or discomfort concerning aspects of intimate care we will try to establish the cause and address it.

## **Staffing**

We will: Respect each CYP's right to privacy

- Give consideration to each CYP'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 (although ideally there should be two) with one CYP unless the task requires two people and inform another adult when they are going to do so where possible
- Ensure that wherever possible staff only care intimately for an individual of the same gender. 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 them accordingly. The needs and wishes of CYPs and parents will be taken into account wherever possible within the constraints of staffing and equal opportunities legislation.
- Understand that CYP who have been abused may feel unsafe with only one member of staff present. In these circumstances they will be asked regularly if they want one or two members of staff present.
- Allow regular agency staff to assist CYPs 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

## **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 intimate care with reference to the stated aims of this policy.
- All CYPs will be taught personal safety skills, and how to give consent, carefully matched to their level of development and understanding.
- If a CYP is known to have been sexually abused, their individual plan will recognise that they may choose to have a second member of staff present for intimate care. A DSL will be involved in sharing this information with key staff and developing a plan with the CYP. Relevant staff should be aware of the plan and how to report anything that is not a usual part of the CYP's intimate care routine – 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 CYP whilst carrying out a part of their intimate care programme
- If a member of staff has any concerns about physical changes in a CYP's presentation, e.g. marks, bruises, soreness etc. they must immediately report concerns to the appropriate manager/DSL.
- If the CYP seems to be sexually aroused by the member of staff's actions
- If the CYP becomes sexually provocative
- If the CYP misunderstands or misinterprets an action or instruction
- If a CYP becomes distressed or unhappy about being cared for by a particular member of staff

It is essential that any of these incidents is investigated and the outcomes recorded. Some of these areas could be cause for concern about the CYP. There is also the possibility that the CYP 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 immediately to the Headteacher, Executive Head, Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Chair/Co-chair of Governors if the concern is about the Executive Head (or the HT if the Executive Head not available). DSLs can support a member of staff in contacting the EHT or Chair/Co chair of Governors.

If a CYP makes an allegation against a member of staff, all necessary procedures and protocols will be followed (see Child protection and Safeguarding policy). 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 CYP's needs remain of paramount importance. School will seek further specialist advice from outside agencies (including the LADO) where necessary to maximize best outcomes for the CYP.

***Health and Safety***

When attending to the intimate care of CYPs staff must:

- Be aware of the Federation Health and Safety policy
- Always wash hands before commencing intimate care and after removing gloves.
- Always wear gloves and ensure these are used for one purpose only and never used for supporting more than one CYP
- Always wear an apron and gloves when dealing with a CYP 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.