



## **COLÁISTE MHUIRE CO-ED, THURLES**



### **INTIMATE CARE POLICY**

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## **Mission Statement**

***School Mission statement: At Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed we aspire to develop a caring and inclusive learning community that encourages the potential of each person. The mission is realised through our core values of Excellence in Education, Respect, Care, Community and Equality.***

***Rath as Saothar – Success through effort.***

### **Rationale**

This policy has been formulated to ensure the needs of students who require intimate care are met. Our core values of excellence in education, respect, care, equality and community underpin this policy.

### **What is Intimate Care?**

Intimate care may be defined as any activity required to meet the personal care needs of an 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. In school this may occur on a regular basis or on a one - off incident.

Intimate care is any care which involves one of the following:

- Assisting a child to change his/her clothes and underwear
- Changing or washing a child who has soiled him / herself
- Assisting with toileting needs
- Supervising a child involved in intimate self-care
- Providing first aid assistance
- Feeding a child
- Assisting a child who requires a specific medical procedure and who is not able to carry this out unaided.

Parents have the responsibility to advise the school of any known intimate care needs relating to their child and to provide a change of clothing to be left on school premises.

### **Principles of Intimate Care**

The following are the fundamental principles of intimate care upon which our policy guidelines are based:

- Every child has a 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;
- All children have the right to be involved and consulted in their own intimate care to the best of their abilities;
- All children have the right to express their views on their own intimate care and to have their views taken into account;
- Every child has the right to have levels of intimate care that are appropriate and consistent.

### **Assisting a child to change his/her clothes**

On occasions an individual child may require some assistance with changing if, for example, he /she has an accident at the toilet, gets wet outside, or has vomit on his/her clothes etc.

- Staff will always encourage children to attempt undressing and dressing unaided. However, if assistance is required, this will be given. What needs to happen will be explained to the student and their consent will be sought.
- Staff will have a colleague in attendance when supporting dressing/undressing and will always give the child the opportunity to change in private, unless the child is in such distress that it is not possible to do so.
- If a staff member is concerned in any way or the child is distressed parents will be notified and asked to come to the school and assist their child.
- Parents/Guardians will be contacted (unless stated otherwise in a student's care plan).

### Changing a child who has soiled him/herself

A meeting is held with parents/guardians and the student, if this has been flagged as a possibility by parents, to have a plan in place should the child soil him/herself during the school day.

If a child soils him/herself in school a professional judgement has to be made, based on the agreed plan, 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, consulted, and reassured throughout.

The following guidelines outline our procedures, but we will also seek to make age-appropriate responses.

- The child is asked do they want to go home as it is paramount that the child's dignity is maintained. Due to this it is paramount that emergency contacts are established in the event of a parent not being available.
- The child will be given the opportunity to change his/her underwear in private and carry out this process themselves. The large, designated toilet will be used and sign saying "do not disturb" will be placed on the door.
- The school will have a supply of wipes, clean underwear, spare clothes and scented bags for this purpose. (Parents will be asked to send in a change of clothing for pupils who have ongoing intimate care needs).
- If a child is not able to complete this task unaided, school staff will attempt to contact the parent/emergency contact to inform them of the situation.
- If the parent/guardian/emergency contact is able 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. In this instance a parent/guardian can use the school facilities to assist their child.
- If the parent/emergency contact cannot attend, school will seek verbal permission for staff to change the child. If none of the contacts can be reached the decision will be taken on the basis of *in 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 adhere to Child Protection Guidelines.

1. Ensure that the action you are taking is necessary.
2. Get verbal agreement to proceed from parents and child

## **Pastoral Care Procedures**

1. Ensure the child is happy with who is changing him/her.
2. Be responsive to any distress shown.

## **Basic Hygiene Routines**

1. Wear protective disposable gloves and aprons
2. Seal any soiled clothing in a plastic bag for return to parents
3. Sanitise hands

## **School Responsibilities**

- All members of staff working with children are Garda vetted by the Teaching Council or Tipperary ETB (who are the employers of staff)
- 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
- Where anticipated, intimate care arrangements are agreed between the school and parents and, when appropriate and possible, by the child. Consent forms are signed by the parent and stored in the child's file.

## **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.

Adhering to the following guidelines of good practice should safeguard both children and staff:

- 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 and get consent. Check your practice by asking the child or parent about any preferences while carrying out the intimate care.
- All SNAs are trained but in the majority of cases one SNA deals with the intimate care needs of each particular child. In the event of the absence of the main SNA the No 2 SNA will perform the procedures but this will be following a conversation with the student. If the student is uncomfortable a parent will be called. No more than 3 SNAs will be designated to each child.
- 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.
- 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.
- Be aware of your own limitations. Only carry out activities you understand and feel competent with. If in doubt, ask someone familiar with the needs of the child.
- 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.

- If you have any concerns, you must report them to the Designated Liaison Person.
- A blanket will be used to ensure privacy and dignity of child is maintained.
- When carrying out care around bodily functions wear appropriate personal protective equipment e.g., gloves, and disposable aprons.

### 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:

- Treat the child as an individual with dignity and respect.
- Make eye contact at the child's level.
- Use simple language and repeat if necessary.
- Wait for response.
- Continue to explain to the child what is happening even if there is no response.

The Board of Management adopted this policy at a meeting in **December 2023** and the policy is available on the school website.

## Appendix 1

Should it be necessary, I give permission for \_\_\_\_\_ to receive intimate care (e.g., help with changing or following toileting).

I understand that staff will endeavour to encourage my child to be independent.

I understand that I will be informed discretely should the occasion arise.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Adult with parental responsibility for: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2

To be completed each time a child requires a change of clothing due to an incident such as wetting and /or soiling themselves or being physically sick.

Date	Time	Initials of Pupil	Class	Incident (W,S,V)	Action Taken (other Comments)	Staff Involved	Signed