

## INTIMATE PHYSICAL CARE OF STUDENTS POLICY

Enable Ireland Sandymount School is committed to ensuring that all staff responsible for the intimate care of children and adults will undertake their duties in a professional manner at all times. We acknowledge that there is a need to treat all people with dignity and respect when intimate care is given. No person should be attended to in a way that causes distress or pain. The student's dignity and wellbeing are of paramount importance. The right to privacy will be respected.

Each student has the right to physical care assistance in order for him or her to participate fully in school life. The level of assistance required will reflect the needs of each individual student at any given time. Specific instructions about intimate care will be discussed with parents during the IEP formulation consultation time each year. Details of personal care will be documented in the Personal Pupil profile (PPP) and updated when necessary.

### Reference to other policies

- Child Safeguarding Statement and Safeguarding Risk Assessment
- Safety, health and welfare policy
- Manual and people Handling Policy
- Hand hygiene policy
- Infectious Diseases in School 2013 HSE
- <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

### Aims

The aims of the policy and associated guidelines are:

- To safeguard the dignity, rights and well-being of all students
- To ensure a consistency of care among pupils when they experience intimate personal care
- To provide guidance and reassurance to staff
- To ensure that parents are involved in planning the intimate care of their child and are confident that their concerns and the individual needs of their son/ daughter are taken into account
- To reassure parents that staff members are knowledgeable about intimate care

### Definition of Intimate Care

Intimate care is the support provided by staff to students while involved in personal care routines such as dressing and undressing, toileting, showering/bathing, swimming and attending to menstrual needs. Where necessary, such support will involve varying levels of supervision and assistance and may involve physical contact with a student when they are partially or fully undressed.

### Staff Guidelines to Protect students and staff members

Levels of staffing for the provision of intimate care assistance will be organised based on the individual needs of the students in each classroom.



Personnel involved in the intimate care of the pupils will normally be the Special Needs Assistants but teachers and nurses may also be involved as required. With the exception of nursing students, all other students and visitors will not be involved in intimate care or toileting of pupils. Short term substitute staff will not be involved in intimate care needs unless accompanied by a permanent member of staff. Long term regular substitute staff may be involved in dealing with pupils' intimate care needs. Any change of personnel will be explained to the pupil.

All Intimate care and toileting must be carried out with two adults, one staff member should never attend to a child in an intimate care setting. Intimate care assistance will at all times take place in the designated area.

Only staff who have completed a manual handling course should assist in the physical transfer of students during intimate care assistance. Staff should at all times follow best practice in relation to Manual Handling and consult each students Manual Handling Profile before undertaking intimate care. Risk Assessments may be required for some pupils and will be carried out by school and Multi-Disciplinary Clinical Team staff.

Staff should ensure supplies of toiletries, towels and fresh clothes etc. are to hand prior to any intimate care procedure so that the student is not left unattended in the bathroom or changing areas. Staff are required to communicate with parents to ensure that there is a regular supply of intimate care supplies and change of clothes at school.

Discreet observation will be used to check if a student needs changing. Staff should be discreet in the use of intimate care items and these should not be visible outside of designated areas.

Staff should at all times follow best practice in relation to infection control. Wearing of personal protective clothing is mandatory to ensure the safety of all. Disposable gloves, aprons and wipes are available to all staff.

### Student welfare

Every student should be treated with dignity and have their privacy respected at all times. Physical care during intimate care assistance should be affirmative and supportive. Staff members must recognise the right of the individual to privacy and deliver care in such a way that the dignity and safety of the student is protected. The pupil's independence will be encouraged at all times.

Before commencing personal care, staff members should explain what is happening in a straightforward and reassuring way and will involve each student as far as possible in their own intimate care programme while being sensitive to their reactions and responsive to their communication (both verbal and non-verbal).

Intimate care must not be undertaken if a student is presenting with behaviours that challenge. Staff should follow individual behaviour management strategies/programmes in this instance.

The staff member must refer to the Personal Pupil profile (PPP), manual handling profile's and current risk assessment(s) if appropriate.

Staff will check in advance that suitable facilities exist for intimate care procedures when planning outings.

*Staff members and other carers should protect themselves from allegations and must endeavour to deliver care in a manner and an environment that is not open to misinterpretation*



### Dressing/Undressing (including after swimming)

Ensure facilities provide privacy and modesty e.g. separate toileting and changing facilities for male and female or at least adequate screening.

People should be encouraged to dress/undress themselves independently.

Staff should be aware of the dignity of each participant during dressing and undressing.

### Dressing/Undressing people who require full support (swimming or when soiled)

Ensure privacy before the procedure:

- Remove clothing from lower body first.
- Put on swimming costume or wash as required.
- Ensure lower regions are covered before removing garments from upper body.
- Encourage the individual to assist in whatever way possible.
- Refer to moving and handling procedures for safe movement of the person and safety of staff.
- Refer to swimming pool procedures for further information.

### Communication

The delivery of personal care should be directed and guided by the individual and staff should continually explain to the individual what they are doing and why. It is therefore essential that staff are aware of how to appropriately communicate with the people they support, are self-critical of their communication skills both verbal and non-verbal. People need to be able to communicate in order to have their needs met. The ability to communicate well helps to build good relationships with people we support. The means of communication for the individual will be identified in their support plan.

Some of the essential principles of communication are:

- Politeness
- Patience
- Listening
- Courtesy
- Respect
- Helpfulness
- Cultural awareness

### Non-Verbal Communication

Some examples of non-verbal communication are:

- Touch
- Space and Positioning
- Hand Movement
- Gestures
- Eye Contact
- Physical Contact
- Facial Expressions
- Posture



- Sign Language
- Picture Cards
- Communication Boards

It is important that non-verbal communication and body language gives the same message as verbal communication. Individuals will be able to pick up feelings by observing behaviour.

It is therefore important to:

- Keep eye contact without staring at pupils.
- Stay in the same position – don't shuffle or fidget.
- Hold their hand or arm, but only if you know that they find this reassuring and are comfortable with this.
- Not engage in personal conversations with other staff that will exclude the child.

### Good Record Keeping and Report Writing

An important part of communication is record keeping and report writing. This may involve anything from a signature to writing a detailed report. It is necessary to understand the purpose of each report so it can be written in the most appropriate way. Staff are encouraged to maintain personal "intimate care" notebooks which can be shared with parents daily.

### Hand Hygiene

Good hand hygiene is the single most effective way of stopping germs from getting into our bodies and causing infection. Liquid soap is better than solid soap because it is less likely to become contaminated. Staff are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the school hand hygiene policy and undertake hand hygiene training every year on [www.hseland.ie](http://www.hseland.ie)

In some circumstances it may be necessary to disinfect with an alcohol disinfectant solution e.g. when a person has an infectious disease. Disposable paper towels are the best option for drying hands because damp towels can harbour germs. All disposal items should be stored in a sealed bin.

***Don't assume people know how to wash their hands.***

### Hand Washing Procedure:

- Wet hands under warm running water.
- Apply a small amount of liquid soap.
- Rub hands vigorously ensuring soap and water is applied to all surfaces of the hands. Be sure to rub between fingers, the palms and the back of the hands. This should take about 30/40 seconds.
- Rinse hands under running water.
- Dry hands, preferably using paper towels.

### Aftercare of Equipment

Staff need to ensure the bathroom is cleaned with an anti-bacterial solution after use and must ensure the person's clothes and toiletries are taken care of. Toilet cleaning supplies are available and staff are requested to ensure there is a constant supply in all bathroom areas before beginning



toileting.

### Observation

If during the provision of intimate care assistance:

- A student is accidentally hurt
- A student seems unusually sore, tender or bruised
- A student appears to misinterpret what is said or done the student has a very emotional reaction without apparent cause

The staff member(s) involved in the intimate care assistance should **immediately** report any such incident to the class teacher who will notify the parents and complete an incident report form if necessary. Staff may wish to consult the Nursing Department for their view. The incident should also be reported **as soon as possible** to the Principal/Deputy Principal. Parents may be contacted and an incident report may be completed if child Protection Guidelines indicate that this step is necessary. Follow up will take place as required.

### Parental Consent

Parents are the primary educators of their children and full partners in the delivery of education and care at our school. Parents will be consulted about the intimate care procedures about their children. Specific discussions about intimate care should form part of the IEP meeting with parent's each year. Parents can request a meeting with staff about intimate care at any time.

### Review and Ratification

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management.

Signed:



Sé Goulding, Chairperson of Board of Management



Jennifer Doyle, Principal

Date: 12 February 2025

