

Children and young people at school often require support in personal care. Children in the early years of school, and those with physical disabilities and learning difficulties may require assistance in managing their personal needs. Other pupils, because of accident or illness, may also at some time require such assistance. Staff will support children with all aspects of school life, including personal care where needed.

Definition of intimate care

Intimate care is any assistance that involves touching a child while carrying out a procedure that most children can do for themselves, if a child is unable to manage without adult support. This may involve help with eating, drinking, dressing, and matters of personal hygiene such as washing and toileting. In some instances, more specialised intimate assistance may be needed for children with physical or medical difficulties.

The child

- The child has the right to assistance that respects his/her dignity and to feel safe when being moved or handled.
- The child has the right to feel comfortable with the adults assisting him/her and to make it known if this level of comfort is disturbed.
- The child should be encouraged to engage in the care procedure, to know what is happening and give permission at each stage.
- The child should be encouraged to work towards independence and helped to do so as much as possible.

The parents

- Parents have the right to information regarding school policy and procedures designed to meet the needs of their child. The school should work closely with parents to ensure that all aspects of the care procedure are shared and understood.
- Parents have a responsibility to ensure that all relevant information is provided to help the school assist their child in an appropriate way. Parents should meet the adult/s who will provide intimate care to the child and be informed of the school's arrangements in the event of this person/s being absent.
- Parents should consider alternative arrangements to allow the child to participate in school activities (PE, examinations, performances, swimming, sports day, etc.) and activities outside school (field trips, educational visits, transport, etc.).
- The school should gain written permission from parents for the care to be provided.

Confidentiality

- Information regarding agreed procedures must be treated confidentially and only recorded in the child's school file.
- Information should not be disclosed or discussed with any adults other than those with responsibility for the child's personal care and should not be referred to in the presence of other children.
- Care should be provided at agreed times, at the child's request or in response to an agreed signal. Staff should make themselves familiar with the child's manner of communication whether verbal, sign or eye contact.
- Appropriate terminology for parts of the body and bodily functions should be clarified between the child, parents, and his/her caregiver at school.

Writing an intimate care plan

- The plan should have the child's safety, privacy, and dignity as paramount.
- The plan should include:
 - Clear information regarding the assistance to be provided;
 - The method of communication to be used by the child;
 - The named person/s with responsibility to assist the child;
 - The timetable, if possible, when assistance will be provided;
 - Arrangements in the absence of the named caregiver at school;
 - Arrangements for school events and activities;
 - The means by which the arrangement will be monitored;
 - Strategies to prevent or deal with questions/comments from other pupils
 - The maintenance of a record of assistance.

If the plan has been agreed and signed by parents, staff and child if appropriate, it is acceptable to have one assistant unless there are implications regarding safe handling.

Alternative arrangements must be in place in the absence of one or both of the named staff, however, the school should be aware that the introduction of other staff to the care context without prior arrangement can increase the vulnerability of the child and adults.

The plan should specify the assistance to be provided as clearly as possible e.g. undressing/cleaning the child, changing a nappy, holding child in position, etc.

Teachers should be made aware of the care timetable, particularly if the child needs to be absent from class, and should be aware of the approximate time the procedure should take.

The assistant/s should ensure their return to the classroom is noted.

The plan should be signed by all contributors and reviewed on a regular basis.

Linked policies:

Early Years Policy