St John of God Primary School

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ST. JOHN OF GOD PRIMARY SCHOOL
INTIMATE CARE POLICY

Introduction

The Board of Management of St John of God School is committed to providing a happy, caring and safe learning environment in which the individual pupil is enabled to achieve his or her full potential. We value the dignity and privacy of all our pupils and acknowledge their right to be respected in our care.

St John of God School recognises its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in our care and is fully committed to following best practice principles in child protection. Supporting pupils with their intimate care needs forms an important part of ensuring their safety, dignity, and overall wellbeing.

'Intimate care' refers to any care task that involves supporting a pupil who is fully or partially undressed. This includes washing (including intimate areas), assisting with toileting, changing nappies, and carrying out procedures that require direct or indirect contact with a pupil's intimate areas. Supervising pupils while they are dressing or undressing is also regarded as intimate care.

This policy and its associated procedures have been developed with the understanding that all physical contact between staff and pupils:

- must be solely for the purpose of meeting the pupil's needs;
- must respect the dignity, privacy, and rights of each pupil; and
- must be carried out in a manner consistent with the professional integrity and safeguarding responsibilities of staff.

Rationale

The Board of Management is committed to ensuring that all staff responsible for the intimate care needs of pupils will undertake their duties in a professional manner at all times. It is acknowledged that these adults are in a position of great trust.

The Intimate Care and Toileting Policy has been developed to safeguard both children and staff. It applies to everyone involved in the intimate care of children.

These situations require a sensitive, practical, and professional response from staff. While always respecting the pupil's dignity and privacy, staff must also ensure that health and safety considerations remain paramount.

The policy refers specifically to the following scenarios:

- Toileting - where children need support using/learning to use the toilet
- Toileting - incontinence changes
- Toileting - catheterisation
- Changes after accidents – wetting, soiling and vomiting
- Attending to cuts/injuries not easily accessible/covered by a child's clothing
- Children who want to go to the toilet during yard time

Parental Responsibilities

Parents/Guardians should identify any toileting needs in their application form. They may need to meet with the class teacher to discuss the Toileting Plan (see below.)

They should supply the school with the resources required to carry out the toileting needs, which may include, but not be limited to:

- Incontinence wear
- Medical equipment e.g. catheter
- Wipes
- Nappy bags
- Creams
- Spare clothes (bottoms, underwear, socks and/or footwear)

Additional Care Needs Plan

Where a specific toileting need has been identified for a pupil, toileting will need to be included in the child's Additional Care Needs Plan. This plan will be developed in partnership with the pupil's class teacher, designated SNAs and the pupil's parents/guardians.

The plan will include;

- Details of the specific toileting/intimate care needs
- Identification of the staff members involved and their roles
- Equipment required
- Child's preferred means of communication which should also include agreed terminology for body parts and bodily functions
- Routines around toileting for the child – time of day, frequency etc…
- Signatures of Class Teacher, SNA, Parents/Guardians, Principal
- Date of plan and date for review of plan

Other areas of the child's care needs, not necessarily related to toileting or intimate care, should be included in the Additional Care Needs Plan too.

Best Practice Guidelines

While it is not possible to prescribe guidelines that will apply in all situations, it is important the following best practice recommendations are followed as far as possible:

- Intimate care procedures will be carried out in a manner which treats the pupil in a dignified and respectful way and allows the pupil the maximum level of privacy.
- The pupil's independence will be encouraged where possible.
- Ideally, there should be two staff members present. If this is not possible or practical, one staff member must inform a colleague when they are going to assist a child with intimate care requirements. Ideally, the second staff member should be outside the toilet/changing area or nearby.
- While assisting with intimate care, cubicle doors should remain partially open to provide the pupil with as much privacy and dignity as possible while ensuring safeguarding guidelines are maintained.
- Substitute SNAs will not generally be involved in the intimate care of a pupil unless unavoidable. Any change of personnel will be discussed with the pupil if appropriate.
- In the case of a child requiring catheterization, where trained SNAs are not available, parents/guardians will be informed.
- In the case that a pupil has toileting needs outlined as part of his/her Additional Care Needs plan the teacher and SNA involved should be completely familiar with the plan.

- Staff will use visual cues for pupils with limited communication, e.g. pointing to a nappy or using a picture.
- Staff will use appropriate and professional language. Specific language may be detailed in the additional care needs plan.
- Have all equipment and materials to hand before commencing.
- Use protective gloves provided.

Communication

Careful and respectful communication must take place with any pupil requiring intimate care, using their preferred method of communication (eg: verbal language, PECS, or other augmentative systems) to establish their needs and preferences. Where the pupil's age and level of understanding allow, consent should be sought before any intimate care procedure is carried out.

Staff providing intimate care should address the pupil by name, clearly explain what they are doing, and communicate in a manner appropriate to the pupil's age, developmental stage, and level of understanding. Wherever possible, the pupil's wishes and feelings should be actively sought and taken into account throughout the process.

Challenging Behaviour

In the case of challenging behaviour during intimate care assistance and where a child refuses toileting, dressing or where dangerous behaviour compromises the child's health and safety, parents/guardians will be contacted immediately and will be requested to come to the school in the best interest of the child's dignity, health and safety.

Changes after Accidents

Where a child has had an accident (wetting, soiling, or vomiting on clothing) they will be supported with cleaning and changing as soon as possible. The child's privacy and dignity will be maintained at all times. A teacher or SNA will assist the child with changing only where absolutely necessary and the child will be encouraged to do as much for themselves as is possible depending on their age, ability and the nature of the accident.

A mainstream class teacher may need to call for additional support from another teacher or SNA to supervise their class or help the child who has had the accident.

Where a child has soiled their clothing, a clean set of underwear and clothes will be provided. Parents may keep the underwear; however, any borrowed school clothing should be washed and returned promptly.

Parents or Guardians will be contacted by phone/via the Aladdin platform/email to inform them if their child has had an accident in school.

In the event that it is not possible to make contact, accidents will be communicated with parents/guardians in person at home time.

In the event that the child is distressed after the accident the parents/guardians should be called again. Parents/guardians of children who have been sick will be called to collect their child.

Pupils who experience repeated accidents will be provided with support and regular opportunities to use the toilet throughout the school day. They will be supported and encouraged in developing independent and appropriate toileting skills.

Injuries and Cuts

When minor injuries occur in the school yard, pupils are brought to the first aid station/bench. The teacher/SNA on duty will administer first aid to the child. Where the injury cannot be seen the child will be encouraged to remove their own clothing so the injury can be assessed. Depending on the location of the injury this may need to be examined in the toilet / classroom. Refer to the best practice guidelines above.

Parents may be contacted if the injury is of concern and the pupil is reluctant to have it examined. Should the injury be deemed serious, medical help (ambulance) should be called and the parents will be immediately contacted.

Child Protection

The school's child protection procedures will be adhered to at all times in accordance with the School's Safeguarding Statement.

All members of staff carrying out intimate care needs have been Garda vetted.

From a child protection perspective, it is acknowledged that intimate care involves risks for both the children and adults as it may involve staff touching the private parts of a child's body. In this school, best practice will be promoted and all adults (including those who are involved in intimate care and others in the vicinity) will be encouraged to be vigilant at all times.

Where appropriate, pupils will be taught personal safety skills carefully matched to their level of development and understanding.

If, during intimate care, a member of staff notices and has concerns about physical changes in a pupil's presentation, e.g. unexplained marks or bruises, they will immediately report concerns to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLP) in accordance with the school's child protection procedures.

Any staff member who has a concern about improper practice or the conduct of a colleague will report this to the DLP or the DDLP.

If during the intimate care of a pupil, the pupil has a very emotional reaction without apparent cause or the staff member is concerned they may have accidentally hurt the pupil, the incident must be reported to the class teacher, the principal, the DLP or the Deputy DLP as appropriate.

Parental/Guardian Consent

Parents/Guardians will be made aware of the school's Intimate Care Policy and must give consent for the pupil to be changed, or the intimate care procedures to be carried out in the school by completing Appendix A, where appropriate.

Ratification and Communication

Ratification:
This revised policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 9/7/2026 (date)

Signed: _____ Date: 9/7/2026

Chairperson BOM

Signed: _____ Date: 9 July 2026

Principal

The Board of Management of St John of God School reserves the right to revise or amend this policy in response to changing needs or circumstances.

Appendix A:
Intimate Care Consent Form

Pupil Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Class/Teacher: _____

Purpose of the Form:
This form seeks parental/guardian consent for staff to provide intimate care to the above named pupil when necessary. Intimate care may include support with toileting, changing clothes, personal hygiene, and medical needs, in line with the school's Intimate Care Policy.

Types of Intimate Care That May Be Required (tick as appropriate):

☐ Toileting assistance/nappy changing

☐ Changing of clothes

☐ Changing/Cleaning after accidents

☐ Other (please specify): _____

Consent Statement:

I understand that staff will follow the school's Intimate Care Policy and will treat my child with dignity, respect, and sensitivity. I give consent for staff to provide intimate care to my child when necessary.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____