



## **Ballinahinch National School**

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# **Intimate Care Policy**

## **Introduction**

This policy outlines the agreed principles and procedures for intimate care within Ballinahinch National School. It has been developed to safeguard the dignity, safety and wellbeing of all students while also protecting staff working in sensitive situations.

## **Rationale**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Safeguard the rights and promote the best interests of children
- Ensure children are treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect
- Provide clear guidance and procedures for staff
- Safeguard staff from misunderstandings or allegations
- Inform and involve parents/carers in all aspects of intimate care
- Ensure transparency and communication with parents/guardians

The school is committed to providing a happy, caring and secure environment where each child is supported to develop independence, self-respect and responsibility.

## **Definition of Intimate Care**

Intimate care may be defined as any activity required to meet the personal care needs of an individual child.

This may include:

- Dressing and undressing
- Toileting and continence care
- Washing and personal hygiene
- Feeding and oral care
- Menstrual care
- Providing comfort to a distressed child
- Supporting medical needs
- Supervision of a child involved in intimate self-care

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### **Note:**

- A copy of this procedure will be available for parents/legal guardians on the school website and/or on request from the school.
- Under the Education Act 1998, legally, all schools are managed by the school's Board of Management, on behalf of the school patron.

## Principles of Intimate Care

The policy is based on the following fundamental principles:

- Every child has the right to be safe
- Every child has the right to privacy and dignity
- Every child has the right to be treated with respect
- Every child has the right to be valued as an individual
- Every child has the right to be involved in decisions about their care (where appropriate)
- Every child has the right to express their views and have them respected
- Care should be consistent and delivered by familiar staff where possible

All care must be delivered in a way that respects the child's wishes, feelings and level of development.

## School Responsibilities

The school will:

- Work in partnership with parents/guardians, health professionals and relevant agencies
- Ensure all staff are appropriately vetted
- Ensure staff are familiar with this policy and related child protection procedures
- Develop an **Intimate Care Plan** where ongoing care is required
- Ensure all arrangements are agreed with parents and, where appropriate, the student
- Maintain records of care provided and parental consent
- Review care plans annually or as needed
- Ensure intimate care is only carried out by trained and designated staff

The Principal has overall responsibility for implementation of this policy.

## Role of Staff

Staff must:

- Treat all children with dignity, sensitivity and respect
- Encourage independence wherever possible
- Follow agreed care plans
- Communicate clearly with the child during care
- Maintain confidentiality at all times
- Be aware of safeguarding responsibilities

Students, volunteers or untrained personnel must not carry out intimate care procedures.

## Role of Parents / Guardians

Parents / Guardians should:

- Inform the school of any intimate care needs that their child has or may have. This is in order for staff to be able to support every child's dignity and care and to prepare necessary resources.

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## **Procedures for Intimate Care**

### **1. General Guidelines**

- Always explain what you are doing to the child
- Encourage the child to participate in their own care
- Respect the child's privacy at all times
- Keep physical contact to a minimum necessary
- Ensure another staff member is present or nearby where possible
- Allow the child to express preferences regarding care

If a child becomes distressed, care should stop immediately and reassurance provided.

### **2. Supporting Dressing/Undressing**

- Encourage independence first
- Provide assistance only when necessary
- Maintain dignity and privacy

### **3. Providing Comfort**

- Physical contact should be **child-initiated where possible**
- Keep contact appropriate and minimal
- Ensure visibility (e.g., hands visible)
- Avoid situations that could be misinterpreted

### **4. Medical Care**

- Medication will only be administered with written parental consent
- Staff must check:
  - Child's name
  - Instructions
  - Dosage
  - Expiry date
- Medication must be stored safely but accessible in emergencies
- Administration of medication is voluntary for staff

### **5. Toileting and Soiling**

- Parental consent must be obtained in advance
- Parents will be contacted where possible
- A child will never be left alone while waiting
- The child will always remain appropriately clothed

Where staff must assist:

- A second staff member should be present or nearby
- Gloves must be worn
- Procedures must be explained to the child
- Encourage independence as much as possible
- Maintain privacy and dignity

After care:

- Soiled materials disposed of hygienically
- Clothing sent home in a sealed bag
- Incident recorded and parents informed

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## 6. Hygiene

Staff must:

- Follow infection control procedures
- Wear protective gloves
- Wash hands thoroughly
- Ensure safe disposal of waste

## 7. Child Protection

Any concerns arising during intimate care must be reported immediately to the **Designated Liaison Person (DLP)** or Deputy DLP.

Concerns may include:

- Unusual soreness, bruising or marks
- Emotional or distressed reactions
- Misinterpretation of actions
- Allegations made by a child

All concerns will be managed in line with *Children First* and Department of Education Child Protection Procedures.

If a child is accidentally hurt or a misunderstanding occurs:

- Reassure the child
- Ensure their safety
- Report immediately
- Record the incident

## 8. Safeguards for Children and Staff

To protect both children and staff:

- Staff must be Garda vetted
- Intimate care should, where possible, involve more than one adult nearby
- Staff should:
  - Inform another colleague before providing care
  - Keep records of care provided
  - Be responsive to the child's reactions
  - Avoid unnecessary physical contact

Children should:

- Be encouraged to express preferences
- Be given choices where possible
- Be reassured and respected at all times

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### **9. Confidentiality**

All information relating to a child's intimate care is confidential and will only be shared on a need-to-know basis in the child's best interest.

### **10. Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be:

- Reviewed every four years or earlier if required
- Updated in line with legislative or school changes
- Ratified by the Board of Management

## **Appendix 1: Parental Consent Form for Intimate Care**

**Student Name:**

**Class:**

I/We give permission for staff at Ballinahinch NS to provide intimate care to my/our child if required.

This may include:

- Toileting assistance
- Changing in the event of soiling
- Assistance with personal hygiene

☐ Yes    ☐ No

Additional information (if applicable):

**Parent/Guardian Name:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

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## Appendix 2: Intimate Care Record Sheet

|                                      |                                                          |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Student Name</b>                  |                                                          |
| <b>Date</b>                          |                                                          |
| <b>Time</b>                          |                                                          |
| <b>Staff Member(s) Involved</b>      |                                                          |
| <b>Type of Care Provided</b>         |                                                          |
| <b>Reason for Care</b>               |                                                          |
| <b>Details of Incident</b>           |                                                          |
| <b>Action Taken</b>                  |                                                          |
| <b>Was Parent/Guardian Informed?</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <b>Signature of Staff Member</b>     |                                                          |

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### Appendix 3: Intimate Care Plan Template

|                                                                                                    |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Student Name</b>                                                                                |  |
| <b>Class</b>                                                                                       |  |
| <b>Specific Care Needs</b>                                                                         |  |
| <b>Level of Assistance Required</b>                                                                |  |
| <b>Agreed Procedures</b>                                                                           |  |
| <b>Staff Assigned</b>                                                                              |  |
| <b>Parental Input</b>                                                                              |  |
| <b>Review Date</b>                                                                                 |  |
| <b>Signatures</b><br><br><b>Parent/Guardian</b><br><br><b>Principal</b><br><br><b>Staff Member</b> |  |

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### **Policy Review, Ratification & Communication**

This policy was updated in Ballinahinch National School in **August 2026** and ratified by the Board of Management on **Monday 24<sup>th</sup> August 2026**.

This policy will be reviewed every four years, however it may be reviewed at an earlier time should the need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

The policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents Association.

### **Monitoring & Evaluation**

The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the Principal and Board of Management.

Signed by Chairperson



Signed by Principal



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