



Intimate Care

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Intimate Care Policy

1. Introduction

Intimate care can be defined as care tasks of an intimate nature, associated with bodily functions, body products and personal hygiene which demand direct or indirect contact with, or exposure of, the genitals. Examples include care associated with continence and menstrual management as well as more ordinary tasks such as help with washing or bathing.

Staff at Palmerston School realise that the issue of intimate care is a difficult one and are respectful of the special needs of the children for whom they provide care. They also have a high awareness of safeguarding issues, seek to preserve children's dignity and provide a high level of privacy, choice and control to them. Staff behaviour is open to scrutiny and staff at Palmerston work in partnership with parents/carers to provide continuity of care to children/young people wherever possible.

Staff deliver a full personal safety curriculum, as part of Personal, Social and Health Education, to all children, appropriate to their development level and degree of understanding. This work is shared with parents and carers who are encouraged to reinforce the personal safety messages within the home.

Palmerston is committed to ensuring that all staff responsible for the intimate care of children will undertake their duties in a professional manner at all times and recognise that there is a need to treat all children with respect when intimate care is given. No child should be attended to in a way that causes distress or pain.

2. Basic Principles

- Young people have the right to feel safe and secure
- Young people should be respected and valued as individuals
- Young people have the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from staff
- Young people have the right to information and support to help them make choices
- Young people have a right to express their view and to be heard. Any complaints must be taken seriously
- Programmes of intimate care should be designed to promote independence.

3. **Our Approach to Best Practice**

All children who require intimate care are treated respectfully at all times; the child's welfare and dignity is of paramount importance. There is careful communication with each child who needs help with intimate care in line with their preferred means of communication (verbal, symbolic, etc.) to discuss the child's needs and preferences. The child is aware of each procedure that is carried out and the reasons for it.

Staff who provide intimate care are trained to do so (including Child Protection and Health and Safety training in moving and handling) and are fully aware of best practice. Apparatus will be provided to assist with children who need special arrangements as required. Staff will be supported to adapt their practice in relation to the needs of individual children, taking into account development changes such as the onset of puberty and menstruation.

As a basic principle, children will be supported to achieve the highest possible level of autonomy, given their age and abilities. Staff will encourage each child to do as much for themselves as they can. This may mean, for example, giving the child responsibility for cleaning their own teeth or washing their hands. Pupils who require Manual Handling have a Manual Handling Passport that provides an individual risk assessment. There are risk assessments, daily checks and safe procedures for work available for intimate care and Manual Handling tasks.

Wherever possible, the same child will not be cared for solely by the same adult on a regular basis; the class or Key Stage team, known to the child, will take turns in providing care. This will ensure, as far as possible, that over-familiar relationships are discouraged from developing, while at the same time guarding against the care being carried out by a succession of completely different carers.

Parents/carers will be involved with their child's intimate care arrangements on a regular basis. The needs and wishes of children and their parents/carers will be carefully considered alongside any possible constraints; e.g. staffing and equal opportunities legislation.

Each child/young person will be encouraged to raise to communicate any issues or concerns that they may have about the quality of care they receive with their class teacher and/or a member of the Senior Leadership team.

4. **Practical Advice for Staff**

- Get to know the young person so you are aware of their communication strategies and moods
- Respect any cultural or religious sensitivities
- Speak to the young person by name and explain what is happening and why
- Agree terminology for parts of the body and bodily functions and encourage pupils to use these appropriately
- Respect a young person's wishes
- Encourage the young person to perform as much of the tasks as possible for themselves
- Use facilities that afford privacy and modesty
- Note and report any unusual responses or changes in behaviour during personal care tasks.

5. The Protection of Children

Palmerston School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Our own Child Protection policy, Local Safeguarding Children's Board guidelines and national Child Protection procedures are accessible to staff and adhered to.

Where appropriate, all children will be taught personal safety skills carefully matched to their level of development and understanding through PSHE and incidentally throughout the day.

If a member of staff has any concerns about physical changes in a child's presentation, e.g. marks, bruises, soreness etc. (s)he will immediately report concerns to the appropriate manager/designated Senior Person for Child Protection. A clear record of the concern will be completed using the pro forma Concern Form (Appendix A of the Child Protection policy) and referred to Social Services and/or the police, if necessary. Parents will be asked for their consent or informed that a referral is necessary prior to it being made, unless doing so is likely to place the child at greater risk or harm. [see Chrysalis Child Protection Policy and Procedures].

If a child becomes distressed or unhappy about being cared for by a particular member of staff, the matter will be looked into and outcomes recorded. Parents/carers will be contacted at the earliest opportunity as part of this process in order to reach a resolution. Staffing schedules will be altered until the issues(s) are resolved so that the child's needs remain paramount. Further advice will be taken from outside agencies if necessary.

If a child makes an allegation against a member of staff, all necessary procedures will be followed [see Palmerston Safeguarding Policy and Procedures].

6. Protection for Staff

As far as is possible personal care should be carried out by one person when there are health and safety reasons for two to be present. Protection for the member of staff as provided in the following ways:

- Staff notify the class teacher and/or another member of the class team discreetly before taking a young person out for personal care
- If a situation occurs which causes embarrassment or concern a second member of staff should be called and the incident reported on a school form
- Any unusual comments or changes of behaviour should be recorded and reported
- Only staff who have undergone all appropriate checks should be involved in personal tasks
- Staff should follow the safe systems of work provided
- Staff providing personal care have training in Manual Handling, Behaviour Management, Personal Safety and Safeguarding.