Intimate Care Policy

School Address*: Our Lady of Good Counsel School,*

Innishmore, Ballincollig, Cork. P31FH22

Phone number: *0214878370*

Roll number: *18208A*

School Patron: *The Bishop of Cork and Ross, Bishop Fintan Gavin*.

Principal: *Aisling Power*.

Deputy Principal: *Nollaig Moynihan.*

Chairperson: *Harold Brooks.*

1. Policy Statement

The Board of Management and staff of **Our Lady of Good Counsel School** are committed to ensuring that all pupils' intimate care needs are met in a manner that safeguards their dignity, privacy, wellbeing, rights, and personal safety.

We recognise that pupils attending our special school have varying levels of independence and may require support with personal and intimate care throughout their educational journey. All intimate care will be provided respectfully, sensitively, professionally, and in partnership with parents/guardians and, where appropriate, the pupil.

The school is committed to:

- Promoting independence and self-care skills wherever possible.
- Respecting the dignity, privacy and autonomy of every pupil.
- Providing care in a safe and supportive environment.
- Protecting pupils from abuse, neglect, humiliation or distress.

- Protecting staff from injury, misunderstandings and unfounded allegations.
- Working closely with parents, guardians and relevant professionals.
- Regularly reviewing supports with the aim of reducing assistance when safe and appropriate to do so.

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2. Purpose

This policy provides guidance for staff supporting pupils with intimate care needs and ensures a consistent approach across the school.

It applies to all school staff who may be involved in providing intimate care supports, including:

- Teachers
- Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)
- School management

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3. Definition of Intimate Care

Intimate care refers to support involving personal and private areas of the body and may include:

- Toileting
- Continence care
- Nappy changing
- Menstrual care
- Changing clothing following soiling
- Assistance with personal hygiene
- Washing and drying intimate body areas
- Assistance with dressing and undressing

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4. Guiding Principles

All intimate care will be provided according to the following principles:

Dignity

The pupil will be treated with respect at all times.

Staff will:

- Speak respectfully and appropriately.
- Protect the pupil's privacy.
- Avoid unnecessary exposure.

- Explain what they are doing in a manner appropriate to the pupil's communication level.
- Respect the pupil's preferences wherever possible.

Respect

Pupils have the right to be listened to and involved in decisions regarding their care.

Staff will:

- Use preferred communication methods.
- Seek cooperation and participation.
- Respect cultural, religious and family values where appropriate.

Independence

The promotion of independence is central to this policy.

Staff will:

- Encourage pupils to undertake any aspect of personal care they can safely manage.
- Teach and reinforce self-help skills.
- Avoid doing tasks for pupils that they are capable of completing independently.
- Review support levels regularly.
- Celebrate progress towards greater autonomy.

The school's objective is not to maintain dependence but to support pupils in developing the highest level of independence possible.

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5. Individual Intimate Care Plans

An Individual Intimate Care Plan will be developed where a pupil requires ongoing intimate care support.

The plan will be developed in consultation with:

- Parents/guardians
- School staff
- The pupil (where appropriate)
- Relevant health professionals where required

The plan should include:

- Current level of independence
- Nature of support required

- Communication methods
- Equipment needs
- Infection control requirements
- Lifting and transferring arrangements
- Medical considerations
- Strategies to promote independence
- Agreed review dates

Plans will be reviewed at least annually or sooner if circumstances change.

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6. Promoting Independence and Reduction of Supports

The school recognises that pupils may develop skills and confidence over time.

Supports will therefore be continuously reviewed with the aim of:

- Increasing self-care skills.
- Increasing privacy.
- Reducing adult assistance where appropriate.
- Supporting preparation for adulthood and community participation.
- Building confidence and self-esteem.

Examples may include:

- Gradual reduction of prompts.
- Increasing responsibility for handwashing.
- Independent changing where possible.
- Use of visual supports and schedules.
- Toileting programmes.
- Skill-building programmes supported by parents and therapists.

Any reduction or removal of supports will be:

- Planned.
- Risk assessed.
- Discussed with parents/guardians.
- Recorded and reviewed.

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7. Partnership with Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians are essential partners in supporting pupils' personal care needs.

The school will:

- Consult with families regarding intimate care arrangements.
- Seek relevant information regarding routines and care needs.
- Share concerns regarding wellbeing or changing needs.
- Communicate significant incidents promptly.
- Work collaboratively on programmes promoting independence.

Parents are expected to:

- Provide accurate information about care needs.
- Notify the school of any changes.
- Supply agreed personal care items.
- Participate in reviews of intimate care plans.

A collaborative approach between home and school promotes consistency and successful outcomes for pupils.

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8. Safeguarding and Child Protection

All staff must adhere to:

- Child Safeguarding Procedures for Primary and Special Schools.
- School Child Safeguarding Statement.
- Relevant Department of Education guidance.

Staff providing intimate care will:

- Maintain professional boundaries.
- Respect pupils' rights and dignity.
- Be alert to signs of distress or safeguarding concerns.
- Report concerns immediately in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

If a pupil displays behaviour or makes disclosures that raise safeguarding concerns, staff must follow school child protection procedures without delay.

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9. Staff Safety and Wellbeing

The school is committed to protecting staff from injury while supporting pupils.

Staff safety considerations include:

- Adherence to manual handling training.
- Use of appropriate hoists and equipment where necessary.
- Compliance with risk assessments.
- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Safe disposal of continence products.

- Access to hand hygiene facilities.

No member of staff will be expected to perform moving and handling tasks beyond their training or physical capability.

Where risk assessments indicate that two adults are required for aspects of care, this arrangement will be followed.

The safety of both the pupil and staff member must always be considered.

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10. Privacy and Supervision

The school seeks to balance privacy with safety.

Staff will:

- Use designated toileting/changing facilities.
- Close doors and screens where appropriate.
- Maintain supervision appropriate to the pupil's age, understanding and vulnerability.
- Avoid unnecessary intrusion.

The level of supervision provided will be based on:

- The pupil's age.
- Medical needs.
- Communication abilities.
- Cognitive functioning.
- Safety risks.

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11. Refusal of Assistance

Pupils may occasionally refuse support.

Staff will:

- Remain calm and respectful.
- Attempt to understand the reason for refusal.
- Use appropriate communication supports.
- Encourage rather than coerce.
- Seek assistance where necessary.

Parents will be informed if refusal affects the pupil's health, safety or wellbeing.

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12. Training

Relevant staff will receive training appropriate to their role, which may include:

- Intimate care procedures
- Safeguarding
- Infection prevention and control
- Manual handling
- Continence care
- Use of specialist equipment
- Positive behaviour support
- Communication strategies

Additional training may be sought where pupils present with specific care needs.

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13. Record Keeping

The school will maintain appropriate records where necessary, including:

- Intimate Care Plans
- Risk assessments
- Significant incidents
- Parent consultations
- Reviews of support needs

Records will be maintained in accordance with GDPR and school data protection procedures.

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14. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if required by:

- Legislative changes
- Changes in Department of Education guidance
- Emerging best practice
- School operational needs

Conclusion

The school believes that intimate care is an important aspect of ensuring equal access to education and participation. By working collaboratively with pupils, parents, staff and external professionals, we aim to provide care that is safe, respectful and person-centred while continually promoting independence, self-determination and dignity for every pupil.

Date: 21 January 2025

Chairperson: Harold Brooks

Principal: Aisling Power

Review Date: January 2027.

Individual Intimate Care & Independence Plan

Pupil Name: _____

Class: _____

Date: _____

Review Date: _____

What I Can Do By Myself

I can:

☐ Go to the toilet independently

☐ Tell someone when I need the toilet

☐ Wash my hands

☐ Pull clothes up/down

☐ Change independently

☐ Follow a visual routine

☐ Other:

What Support Helps Me

I may need support with:

☐ Toileting

☐ Changing

☐ Personal hygiene

☐ Washing hands

☐ Dressing/undressing

☐ Menstrual care

☐ Moving safely

☐ Other:

The support that works best for me is:

☐ Verbal reminders

☐ Visual supports

☐ Gestures/signs

☐ Physical assistance

☐ Extra time

☐ A familiar adult

☐ Other:

My Independence Goals

We are helping me learn to:

_____
_____
_____
_____.

Respecting My Dignity

Adults supporting me will:

✓ Knock or announce themselves before entering where possible

✓ Explain what is happening

✓ Give me as much privacy as possible

✓ Listen to my communication and preferences

✓ Encourage me to do as much as I can for myself

✓ Treat me with dignity and respect at all times

Working Together

This plan has been created in partnership with the pupil (where appropriate), parents/guardians, and school staff.

Parent/Guardian: _____

Class Teacher: _____

SNA(s): _____

Principal/Deputy Principal: _____

Date: _____