



## Intimate Care Policy Summer 2023

St. Matthew's CofE Primary School 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.

We recognise that there is a need to treat children with respect when intimate care is given. No child should ever be attended to in a way that causes distress, embarrassment or pain.

The management of intimate care needs will be carefully planned. Children who require intimate care will be treated with respect at all times. The child's welfare and dignity are always of paramount importance.

### **Guidelines for Good Practice in Intimate Care**

These guidelines are designed to safeguard both children and staff, and apply to every member of staff involved with the intimate care of children at St. Matthew's CofE Primary School. They aim to support and facilitate good practice in intimate care.

Children, including those with special needs and disabilities can be vulnerable. All staff involved with their intimate care must be sensitive to the child's needs and also aware that some care tasks or treatments could be open to possible misinterpretation.

False allegations of sexual abuse are extremely rare, but certain basic guidelines will safeguard both children and staff. Everyone is safer if expectations are clear and approaches are consistent as far as possible.

### **Treat every child with dignity and respect and ensure privacy appropriate to the child's age and situation**

Privacy is an important issue and each child's right to privacy is respected. One staff member will carry out intimate care with one child. This practice is actively supported unless the task requires two people. Having people working alone does increase the opportunity for possible abuse, however this is balanced by the loss of privacy and lack of trust implied if two people have to be present – quite apart from the practical difficulties. Therefore, staff are asked to support the intimate care of children alone unless the task requires the presence of two people. If this is the case, the reasons should be clearly documented.

Wherever possible, staff should only care intimately for an individual of the same sex. However, in certain circumstances, this principle may need to be waived where failure to provide appropriate care would result in negligence for example, female staff supporting boys in a primary school as no male staff are available.

When intimate care is required, parents/carers are informed on every occasion. The needs and wishes of children and parents are considered wherever possible within the constraints of staffing and equal opportunities legislation. With parents/carers agreement, staff change children who are not yet toilet trained regularly, and the change is recorded in the intimate care file. In these instances, it is not necessary to report every change to parents/carers.

To protect the dignity and privacy of the child, they should be changed and toileted in the school toilets. Where this is not practical, all possible measures will be taken to ensure that the child is cared for in a screened off area or private room.

### **Involve the children as far as possible in their own intimate care**

We try to avoid doing things for a child that he/she can do themselves and if a child is able to help, we ensure they are given the chance to do so. If a child is fully dependant on an adult, we talk with them about what we are doing and give them choices where possible, allowing the children to achieve the highest level of autonomy that is possible given their age and abilities.

### **Be responsive to a child's reactions**

Some general principles:

- Check your practice by asking the child, particularly a child you haven't previously cared for. For example, ask "Is it ok to do it this way?" "Can you wipe yourself there?"
- 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 the process in order to reach a resolution. It may be necessary for staffing schedules to be altered 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 the necessary procedures will be followed as detailed in the Safeguarding Children policy.

### **Make sure practice in intimate care is as consistent as possible**

The headteacher has responsibility for ensuring their staff have a consistent approach. This doesn't mean that everyone has to do things in an identical fashion, but it is important that approaches aren't markedly different between different staff. For example, staff should wear protective gloves and use disposable wipes to wash a child - bare hands must not be used. Care during menstruation should be consistent across staff.

Wherever possible staff who are involved in the intimate care of children will not usually be involved with the delivery of Relationship and Sex Education to the children in their care as an additional safeguard to both staff and children involved.

## **Never do something unless you know how to do it**

- Staff who provide intimate care are trained to do so (including Child Protection Safeguarding) and are fully aware of best practice.
- They must be aware of their own health and safety and wear protective gloves/ aprons as necessary.
- If you are not sure how to do something, **ASK**. If you need to be shown more than once, ask again!
- Other procedures, such as giving rectal valium, must only be carried out by staff who have been formally trained and assessed as competent.
- If a child needs special equipment following assessment from physiotherapists/ occupational therapists, training will be provided for school staff.
- Staff will be supported to adapt their practice in relation to the needs of individual children considering development changes such as the onset of puberty and menstruation.

## **Safeguarding - if you are concerned, report it!**

The Safeguarding policy details the procedures for the school and will be adhered to in all cases.

If during the intimate care of a child you accidentally hurt them, or the child seems unusually sore or tender in the genital area, or appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, or misunderstands or misinterprets something, or has a very emotional reaction without apparent cause **report any such incident as soon as possible to the Designated Safeguarding Lead**. Some of these could be cause for concern about the child, or alternatively the child or another adult might possibly misconstrue something you have done.

All children will be taught personal safety skills carefully matched to their level of development and understanding.

## **Encourage the child to have a positive image of their own body**

Confident, assertive children who know their body belongs to them are less vulnerable to sexual abuse. As well as basics like privacy, the approach you take to a child's intimate care can convey lots of messages to them about what their body is "worth". Your attitude to the child's intimate care is important. Keeping in mind the child's age, routine care should be in a relaxed and stress-free manner.

## **Reporting**

### Early Years

All Early Years instances to be reported and recorded using the paper-based system in the intimate care folders.

## Key Stage 1 / Key Stage 2

All instances in KS1/KS2 to be recorded and reported using CPOMs. This includes those in wrap-around care – Breakfast / After school clubs.

Parents/carers must always be informed on the same day.

### **Further guidance**

See school Safeguarding Children Policy.