

Realt Na Mara N.S Intimate Care Policy

Introduction

Staff who work with young children or young people will realise that the issue of intimate care is a difficult one and will require them to be respectful of children's needs. 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 intimate personal areas or exposure to intimate personal areas. An example includes care associated with continence as well as more ordinary tasks such as help with washing or showering.

Children's dignity will be preserved and a high level of privacy, choice and control will be provided to them. Staff that provide intimate care to children have a high awareness of child protection issues. Staff behaviour is open to scrutiny and staff at Réalt Na Mara N.S. 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 Social, Personal and Health Education, to all children as appropriate to their developmental level and degree of understanding.

Réalt Na Mara N.S. 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 all children with respect when intimate care is given. No child should be attended to in a way that causes distress or pain.

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.

Equipment will be provided to assist with children who need special arrangements following assessment from physiotherapist/occupational therapist as required. Staff will be supported to adapt their practice in relation to the needs of individual children taking into account developmental changes such as the onset of puberty and menstruation..

As a basic principle, children will be supported to achieve the highest level of autonomy that is possible 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 specific aspects of intimate care.

Each child's right to privacy will be respected. Careful consideration will be given to each child's situation to determine how many staff might need to be present when a child needs help with intimate care. Where possible one child will be cared for by two adults. However, this may not always be practically possible or deemed necessary/appropriate.

Parents/staff will be involved with their child's intimate care arrangements (Appendix 1) annually; a clear account of the agreed arrangements will be recorded on the child's IEP. The needs and wishes of children and parents will be carefully considered alongside any possible constraints; e.g. staffing .

The Protection of Children

All members of staff adhere to all Child Protection Procedures at all times.

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

If a member of staff has any concerns about physical changes in a child's presentation, e.g. marks, bruises, soreness etc. he/she will immediately report concerns to the class teacher and the Principal/DLP will be notified. A clear record of the concern will be completed and where appropriate referred to social services. Parents will be informed that a referral is necessary prior to it being made unless doing so is likely to place the child at greater risk of harm

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 Child Protection Procedures / Child Safeguarding Statement.

Specific Areas of Intimate Care

Children Wearing Nappies

If a child is admitted into Réalt Na Mara N.S. and still wears nappies, parents will be provided with information from this policy and our practices in school. These being: a care plan for parents and the class teacher to sign; outlining who will be responsible, within the school, for changing the child and where and when this will be carried out. This agreement allows the school and the parent to be aware of all the issues surrounding this task from the outset.

Equipment Provision

If a child is admitted to Réalt Na Mara N.S. still wearing nappies, it will be the parent's responsibility to provide nappies, disposal bags, wipes and where necessary a changing mat. Spare clothes for the child are needed too. The school will make the parents aware of this responsibility prior to the child joining the school. We as a school will be responsible for providing gloves, plastic aprons, a bin and liners to dispose of any waste.

Health and Safety

Staff should always wear an apron and gloves when dealing with a child who is bleeding or soiled or when changing a soiled nappy. Any soiled waste should be placed in a waste disposal bag, which can be sealed. This bag will then be placed in a bin (complete with liner), which is specifically designated for the disposal of such waste. The bin will be emptied regularly and it will be collected as part of the usual refuse collection service as this waste is not classified as clinical waste. Staff will be aware of the school's Health and Safety policy.

Changing Facilities

Any child who has long-term incontinence will require specially adapted facilities. At Réalt Na Mara N.S., we have two toilets specifically for children who need a larger space to toilet in. Within these rooms there are also shower facilities. When children need to be changed in school, the dignity, safety and welfare of the child is of paramount concern. An area, which can be made private by the use of a screen, is acceptable. Consideration will be given to the sighting of this area from a health and safety aspect. The area should not be situated in a thoroughfare.

Special Needs

Children with special needs have the same rights to safety and privacy when receiving intimate care. Additional vulnerabilities that may arise from a physical disability or learning difficulty must be considered with regard to individual teaching and care plans for each child. As with all arrangements for intimate care needs, agreements between the child, those with parental responsibility and our school will be easily understood and recorded.

Regardless of age and ability, the views and/or emotional responses of children with special needs will be actively sought (with advocacy arrangements made for those who can't) in regular reviews of these arrangements.

Physical Contact

All staff engaged in the care and education of children and young people need to exercise caution in the use of physical contact. The expectation is that staff will work in 'limited touch' cultures and that when physical contact is made with pupils this will be in response to the pupil's needs at the time, will be of limited duration and will be appropriate given their age, stage of development and background.

Staff will be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact might be misconstrued directly by the child, an observer or by anyone the action is described to. Children with special needs may require more physical contact to assist their everyday learning. The general culture of 'limited touch' will be adapted where appropriate to the individual requirements of each child. The arrangements must be understood and agreed by all concerned, justified in terms of the child's needs, consistently applied and open to scrutiny.

Wherever possible, consultation with colleagues should take place where any deviation from the arrangements is anticipated.

Any deviation and the justification for it should be documented and reported. Extra caution may be required where a child has suffered previous abuse or neglect. In the child's view, physical contact might be associated with such experiences and lead to staff vulnerable to allegations of abuse. Additionally, many such children are extremely needy and seek out inappropriate physical contact. In such circumstances staff should deter the child without causing them a negative experience. Ensuring that a witness is present will help to protect staff from such allegations.

Restraint

There may be occasions where it is necessary for staff to restrain children physically to prevent them from inflicting damage on either themselves, others or property. In such cases, only the minimum force necessary should be used for the minimum length of time required for the child to regain self-control. In all cases of restraint, the incident must be documented and reported. Staff will be fully aware of our schools' Physical Intervention/Positive Handling Policy.