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Code of Good Practice for the "Intimate Care" of the children

Introduction.

Intimate care is any caring procedure which involves attending to a student when he/she is undressed or partially dressed, washing (including intimate parts), helping to use the toilet, changing nappies or carrying out a procedure that requires direct or indirect contact with an intimate area of a student, or any procedure carried out while the student is in a state of whole or partial undress. The supervision of students while they are dressing and undressing will also be considered as intimate care.

This policy and related procedures have been developed bearing in mind that all physical contact between staff and students:

- Should be aimed at meeting the needs of students
- Should respect the dignity of each student
- Should be consistent with professional integrity of staff members

Policy rationale. The aim of the policy is to increase knowledge, enhance skills and promote good practice in this sensitive area. All staff will be made aware of the standards expected of them. Intimate care will be carried out only by regular school employees.

This Code is for all staff and children at St Gabriel's School,

Aim.

This Code is written to safeguard and protect our pupils because they come into contact with a multiplicity of staff in our setting. It is important therefore:

1. To establish norms so that children can expect consistency from staff throughout their school day.
 2. To ensure that persons coming in contact with pupils respect their dignity at all times.
- The pupils are dependent on adults for their intimate care on a daily basis.
 - Lack of speech makes the pupils vulnerable as they may not be able to "tell" or are at risk of being misunderstood.
 - Pupils may be over-protected leading to passivity and over-reliance on adults.
 - Pupils that are more dependent than others due to lack of mobility are at greater risk.
 - Pupils with challenging behaviour may be at risk of physical abuse.

A code is also necessary to safeguard staff so that they do not place themselves or others in situations where they could be vulnerable to false allegation.

Elements of Good Practice for Staff:

While it is not possible to prescribe guidelines that will apply in all situations, it is important the elements of good practice be followed:

- In the case that a student has an Intimate Care Plan ensure you are completely familiar with the plan.
- Address the student by name and ensure he/she is aware of the focus of the activity.
- Verbalise your actions to the student in a reassuring way to prepare them for each procedure.
- Use visual cues for students with limited communication, e.g. pointing at a wipe or picture board.
- Use appropriate and professional language. Specific language may be detailed in a care plan.
- In intimate care, the touch should be affirmative and supportive, not rough or insensitive.
- Respect the dignity and privacy of the student at all times.
- Have all equipment and materials to hand before commencing.
- Use discreet observation if checking to see if a nappy needs changing.
- Use protective gloves provided.
- Take all precautions when disposing of soiled material in the bin provided.
- Intimate care procedures will be carried out in a manner which treats the student in a dignified and respectful way and allows the student the maximum level of privacy.
- The student's independence will be encouraged.

General Guidelines

Appropriate Touch

Physical contact between school staff and the pupil should always be in response to the needs of the pupil not the needs of the adult.

Staff must remain aware that especially when children are entering adolescence, while hugs and kisses are beneficial, there are boundaries that **must** be respected when the child is outside the context of his/her own family. In order for pupils to learn the social boundaries that are appropriate in life, they need to learn them from an early age.

For **all** pupils:

1. Kissing on the lips is banned.
2. Pupils of all ages should not be allowed to sit on laps.
3. If a pupil seeks a hug, we must respond in an appropriate way that reassures the pupil that they are worthy of attention e.g. through "high five", deep pressure, massage etc.
4. If a distressed pupil needs reassurance, staff is trained to seat the pupil on their outside knee, facing away while still giving the "deep pressure" reassurance which will benefit the pupil.
5. All pupils should be encouraged to shake visitors' hands in greeting instead of hugs or to use "Give me five" as a means of social contact with our pupils. This is a gesture used throughout the school which they enjoy.

For **older** pupils:

1. When supporting older pupils on walks, it is more appropriate to link with them.

Also, we must be aware of our dress code and dress modestly at all times, especially when in regular contact with the older pupils.

Toileting

In the classroom areas let someone else know that you are toileting or changing a pupil
When visiting the toilets adjacent to the yard during breaks etc. let another staff member know that you need to accompany a pupil to the toilet.

Do not lock yourself into a toilet alone with a child under any circumstances.

Students on placement or volunteers are not permitted to toilet pupils.

Swimming

Swimming is an activity that requires intimate care. Children need to be completely dressed/undressed and their bodies dried off.

- Try to ensure that you are never alone in a dressing room with a child. If you are, let someone else know that you are in this situation.
- If the child is independent allow them to dress themselves, intervening only if necessary.
- If the child is semi-independent assist only where necessary-talking through your actions with the child.
- If the child is completely dependent, dress and undress the child interacting with the child as you go by attempting to get eye-contact and talking through your actions using reduced language.

Bruises/Marks

If you notice any bruises or unexplained marks on a child, report this immediately to the class teacher or the principal. Such marks/bruises must be reported from there to the social worker.

If a child sustains any marks or bruises whilst at school as a result of a fall or an accident, they must be reported immediately to the class teacher or principal who will assess the situation and explain the circumstances of the mark/bruise to the child's parent or residential carer via telephone or note. Such instances must be recorded on an incident report.

(Any member of staff who sustains a cut, bite, kick or bruise from a child must also report to the principal/school nurse who will decide, in consultation with the staff member, whether medical attention is necessary.)

General Care and Handling of Pupils.

Respect for the pupil can be shown in many ways:

- **Choices:** Allowing pupils to be part of decision-making and then acting on the child's contributions e.g. Which do you want? –a drink or a yogurt? (showing both and allowing them to choose
- Giving **praise** and compliment for every positive act/behaviour/piece of work.
- Allocating **responsibility** related to ability and age e.g. put away own lunch...get own coat...etc.

- Setting tasks at which pupils can succeed.
- Being careful not to talk about the pupils when they can overhear.

We should be aware of how we speak and behave towards the children as we go about our daily work for example:

- Being aware of how we speak and relate to them as we go about our daily work e.g.
 - o Attempting to get eye-contact when we speak to them.
- Using “objects of reference” e.g. a lunch-box when you want to indicate that it is lunch-time.
- Using reduced language/signs/photos where appropriate to assist them to understand us.
- Using positive comments that give pupils some element of control over their lives e.g. Bus-time now? Help me get your coat?
- Thanking pupils when they co-operate and assist you.
- No use of negative words and phrases, use positive commands instead for example, instead of saying ‘Don’t hit’ say ‘Hands down’
- Calmness, clear messages and consistency are three key elements to remember when working with children with special needs

Ratified by the Board on 23 Oct 2018

Signed by Chairman: _____

Reviewed: May 2021, May 2023