



Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs

Toileting and Intimate Care Policy

Introduction: The Board of Management of ABACAS Special School is committed to taking every precaution to protect students and staff from any form of abuse and harm. This policy is in accordance with the ethos and value of our Patron Body, Autism Ireland and is in accordance with Child Safeguarding Procedures and DES Guidelines. This policy and related policies have been developed bearing in mind that all physical contact between staff and pupils:

- should be aimed at meeting the needs of the pupils
- should respect the dignity of each pupil
- should be consistent with the professional integrity of staff members.
- should adhere to government guidelines that pertain to the prevention and management of COVID-19 in schools.

ABACAS Special School is conscious of the increased vulnerability of our pupils due to their additional needs. This may be due to:

- Limited communication skills
- Limited sense of danger
- Need for intimate care such as washing and toileting
- Reliance on adults for many of their needs
- A variety of carers and care settings
- Need for attention, friendship or affection
- Poor self-confidence and limited assertiveness
- Fear of not being believed
- Limited understanding of sexuality or sexual behaviour.

The aim of this 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 and are responsible for ensuring this policy is adhered to. This policy should be viewed in conjunction with our Child Safeguarding, Administration of Medicines, Stay Safe and RSE policies.

This policy includes measures, in so far as is reasonably possible, that provide for the safety of staff and students during the COVID-19 pandemic. These include remaining at least one metre apart from students where possible, washing hands regularly, sanitising surfaces



Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs

regularly and adhering to strict coughing / sneezing etiquette. Where necessary, risk assessments will be carried out and additional measures will be put in place.

Definition of Intimate Care: Intimate care is defined as care tasks of an intimate nature, associated with body functions, body products, medication and personal hygiene which needs direct or indirect contact with or exposure to the body.

Toileting Training: ABACAS recognises that toilet training can be a complex process. As children learn to use the toilet at different stages, the school's approach to toilet training will be parent-led and individual to each student. The school will liaise, where deemed necessary, with health professionals and support personnel from external services at the outset of toilet training and at the review stage.

To facilitate toilet training, parents/guardians will be expected to provide up to three changes of clothes for the student, which will be stored in school. Soiled clothes will be sent home to be washed and parents/guardians will send replacement clothes into school the next day. During the COVID-19 pandemic, all parents/guardians, regardless of whether their child is being toilet trained, will be asked to ensure that their child is furnished with at least one change of clothing including all outer and underwear, which will be stored in the school.

Toileting Programmes: Pupils are encouraged to be as independent as possible around toileting needs. This may include requesting to use the toilet where required or independently entering the toilet when needed. At times, it may be necessary to implement a toileting programme for a pupil (where pupils are prompted to use the toilet on timed intervals). This will include hygienic practices of washing hands after going to the toilet. As much as possible, the student is given the utmost privacy and is prompted using visual cues to attend to their toileting themselves. In some cases, the pupil may require assistance such as visual supports, verbal or gestural prompts, following urination or a bowel movement. For students who require physical assistance, a risk assessment will be carried out and additional measures, such as the wearing PPE, will be put in place.

The school's toileting facilities will at all times afford our pupils privacy and safety. Where it is necessary for a pupil to be assisted in or following use of the toilet in school, they will be assisted by one staff member. Cubicle doors are left open and at least one metre distance will be maintained, where possible. A staff member will never close over or lock themselves in a cubicle with a pupil. Because the toilets are situated in classrooms, they are adequately supervised by school staff. Where a staff member accompanies a pupil to the toilet and there are no other staff members present in the classroom (for example during yard times), the staff member should make it clear to another member of staff that they are accompanying that pupil to the toilet.



Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs

Where it necessary for a pupil to use a toilet in a public place (on trips), they will be accompanied by at least 2 staff members and have at least 2 children present. The school will use facilities with communal changing areas where pupils can be adequately supervised by school staff and are not left unattended in changing rooms/toilets. Wherever possible and available, the wheelchair accessible toilet should be used with the staff member remaining outside the door. All other principles of intimate care practice will be followed at these times.

Touch/ Massage

Massage/deep pressure may be included as part of a child's sensory schedule or based on the guidance of a qualified Occupational Therapist. Massage by staff will be confined to the hands/feet, face and shoulders. When using massage, staff must recognise the student's vulnerability. Approaching a person through touch in this way will be done within a relationship of trust built up gradually with staff who know the student well and who can sensitively interpret and respond to the student's reactions. Massage must be discontinued at the first indication of the student's wishes to do so. During the COVID-19 pandemic, risk assessments will be conducted and control measures, such as wearing PPE, will be put in place. Contact of this nature will not be conducted for longer than 15 minutes by one staff member.

Sexual Aspects of Intimate Care

As part of normal development, interest in one's own body and other people's bodies may be evident. People with autism or learning disabilities develop the same feelings and needs as others, although understanding and expressing these may be difficult. If the student shows signs of becoming sexually aroused during an intimate care procedure, staff must report this matter to the Principal, class teacher and behaviour analyst. In such a case, individual guidelines will be drawn up by the relevant personnel. As a general guideline, physical contact will not be undertaken while someone is sexually aroused.

Inappropriate sexualised behaviours

As detailed above, personal behaviours, such as touching private body parts are an expected part of normal development. It may be more challenging for pupils with Autism or an Intellectual Disability to learn when it is appropriate to touch private body parts.

If a student is displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviours, and no child protection issues are raised or noted, the pupil will be redirected to an appropriate task or activity. In all instances of inappropriate sexualised behaviours this should be brought to the class teacher's attention as soon as possible. If the inappropriate behaviour continues, an intervention programme, aimed at decreasing the behaviour, will be devised involving the parents, Class Teacher, Behaviour



Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs

Analyst, SNAs and multi-disciplinary support staff (where relevant). No child will ever be reprimanded for inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Please refer to our **Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy** for guidelines on how the school will respond to sexualised behaviour.

It is preferable to develop a proactive rather than reactive approach to managing behaviours. Any behaviour intervention will be reviewed frequently and in consultation with parents. ABACAS Special School recognises that some parents may find it difficult to discuss their son or daughter's sexualised behaviours in a public forum and may prefer to conduct such conversations over the telephone or in a meeting with only two staff members present. All government guidelines pertaining to COVID-19 will be adhered to during such a meeting.

Menstruation

Menstruation is a normal physical function. However the student may often require extra reassurance and guidance. The student may require the opportunity to rehearse hygiene routines previous to menstruation as well as instruction during menstruation. This instruction may include the use of visual, verbal or gestural prompts, social narratives and so on. All assistance should always be provided by a female member of staff and social distancing guidelines will be adhered to at all times. For students who require physical assistance, a risk assessment will be carried out and additional measures will be put in place. Tampons must not be used except in situations where the person can independently attend to their own menstrual needs.

Medication

Staff at ABACAS do not administer any medications, except where a potential emergency situation may deem it necessary (for example Epilepsy). Where possible, staff will receive training in the area where it is identified that a child may require the administration of an emergency medication. Medication will only be administered where a specific instruction for administration is provided by the child's doctor along with an indemnity form signed by the child's parents. Please see "Administration of Medicines" policy. A risk assessment will be conducted for all students requiring emergency medication and the relevant measures will be put in place to maintain staff and student safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Practice in Intimate Care

The Board of Management will make every effort to ensure that all staff are trained and supported in the area of intimate care. The staff at ABACAS special School Kilnamanagh are expected to familiarise themselves with the Toileting and Intimate Care Policy and be aware



Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs

of the standards expected of them. The staff will establish good working practices regarding physical transfer (manual handling), wearing of protective clothing (e.g. gloves) and ensure safe practice in relation to procedures carried out. Where possible, events requiring intimate care assistance will be identified in advance. Risk assessments where necessary will be carried out and COVID-19 safety measures will be put in place. Should an emergency arise where assistance is required (e.g. out of school activities) and where surroundings are less than ideal, the principles of privacy and dignity will be respected.

All staff members are expected to:

- Encourage the pupil towards independence.
- Get to know the students in their class and gain an appreciation of his/ her moods, likes/ dislikes and verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Have a knowledge and understanding of any religious or cultural sensitivity related to aspects on intimate care for the students in their class.
- Explain what is happening in a straightforward and reassuring way. In this way, the student is prepared for and can anticipate your assistance. Initially approach the student from the front, make eye contact and use their name.
- Be careful that in intimate care, the touch should be affirmative and supportive, not rough or insensitive.
- Adhere to COVID-19 safety measures including social distancing, coughing / sneezing etiquette and regular hand-washing.
- Adhere to measures that relate to risk assessments conducted as a result of COVID-19, such as wearing PPE.
- Use visual cues such as pointing to a prompt, use a picture schedule or board or any other appropriate aid to signal intention to wash or change (where necessary).
- Use discreet observation to monitor changing needs, for example in the case of a nappy or sanitary pad.
- Bathe, change or toilet students, one at a time. Ensure supplies of fresh clothes are to hand so that the student is not left unattended while items are found.
- Use only the student's own clothing. During COVID-19, sharing of clothes will not be permitted between students.
- Access protective gloves and ensure that they are used where necessary.
- Take special precautions when disposing of soiled materials.
- Check in advance where possible that suitable facilities exist for intimate care procedures when on school trips, etc.
- Never carry out an intimate care procedure unless the staff member knows how to carry it out correctly. If in doubt, staff will seek help or advice before commencing.



Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs

- Do not allow a student assist another student with his/ her intimate care needs.
- Intimate care procedures will be carried out in a manner which treats the pupil in a dignified and respectful way and allows the pupil the maximum level of privacy.

ABACAS Special School accepts that at times, intimate care support is provided by one staff member on their own with an individual student. This places additional responsibility on the school in terms of child safeguarding. As a reasonable precaution and in keeping with best practice, a staff member **must** make their intention and purpose known to another staff member in the building, before commencing a procedure involving intimate care. **The door must be left slightly open.** This must be balanced by the need for privacy for the individuals concerned.

In some cases, two members of staff may be required to assist with intimate care needs and these cases will be identified by the class teacher, in keeping with all other practices outlined above.

Reporting

Staff must report immediately to the Principal if during the intimate care of a student:

- A staff member accidentally hurts a student
- The student seems unusually sore, tender or bruised in any area of the body
- The student appears to misunderstand or misinterpret what is said or done
- The student has a very emotional reaction without apparent cause

The school's child safeguarding statement, prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 and Tusla Guidance should be followed.

Policy Review

It is fully acknowledged by all parties that this policy will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it is kept up to date and that it retains its relevance. Ongoing evaluation and new approaches to education & DES guidelines may require this document to be modified.

Ratified by the Board of Management on 24th August 2020.

Signed: _____
(*Chairperson of the Board of Management*)