Intimate Care Policy
INTRODUCTION

This policy is designed to ensure the safeguarding of all pupils at Woodlands School in the aspect of toileting and intimate care. Woodlands 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 all children with respect when intimate care is given. No child should be attended to in a way that causes distress, embarrassment or pain.

DEFINITION

Intimate care is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure (such as cleaning a pupil after they have soiled themselves) to intimate personal areas. In most cases such care will involve procedures to do with personal hygiene and the cleaning of equipment associated with the process as part of a staff member’s duty of care.

BEST PRACTICE

The issue of intimate care is a sensitive one and will require staff to be respectful of the child’s needs. The child’s dignity should always be preserved with a high level of privacy, choice and control. There shall be a high awareness of child protection issues. Staff behaviour must be open to scrutiny and staff must work in partnership with parents/carers to provide continuity of care to pupils wherever possible. No pupil should be attended to in a way that causes distress or pain.

The management of all pupils with intimate care needs will be carefully planned. Staff who provide intimate care are trained to do so (including Child Protection and Health and Safety training in moving and handling when required) and are fully aware of best practice. The pupil will be supported to achieve the highest level of autonomy that is possible given their age and abilities. Staff will encourage each pupil to be as independent as possible. This may mean, for example, giving the child responsibility for washing themselves.

When providing intimate care, gloves should always be worn by staff and aprons are optional but recommended. Staff should always wash hands before commencing personal care and after removing gloves. Changing beds should be thoroughly cleaned with antibacterial spray before and after each use. Wipes can be used to clean children.

Equipment is provided to assist with pupils 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.

Staff will also ensure that each pupil’s individual needs are met in terms of the type of communication, structure, environment, approaches to behaviour, cueing as well as special requirements due to sensory sensitivities that are necessary.

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 at Woodlands School is that staff will work using a ‘limited touch’ culture 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. Any deviation from planned physical contact and the justification for it should be documented and reported in an incident report and/or risk assessments (See behaviour and physical intervention policies for further details).

Some pupils occasionally may seek out inappropriate physical contact. In such circumstances staff may discourage the child **without causing them a negative experience.** Ensuring that a witness is present will help to protect staff from such allegations.

Young people are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes or taking a shower. However, there must be the required level of supervision to safeguard young people with regard to health and safety considerations and to ensure that bullying or teasing does not occur. This means that adults should announce their intention of entering changing rooms, avoid remaining in changing rooms unless pupil needs require it, avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress and avoid any visually intrusive behaviour.

Given the vulnerabilities of the situation, it is recommended that when supervising children in a state of undress, another member of staff is present. However, this may not always be possible and therefore staff need to be vigilant about their own conduct, e.g. adults must not change in the same place as children or shower with children.

**COMMUNICATION**

There should be communication with each child who needs help with intimate care in line with their preferred means of communication (e.g., PECS, verbal, symbolic, etc.) to discuss the child’s needs and preferences. The child should be aware of each procedure that is carried out and the reasons for it. Staff should be aware of the language that they use in this situation either when talking to the
child or another member of staff. Language should be positive and sensitive i.e. the words naughty, dirty, smelly etc. are offensive and unacceptable.

Our pupils with a diagnosis of Autism will particularly need special attention to their preferred method of communicating to, for example, ensure that they understand as much as possible to help keep anxiety to a minimum. Pupils with a diagnosis of Autism will most likely benefit from strategies such as waiting cards, social stories and visual timetables for clarity and to keep anxiety to a minimum. Staff should understand that these pupils may have anxieties around toilet training and may have difficulties transferring skills between home and school due to the difference in environments. As much as possible, consistency in staff, in language and in approach should be used.

PERSONAL AUTONOMY

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 washing themselves. Opportunities for rehearsing daily living skills will occur throughout the school day as well as through the PCSHE curriculum. Pupils must be encouraged to be as independent as possible in every aspect of the school day, including while intimate care is being provided and/or supported.

If a child is fully dependant, staff should talk through what is happening and give the pupil choices wherever possible.

Encourage the child to have a positive image of his or her own body

Confident, assertive children who feel their bodies belong to them are less vulnerable to sexual abuse. As well as basics like privacy, the approach you take to the 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 therefore very important. Keeping in mind the child’s age, routine care should be enjoyable, relaxed and fun.

STAFFING RATIOS

Careful consideration will be given to each child’s situation to determine how many carers might need to be present when a child is toileted. Please refer to any current risk assessment.

It is advisable however for a member of staff to inform another adult when they are going to assist a child with intimate care.

When agency staff are employed by the school they will be DBS checked; agency staff can assist pupils with intimate care provided:
They have read the relevant school policies
They are assisting a member of the school staff; agency staff should not be asked to provide intimate care unless they are with a member of school staff

**GENDER**

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 the predominantly female staff supporting boys in our school.

**PRIVACY**

Privacy for pupils is essential and staff should respect the pupils dignity at all times however **hygiene room doors should never be locked**. Curtains should be used within a hygiene room when two pupils are using the facilities at the same time. Staff should knock on the door before entering the toilet if the door is closed.

**PARENTS/CARERS**

Parents/Carers will be involved with their child’s intimate care arrangements on a regular basis. The needs and wishes of children and parents will be taken into account wherever possible within the constraints of staffing and equal opportunities legislation.