Within this policy, Doucecroft School Services relates to the school day and residential services.
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1. **Purpose of the Policy**

The Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines Regarding Children have been developed to safeguard children/young people and staff. They apply to everyone involved in the intimate care of children and young people. Children and young people can be especially vulnerable. Staff involved with their intimate care need to be sensitive to their individual needs.

2. **School Ethos:**

We welcome individuality and provide a safe and positive learning environment, to enable our Children and Young People to thrive and meet their full potential preparing them for their future.

3. **Our Mission:**

At Doucecroft School services our mission is that our Children and Young People are/have:

- **Developing** – Independence and life skills
- **Opportunity** - to experience and learn new things
- **Understanding** – to be understood and valued as an individual
- **Creativity** – to express myself as an individual
- **Encourage** – to try new things and realise my potential
- **Confidence** – to achieve and develop self esteem
- **Respect** – to feel accepted and accept others
- **Openness** – to share experience and feelings with others
- **Fairness** – to be recognised for achievements
- **Tolerance** - accept that everybody is different.

4. **Introduction**

Intimate care is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure, such as washing a Child or Young Person after they have soiled themselves, which relates to intimate personal areas. In most cases, such care will involve cleaning for hygiene purposes as part of a staff’s duty of care. In the case of a specific procedure only a person suitably trained and assessed as competent will undertake the procedure (e.g. the administration of rectal diazepam). The issue of intimate care is a sensitive one and will require staff to be respectful of the Children and Young People’s needs. Children and Young People’s dignity should always be preserved with a high level of privacy, choice
and control. There should always be a high awareness of possible safeguarding and child protection issues. As such, staff behaviour must be open to scrutiny, and staff must work in partnership with parents, carers and health professionals, where appropriate, to provide continuity of care to Children and Young People wherever possible.

Doucecroft School Services is committed to ensuring that all staff responsible for the intimate care of children and young people will always undertake their duties in a professional manner. We recognise there is a need to treat all children and young people with respect when intimate care is given.

The management of all Children and Young People with intimate care needs will be carefully planned. Their welfare and dignity are of paramount importance. Staff who provide intimate care will be trained to do so (including Safeguarding, Child Protection and Health and Safety training) and be fully aware of best practice.

Each Child and Young Person will be supported to achieve the highest level of autonomy that is possible given their abilities. Staff will encourage each Child and Young Person to do as much for him/herself as he/she can. This may mean, for example, giving the Child or Young Person responsibility for washing themselves.

Each Child and Young Person’s right to privacy will be respected. Careful consideration will be given to each Child and Young Person’s abilities in determining, for example, how many carers, staff might need to be present when a Children and Young Person are toileted. Wherever possible, one Child or Young Person will be supported by one adult unless there is a sound rationale for having more adults present.

5. The Special Needs of Children and Young People with ASC

This policy has been developed recognising the needs of children and young people with ASC. Consideration is given to the needs specific to children and young people with ASC as well as an awareness of their individual strengths and difficulties.

Children and Young People may present unpredictable, unprecedented, uninhibited and impulsive behaviour, without regard to, or understanding of, the consequences of their actions.

The nature of autism, with deficits in the areas of communication, social interaction, creativity, flexibility and sensory processing, places children and young people in a position of vulnerability. These impairments may not be outwardly apparent to others and in safeguarding each child or young person, significant demands are placed upon staff and carers.

Individual risk assessments identify the potential risks and detail the controls and actions required to minimise risks.
Children and Young People have the right to have times of being alone and in private, and it is neither appropriate nor desirable for staff to be with the child/young person all the time. Levels of support and supervision are based on regular assessments and review of individual’s needs.

Children and Young People with ASC can display behaviours that may be interpreted as possible indicators of abuse e.g. rocking, self-injurious behaviour, therefore having knowledge of the individual’s profile is important to recognise behaviours that are unusual for that individual.

Children and Young People with ASC do not always mean what they say or say what they mean; however, all disclosures are taken seriously.

6. Protection of Children and Young People/Staff

All Children and Young People 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/young person’s presentation, e.g. marks, bruises, soreness etc. she/he will immediately report concerns to the appropriate manager/designated safeguarding lead. If a child/young person becomes distressed or unhappy about being cared for by a particular member of staff, the matter will be investigated, and outcomes recorded. If a Child and Young Person makes an allegation against a member of staff, all necessary procedures and protocols will be followed. Parents/carers will be contacted and informed as part of this process to reach a resolution.

Special/Complex Health needs; Children and Young People with special/complex health 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 about individual support for each child/young person, as with all arrangements for intimate care needs.

Physical Contact; all staff engaged in the care and education of Children and Young People needs to exercise caution in the use of physical contact. The expectation is that staff will work in ‘appropriate limited touch’ cultures and that when physical contact is made with children and young people this will be in response to the child/young person’s needs at the time. Staff should be able to offer appropriate touch, if a child/young person needs comfort or reassurance. Staff should be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact might be misconstrued directly by the child/young person, an observer or by anyone the action is described to. Staff must therefore always make considered judgements when executing their duties, be prepared to justify actions and accept that all physical contact will be open to scrutiny. Any physical contact with individual children and young people is likely to be open to question unless the justification for this is formally agreed by the individual, the school and those with parental responsibility.
**Restraint;** There may be occasions where it is necessary for staff to restrain Children and Young People physically to prevent them from inflicting damage on either themselves, others or property. In such cases trained staff should use the minimum force necessary for the minimum length of time required for the individual to regain self-control using accredited training and techniques. In all cases of restraint each incident is documented and reported.

**First Aid and intimate care;** Staff who administer first aid should ensure wherever possible that another adult is present. The children and young people’s dignity must always be considered and where contact of a more intimate nature is required, another member of staff should be in the vicinity and must be made aware of the task being undertaken.

**Physical Education and other Skills Coaching;** Some staff are likely to come into physical contact with Children and Young People from time to time during their duties when participating in games, demonstrating an exercise or the use of equipment. Staff must be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of misinterpretation. Where it is anticipated that a Child and Young Person might be prone to misinterpret any such contact, alternatives should be considered, perhaps involving another member of staff or a less vulnerable child/person in the demonstration. Children and Young People are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes. However, there must be the required level of supervision to safeguard them about health and safety considerations and to ensure that bullying or teasing does not occur. This means that adults must announce their intention before entering changing rooms, avoid remaining in changing rooms unless support is required. Avoid any physical contact when children/young people are in a state of undress and avoid any visually intrusive behaviour. Given the vulnerabilities of the situation, it is strongly recommended that when supervising Children and Young People 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 or shower in the same place as the children/young people.

7. **Guidance for Good Practices at Doucecroft School**

Every effort must be made to ensure that each Child/Young Person are supported and treated with respect and dignity. Issues of personal hygiene and intimate care must be dealt with sensitively whilst promoting independence. Try to encourage a Child/Young Person’s independence as far as possible in his/her intimate care. Where the individual is fully dependent on adult support talk with them about what is going to be done and give him/her choice where possible. Initially hand-over-hand support may be required, this may then be reduced to encourage Children and Young People to develop skills in managing their own personal/ and intimate care. The use of pictorial/visual schedules, verbal prompts, demonstration using
objects of reference, miming or mirroring, etc. However, staff should remember that we each have a ‘duty of care’ which may mean the level of intimate care is greater to ensure the Children and Young People’s health and hygiene is maintained. Unless a Child/Young Person requires assistance or supervision, they should have the opportunity to bath, shower and use the toilet in private.

Prior to a new staff member supporting Children and Young People with intimate care opportunities, the new member of staff must read the Children and Young People “Getting to know me” document and to observe an experienced member of staff working with each Child /Young Person as part of their induction. Whilst training, and in general practice, staff must ensure that supervision of Children and Young People does not intrude inappropriately or in a way that may unnecessarily embarrass them. The Child/Young Person concerned, where practicable, should be encouraged to express their choice and give consent regarding provision of intimate care prior to observations/training taking place. Guidance in the use of any equipment involved in caring for the Children and Young People must be given, in accordance with Health and Safety procedures. Once it is evidenced that skills and knowledge have been attained the new member of staff should then be observed working with the Children and Young People by an experienced member of staff. This procedure provides opportunities to promote, and ensure, consistency of practice when supporting Children and Young People with intimate and personal care. Levels of support required relating to intimate and personal care are detailed in everyone’s plan and reflected in targets.

8. Intimate Care for children and young people of the opposite sex

Implications for Male Staff; Whilst male staff are not involved in the intimate care of female children/young people, they can be involved in the following, unless there are specific reasons for same gender support,

- Supporting individual female children and young people in life skills,
- Leisure and recreational activities,
- Helping a female child/young person in packing their suitcase and changing bed linen,
- Supporting a female colleague with physical intervention.

Female Staff Involvement; Female staff can be involved in the following care practice to male children/young people,

- support during bathing and showering,
- help with toileting,
- help with making beds and packing clothes,
- administration of creams and lotions over the body.
- administration of creams and lotions to the genital area should be carried out by the children and young people themselves whenever possible. If an
individual is unable to do this themselves and it would cause them distress not to apply the cream or lotion, it should be administered by staff with a second member of staff as witness whenever possible.

**Care Practices:** The following care practices must not be delivered to female Children and Young People by male staff:

- Bathing and showering,
- Dressing/undressing e.g. changing for PE, changing soiled clothes, etc.
- Physical support during menstruation,
- Administration of creams and lotions on parts of the body other than the hands and face,
- Support of a female child and young person at a medical appointment, unless accompanying a female member of staff,
- Discussion of any sexual issue,
- Inappropriate comments of others physical appearance, this applies to male and female staff and include inappropriate comments about all children and young people
- Help with the toilet.

**9. Other Policies to be read in conjunction with this policy**

- Safeguarding
- Child Protection
- First Aid
- Positive Behaviour
- Professional Conduct
- Whistleblowing

**10. Duty of Care**

Whilst this policy is descriptive of what is admissible and what is not, staff should feel able to work in confidence. A common-sense approach is needed within an environment of openness. When dealing with an incident requiring physical intervention, staff should be mindful of the possibility that a physical intervention may remind a Child and Young Person of a previous negative experience.

As carers we must provide a safe and secure environment that nurtures the individual. Children and Young People may need to develop the skills required to maintain their safety within the wider community and staff must act as good role models as well as supporting Children and Young People in developing skills. Confident, self-assured Children/Young People who feel that their body belongs to them are less vulnerable to sexual abuse. The approach that staff takes to
intimate care can convey lots of messages to a Child/Young Person about their body worth. Staff’s attitude to a Child/Young Person’s intimate care is important. Keeping in mind the individual’s age and level of support required; routine care can be relaxed, enjoyable and fun.

As professionals we have a duty to ensure that our, and others, practice is of a high standard and that Children and Young People are always treated with respect. Any physical contact must be as a response to Children and Young People’s needs. Any concerns regarding physical contact between staff and Children/Young People, or peer on peer, must be brought to the attention of a senior member of staff.