

# Intimate Care Policy



## 1. Introduction

Vale School is committed to ensuring that all staff who are responsible for the intimate care of students will undertake their duties in a professional manner at all times. Vale School recognises that there is a need to treat all students with respect and dignity when intimate care is given. No student should ever be attended to in a way that causes distress or pain.

Vale School will work to the principle that 'intimate care' relates to any exposed part of the body that would normally be covered by under garments and will include all areas of exposed body trunk.

## 2. Our Approach

The student who requires intimate care is treated with respect at all times; the student's welfare and dignity is of paramount importance.

Staff who need to provide intimate care will be trained to do so (including Child Protection and Health and Safety training in lifting and moving) and be fully aware of best practice. Equipment is provided to assist with students who need special arrangements following assessment from an NHS physiotherapist and occupational therapist as required.

Staff are supported to adapt their practice in relation to the needs of individuals taking into account developmental changes such as the onset of puberty and menstruation.

The student will be supported to achieve the highest level of autonomy that is possible given their age and ability. Staff will encourage each student to do as much for him/herself as he/she can. This may mean, for example, giving the student responsibility for washing themselves.

Individual care plans are drawn up for particular students as appropriate to suit the circumstances of the student.

Each student's right to privacy will be respected. Careful consideration will be given to their situation to determine how many staff might need to be present when a student requires intimate care. The number of adults stated on the individual's care plan and Statement of Special Educational Need/Education Health Care Plan is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure the correct provision is always available.

Where intimate care is required the staff allocated to that pupil will, where possible, work on a rota basis to ensure over familiarity in a relationship does not occur, yet, regular staff are attending the student so they feel comfortable and cared for.

Staff dealing with an individual pupil will consider the following factors:

- treat pupils with dignity and respect and avoid contact with the intimate parts of the body

- always explain to a pupil the reason why contact is necessary and what form that contact will take
- Where practical, seek consent of parents where a pupil is unable to give this e.g. because of a disability
- consider alternatives, where it is anticipated that a pupil might misinterpret any such contact
- be familiar with and follow recommended guidance and protocols
- conduct activities where they can be seen by others or another member of staff is in the vicinity and made aware of the task being undertaken.
- be aware of gender, cultural and religious issues that may need to be considered prior to initiating physical contact

On all residential visits wherever possible there will be a mixture of male and female staff to ensure that intimate care can be provided by the most appropriate member of staff.

Intimate care arrangements will be co-produced with parents/carers on a regular basis and recorded on the student's care plan. The needs and wishes of students and parents will be taken into account wherever possible within the constraints of available staffing at Vale School.

### **3. The Protection of Students**

Education Child Protection Procedures and Inter-Agency Child Protection procedures will be adhered to.

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, eg marks, bruises, soreness etc. s/he will immediately report concerns to the designated person for child protection – deputy headteacher or headteacher in their absence.

If a student becomes distressed or unhappy about being cared for by a particular member of staff, the matter will be looked into and outcomes recorded. Parents/carers will be contacted at the earliest opportunity as part of this process in order to reach a resolution. Staffing schedules will be altered until the issue(s) are resolved so that the student's needs remain paramount. Further advice will be taken from outside agencies if necessary.

If a student makes an allegation against a member of staff, we will follow our child protection procedures.

### **4. Students Wearing Pads or Similar**

Class teachers and support staff will discuss care needs and timing issues with parents and have frequent contact with parents to discuss any changes in routine or care needs as appropriate.

### **5. Changing Facilities**

Children who have long-term incontinence will use the specially adapted facilities in the school. The dignity and privacy of the child is of paramount concern and we have adapted facilities available.

## **6. Equipment Provision**

Parents provide pads, disposal bags, wipes etc. Parents are made aware of any equipment they need to provide. Families need to send in the pads appropriate for the individual's needs and on occasion will also provide disposal bags and cleaning wipes. Vale School is responsible for providing gloves, aprons, a bin and liners to dispose of any waste.

## **7. Health and Safety**

Staff always wear gloves when dealing with a pupil who is bleeding or soiled or when changing a soiled pad. Any soiled waste is placed in a yellow waste disposal bag, in a bin (complete with a liner) which is specifically designated for the disposal of such waste. The bin is emptied on a regular basis and is collected by an external agency. Regardless of ability, age and disability, the views and/or emotional responses of our students with special needs are actively sought (with advocacy arrangements made for those who can't) in regular reviews of these arrangements.

## **8. Physical Contact**

All staff who engage in the care and education of our students exercise caution in the use of physical contact.

The expectation is that the majority of staff will work in 'limited touch' cultures and that when physical contact is made with students this will be in response to the individual's needs at the time, will be of limited duration and will be appropriate given their age, stage of development and background.

Staff are aware that even well intentioned physical contact might be misconstrued directly by the child, an observer or by anyone the action is described. Staff can always justify their actions and accept that all physical contact may be open to scrutiny.

Children with special needs or disability 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; justification in terms of the child's needs is consistently applied and open to scrutiny.

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 leave staff vulnerable to allegations of abuse. Additionally, many such children are extremely needy and seek out inappropriate physical contact. In such circumstances staff deter the child without causing them a negative experience. Ensuring that a witness is present will help to protect staff from such allegations. Where appropriate, and a history of abuse is known, those adults working with an individual will be informed of the student's vulnerability and child protection strategies will be followed.

## **9. Restraint**

There are occasions where it is necessary for staff to restrain a student physically to prevent them from inflicting damage on either themselves, others or property.

In such cases only the minimum force necessary is used for the minimum length of time required for the student to regain self-control, staff will receive appropriate training.

In cases where serious exercise of force is used the incident is documented and reported to a member of the Senior Leadership Team as soon as possible.

### **10. Pupils in Distress**

There are occasions when students are distressed and need comfort and reassurance which may include physical touch such as a caring parent would give. Staff always remain self-aware at all times and ensure that their contact is not threatening or intrusive and not subject to misinterpretation.

Judgements take account of the circumstances of a student's distress, their age, the extent and cause of the distress. Unless the student needs an immediate response, staff consider whether they are the most appropriate person to respond. At times it is more suitable to involve the student's relative and the appropriate adult will arrange for this to happen. In such instances staff will seek further advice from their line manager or other appropriate person in school.

### **11. First Aid and Intimate Care**

There are named staff in school who administer first aid and wherever possible another adult or pupil are present. The pupil's dignity is always considered and where contact of a more intimate nature is required, another member of staff is always in the vicinity and made aware of the task being undertaken.

### **12. Out of School Trips, Clubs etc.**

Employees take particular care when supervising students in less formal atmosphere of a residential setting or after-school activity. Although more informal relationships in such circumstances tend to be usual, the standard of behaviour expected of Vale School staff is no different from the behaviour expected within school. Staff involved in such activities are familiar with Vale School policy and all LA Guidance regarding out of school activities.

To ensure student safety, we recognise increased vigilance is required when monitoring behaviour on field trips, holidays etc. We believe it is important to exercise caution so that a student is not compromised and a member of staff cannot be subject to allegations of overly intrusive or abusive behaviour. Wherever possible staff do not place themselves in a position where they are in a vehicle, house or other venue alone with a student. On any occasion where this is unavoidable, such as work experience, another member of staff is always aware of the situation and it will have been discussed prior to the event.