

CARRICKFERGUS MODEL SCHOOL



PERIOD DIGNITY POLICY

Date of Policy Writing	May 2022	Vice-Principal
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Carrickfergus Model School – Period Dignity Policy

1. SCHOOL ETHOS

The Model Primary School is a co-educational controlled Primary School. Our School Motto is one of 'Aspiring to learn, care and grow together.' We promote pastoral vigilance and pride in high standards within our whole school community. We aim to create an orderly, caring and calm environment where teachers teach and children learn.

Central to the creation of this environment is a commitment to Christian values, the recognition of the worth and value of each child and the cultivation of self-respect, so that the child may accept his/her appropriate responsibilities and show respect for others. We aim to establish a community wherein pupils, teachers, parents and support staff enjoy a sense of belonging and have an important part to play. Whilst we attempt to express Christian values in the life of the school, we remain open to all children and their parents and believe that diversity in the school community enhances the educational experience for everyone.

The Model Primary School has a strong tradition of high standards of pupil attainment and this is reflected in the expectations held by staff for pupils in terms of their attitude, approach and application to learning, school discipline, respect for others, appearance and attendance. We value the need for clear expectations, rules and procedures, which encourage children to take responsibility for their own actions. Well established routines and clear communication contribute to a sense of well-being, safety and security for each child.

All members of staff in Carrickfergus Model Primary School are aware that a positive ethos does not come about by chance; it is achieved by the Principal, members of the senior management team and staff, promoting and facilitating an atmosphere of care and respect within the informal and formal life of the school community.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

What is period dignity?

- Period dignity refers to the accessibility and availability of essential care needed to support a period, in conjunction with the removal/breaking of stigma and taboo around periods. Education is a key factor in breaking the stigma surrounding periods and promoting respect, understanding and open discussions about what people may experience when menstruating.
- The pilot scheme to address period dignity in schools aims to promote period dignity and tackle period poverty, helping learners who menstruate to reach their potential.
- Period poverty generally refers to poor menstrual knowledge and/or access to period products.
- Plan International describes what it calls a toxic trio of:
 - the cost of sanitary products;
 - a lack of education about periods; and,
 - shame, stigma and taboo.
- Period dignity is a cross-cutting issue and, if addressed, has the capacity to impact positively on a range of sectors including schools, further and higher education, health, communities and justice. It is therefore repercussive in nature with significant potential for cross-cutting impact to the benefit of thousands of people.
- There have been significant developments in the rest of the UK in relation to schemes to provide free period products and promote period dignity through education programmes in schools and other educational establishments.
- On the 17 December 2020, the NI Executive agreed to fund a pilot programme to provide free period products to all schools in Northern Ireland with effect from September 2021.
- The pilot scheme addresses the specific needs of the school sector and is supported with curriculum materials and an online Teacher Professional Learning programme for schools, thereby improving period dignity through addressing all three elements of Plan International's toxic trio.
- The free products are not aimed at providing a blanket provision, but the scheme aims to ensure products are available to menstruating learners where and when they need them.

Period Poverty Survey Results (August 2021)

CCEA's Data Science and Statistics and Research Unit sought to gain an insight into the frequency and extent of period poverty and other issues relating to period dignity in Northern Ireland. Online questionnaires were made available to pupils and teachers in primary and post-primary schools from 15 June to 2 July 2021. 1,711 pupils and 770 teachers responded to the surveys. A summary of the responses is listed below:

Pupil Survey – Responses received: 1,711

- *Almost all pupils (98.2% N=1,681) who responded to this questionnaire supported the new government scheme that supplies free period products to schools.*
- *Over a quarter of pupils (27.5% N=382) who have a period have had difficulty accessing period products.*
- *83.2% (N=318) of pupils who have had difficulty accessing period products experienced this because they didn't have what they needed with them in school.*
- *11.8% (N=45) had difficulty accessing period products because their parents couldn't afford them, while 6.5% (N=25) said they themselves could not afford them.*
- *8.12% (N=113) of pupils with a period have missed school because they didn't have access to sufficient period products.*
- *9.7% (N=11) pupils have missed school many times because they did not have sufficient period products.*
- *Over half of pupils (56.7% N=789) who menstruate have had to ask a friend or teacher for period products while in school.*
- *44.2% (N=756) of pupils' schools provide some period products at present, with 48.9% (N=318) having to use these at some point.*
- *Over half of pupils (53.0% N=737) were embarrassed when buying period products.*
- *Almost a quarter of pupils who responded (24.4% N=417) agree that eco factors are important when choosing period products.*

Teacher Questionnaire – Responses received: 770

- *Almost all teachers who responded (98.8% N=761) agreed with the new government scheme to provide free period products to schools.*
- *The majority of teachers (96.8% N=745) have heard of period poverty.*
- *70% (N=539) of teachers who responded had noted a pupil asking another pupil or member of staff for period products.*
- *Over half of teachers' (55.3% N=426) schools already provide free period products.*
- *40.6% (N=313) felt that pupils considered eco factors when buying period products.*
- *67.0% (N=516) of teachers agreed they would find training on menstrual wellbeing and period poverty useful.*

Aims of the Policy:

This policy will address the importance of accessibility and availability of essential care in Carrickfergus Model Primary School. We aim to ensure that:

- Pupils are provided with facts about menstruation;
- Children are given a comprehensive understanding of menstrual wellness, and how this impacts physical and emotional wellbeing
- We educate children about menstrual hygiene – essential facts and how to deal with related situations
- Negative attitudes, myths and stereotypes are challenged

This policy has been developed in line with the following guidance:

- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006
www.legislation.gov.uk
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (www.unicef.org.uk)
- Every School a Good School, Together Towards Improvement and Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy (www.deni.gov.uk)

- Menstrual Well-being in the RSE Curriculum
<https://ccea.org.uk/learningresources/relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse/menstrual-wellbeing>

The policy will be reviewed in May 2023 by the Period Dignity Key Contact (Mrs Kirkland) in light of the pilot scheme currently in place.

Our Ethos:

Carrickfergus Model staff are highly committed to the care and well-being of each child, have a deep sense of pride in our school and community, and work together to contribute to the holistic development of all children entrusted to our care. We seek to provide a safe environment to break the stigma surrounding periods and promoting respect, understanding and open discussions about what people may experience when menstruating.

Period Dignity is an integral part of the development of our pupils in line with the following Pastoral and Safeguarding policies:

- Child Protection policy
- Intimate Care policy
- Safeguarding policy
- Pastoral Care policy
- PDMU/RSE policy
- SEN policy
- Positive Behaviour policy
- Anti-Bullying policy
- First Aid policy

Roles and responsibilities:

The Period dignity program is a whole school initiative, involving pupils, parents, teaching staff and Governors. A summary of this policy is shared with parents in P6 and P7 and paper copies are also available for all parents from the school office. Parents are given information about period dignity and the sanitary items available for pupils in school through Parentmail. They are also provided with helpful links to support conversations they may have at home with their children. The Board of Governors are responsible for overseeing the implementation of Period Dignity as they review all relevant policies and liaise with key members of staff. Mrs Kirkland (Vice Principal, safeguarding team, SENCO and Head of Key Stage 2) is the Period Dignity Key Contact. She works closely with Mrs Miller (Principal and Pastoral Care lead) and Mrs Mitchell (Designated Teacher and First Aid co-ordinator) along with all staff members to ensure a whole school approach. Mrs Kirkland has availed of curriculum teaching materials and Online Teacher Professional Learning provided by CCEA. All staff will continue to follow CCEA guidance and any further Period dignity circulars to equip themselves for teaching effectively using relevant and current information.

Whole-school approach to period dignity:

RSE is taught throughout the school in every key stage as part of PDMU using cross curricular themes, practical activities and group/partner work. A Period Dignity workshop is delivered to all girls in Primary 6, Term 3 by the NSHCT School Nursing Team. The parents of Primary 6 girls will be informed in advance of the date for this workshop. This workshop will address

the stigma and myths around periods and create an atmosphere of positivity and open communication in order to increase pupil's knowledge, confidence and well-being. The children will be challenged to discuss, ask questions and make decisions to equip them for real situations. By providing a comprehensive period dignity education, we will encourage pupils to make use of the free period products provided in school, rather than wearing poor quality or unhygienic products. Primary 7 teachers use informal observation and open lines of communication with pupils and parents to assess whether additional follow-up teaching or revision is required during the last year of pupils' primary education. In this instance, the Period Dignity series of lessons provided by EA will be delivered by Mrs Kirkland.

Primary 6 and 7 pupils are informed of the period dignity scheme and the items available to them, following the School Nursing Team workshop in Term 3, Primary 6 . They are advised of the teachers they should approach if they have any issues (Mrs Kirkland, Mrs Hutton, Mr Trussell, Mr Caldwell, Mrs Miller). The products are ordered after consultation with staff and pupils to ensure suitable items are purchased. A range of sanitary towels and underwear are available for girls in the bathrooms and a supply is kept by Mrs Kirkland. The products are stored and replenished by these members of staff when necessary, checking expiry dates on a termly basis.

Links across the curriculum and to the wider life of the school

The understanding and knowledge of period dignity and menstrual well-being will be taught mainly through our PDMU and RSE curriculum, with links to ICT, WAU and Literacy. The emotional health and well-being of pupils is a key priority in our SDP, and therefore a whole school focus. The period dignity program compliments work being carried out in Shared Education as we focus on mutual respect and the rights of the child. RSE, PDMU and EMWB lessons are centred around growth, understanding and developing knowledge and understanding of ourselves and others. Our whole school focus on EHWP reinforces the messages of period dignity and well-being.

Managing Issues

Staff will be vigilant for any children who are distressed or experiencing discomfort due to menstruation. Children will be treated with care and sensitivity. Pupils will be given support and the bathroom will always be well stocked up with towels, disposal bins, underwear and extra clothes. Although all toilet cubicles are available to girls in their bathrooms, one is designated for P6 and P7 use only to help ensure sanitary supplies are readily available for pupils. Staff will work alongside parents, to ensure that absences are not caused by children unable to manage periods or lacking confidence. Parents will be informed of any issues that arise.

Suggested teaching resources:

The Real Period Project – Primary <https://www.realperiodproject.org/educators/primary/>

Able2Learn Social Story: I Have My Period (available from the Learning Support Room)

CCEA Period Dignity resources

<https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse/menstrual-wellbeing>

<https://www.facebook.com/cbeebies/videos/newsround-special-lets-talk-about-periods/431575084613572/>

Advice for Parents:

Autism Magazine: 10 Ways to Help Your Child on the Autistic Spectrum Prepare for Periods
<https://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/ways-child-autism-prepare-periods/>

Able2Learn Social Story: I Have My Period (available from Mrs Kirkland)

<https://www.facebook.com/cbeebies/videos/newsround-special-lets-talk-about-periods/431575084613572/>

NHSCT leaflet “Want to know about Puberty?” (provided to P6 girls by the NHSCT Schools Nursing Team)