

COLERAINE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Period Dignity and Menstrual Well-Being Policy

POLICY OVERVIEW

POLICY DETAILS

Policy Title: Period Dignity and Menstrual Well-Being Policy

Target Audience: Pupils, Staff, Parents/Carers

Policy Review Lead: Miss L. Magee and Mrs S. Taggart

Personnel Involved in the Review of this Policy: Safeguarding Team, Pastoral Leaders

Policy Consultation Period: October 2022

This policy was developed through consultation with: School governors, Senior Leadership Team, teaching staff, Pastoral Leaders, Curriculum Leaders, Learning Support Co-ordinator (SENCO) and Pupil Council groups across years 8-14.

This policy was presented to the Board of Governors on: 15th March 2023

This policy was ratified by the Board of Governors on: 22nd March 2023

This policy is effective from: 22nd March 2023

Frequency of Policy Review: Every two years

This policy will be reviewed: On or before March 2025

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The legislative context within which this policy has been developed includes:

- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 Article 3
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Education and Libraries Order (Northern Ireland) 2003
- Welfare and Protection of Pupils Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003
- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006

- The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010
- The Education (2006 Order) (Commencement No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2010
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

1: Introduction

At the heart of our values and vision in Coleraine Grammar School is RESPECT, which embodies our commitment to know and value our pupils as individuals and to challenge and support them to identify and fulfil or exceed their individual potential. We seek to do this within a caring and supportive environment where we aim to develop our young people in mind, heart and body to enable them to hold a positive view of themselves. We aim to encourage each pupil to develop moral and ethical values and a sense of social responsibility which has at its core respect and tolerance towards each other. Furthermore, it is our aim to create an environment where each member of the school community feels safe, valued and respected.

We recognise that many pupils may have additional physical, emotional, mental, social and educational needs due to the challenges and difficulties surrounding menstruation which may, at times, create barriers to learning. In implementing this policy, we believe that pupils can be helped to overcome these barriers to learning and be supported to reach their full potential.

A whole school approach is adopted in relation to period dignity issues and is linked to our Pastoral Priorities within the School Development Plan at Key Stages 3, 4 & 5 to meet the needs of the pupils.

The implementation of the Pilot Period Dignity Scheme in Coleraine Grammar School sits within the Preventative Curriculum and gives permission for menstruation to be addressed and openly discussed so that our young people are equipped with the skills, attitudes and behaviours to recognise, understand and respect the different challenges and difficulties that people may experience when menstruating, irrespective of religious belief, race, disability, age or sexual orientation.

All staff, teaching and non-teaching, should be aware of the importance of promoting period dignity. Staff will be asked to be sensitively alert to signs of physical and emotional distress that the young person may be experiencing in relation to periods, for example, discomfort, pain, lack of concentration, leaking, anxiety or being unable to sit still. Staff will manage such situations sensitively in line with our school values and ethos by helping the pupil to manage the situation.

This policy sets out the procedures in place to ensure free accessibility to period products, menstrual education and the de-stigmatisation surrounding menstruation which will subsequently have a positive impact on pupil confidence, wellbeing, attendance and attainment.

2. Aim and Objectives

Our overarching aim within this policy is to have a positive impact on pupil confidence, wellbeing, attendance and attainment.

The aim will be met through the following objectives which ensure that pupils, staff and parents/carers understand the term 'period dignity';

- raise awareness of the toxic trio*;
- promote period dignity in school and ensure that everyone who needs them has free access to period products;
- ensure that all pupils, staff and parents/guardians understand the impact of periods on the physical, emotional, mental, social and educational wellbeing of pupils;
- enable learners to achieve their potential by reducing any barriers they may experience due to periods;
- reduce stigma/taboo in relation to periods by providing all pupils with relevant, age appropriate information on periods so that a culture of openness in relation to menstrual issues is created;
- enable learners to understand how to deal with period issues, hygiene and disposal of period products;
- promote respect, understanding and open discussion about the challenges and difficulties that pupils may experience when menstruating.

*Toxic Trio refers to inaccessibility/unaffordability of period products, a lack of menstrual education, and period stigma.

3: Whole School Approach and Involvement of Parents/Carers

Educating pupils on period dignity is the responsibility of all staff. In drawing up our implementation plan, we will seek to ensure a whole school approach which visibly supports the promotion of period dignity through the use of presentations by the Period Dignity Leads in school to teaching and non-teaching staff, via Year Group Assemblies and extended registration time to pupils, by placing posters around the school, by working closely with the School Council and through the weekly parent/carer email from the Headmaster.

In Coleraine Grammar School, will encourage our parents/carers to work in partnership with us by talking to their children about period dignity and menstrual wellbeing. Relationships and Sexuality Education/Preventative Curriculum are statutory components of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, and it is within these areas that Period Dignity and menstrual wellbeing will be primarily addressed. However, parents/carers have the right to have their child educated in accordance with their wishes, therefore the school will respect the requests of parents/carers who wish to withdraw their child from Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing education.

4: Curricular Links

- The Period Dignity scheme sits firmly within our Pastoral Care programme and will be promoted and discussed at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 under the unit Relationships & Sexuality within our LLW Curriculum. CCEA resources may be used to complement the teaching of this topic.
- Menstruation/Period Dignity will also be addressed in the following curriculum areas:
 - Biology in Term 1 of Year 8 under Reproduction and in Year 12 when covering Reproduction topic.
 - Child Development in GCSE specification Topic on Reproduction: "explain how the menstrual cycle works".
 - Geography in Year 10, pupils will study development in LEDCs and look to the problems facing young girls trying to access education.*

*(*this information came from consultation with Curriculum Leaders in October 2022)*

- We recognise that menstruation can be a sensitive topic for some people to talk about, and that in discussing menstruation and menstrual health other related sensitive topics may be brought up by participants (including gender identity, sexual health, contraception and pregnancy). Appropriate sensitivity when approaching these topics will be of paramount importance and handling questions and disclosures will be in line with our school's Child Protection Policy.
- In line with our Special Educational Needs Policy, for those pupils with sensory difficulties, anxiety or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) tendencies or learning difficulties, their needs will be taken into consideration when delivering lessons related to Period Dignity.
- Our overarching aim in educating pupils within the Pastoral Programme is to challenge negative views, stereotypes, inequality and stigma in line with our school's Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Guidance issued from NHS, CCEA and in DE Circulars will inform curricular planning to ensure relevance.

5: Teaching Approaches/Strategies

In delivering the Period Dignity aspect of the Pastoral Programme we will use active and experiential approaches when exploring issues around menstrual wellbeing.

Teaching of period dignity and menstrual wellbeing will be incorporated into the curriculum, building on knowledge and understanding, rather than being treated as a one-off lesson. The issues relating to periods, menstrual wellbeing and period dignity are integral to the physical, spiritual, emotional, moral, social and intellectual development of our pupils.

External organisations/agencies will be used to complement the delivery of elements of the lessons and teaching relating to Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing. Where external agencies are involved appropriate, relevant details will be communicated to parents/carers and pupils.

The normal teaching arrangements of mixed gender classes will remain in place for delivery of period dignity and menstrual education with the aim of increasing understanding among all pupils and to challenge/reduce stigma, myths and stereotypes. This arrangement will be kept under review.

Having open conversations with pupils of all genders will enable us to break down the stigma around periods, and work to prevent bullying and shaming behaviour. In Coleraine Grammar we will seek to develop open conversations through menstrual education being delivered via the following ways:

- Mixed classes when period dignity discussed in pastoral or curricular lessons;
- A team of Well-being Ambassadors in senior school will assist in ensuring availability of necessary products;
- The School Council is also a mixed body of pupils and has, and will, continue to discuss Period Dignity as an agenda item when needed.

We will continue to offer all pupils the opportunity to be involved in consultation processes. Staff will be mindful of cultural differences that may exist, for example, some cultures may be against the use of tampons. There is a wide age range represented in School Council and the Period Dignity Leads will continue to encourage membership of the Well-Being Ambassadors team from pupils of all backgrounds, cultures and gender. Staff will be mindful to use inclusive language when discussing periods.

As the Period Dignity Policy rolls out, we will continue to consult with our School Council to continue to improve and develop the policy on an ongoing basis.

6: Resources

Resources will be carefully selected to the age and learning needs of the pupils. Resources used, including images, videos and language will not include inappropriate or explicit content. All resources will be inclusive and consistent with the ethos and values of Coleraine Grammar School as well as ensuring that they are factually accurate and up to date.

The resources used in the delivery of Period Dignity related lessons may be those recommended or produced by CCEA. These resources may address the following key topics and themes:

- Key facts about the menstrual cycle;
- What is and isn't normal;
- Communication skills needed to ask for help;
- The range of period products available, how and when they're used, and their advantages and disadvantages;
- Menstrual wellness – physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing leading up to and during periods;
- Menstrual hygiene – essential facts and how to deal with related situations;
- Challenges – pain, anxiety, fear, embarrassment and myths;

- Endometriosis and other menstruation-related issues – symptoms, support and treatment; and
- Period poverty.

The resources used by individual curriculum areas (cited above) may be prepared by the Curriculum Leader for those specific subjects.

7: Consultation

There have been surveys for pupils, all staff, parents/carers and the School Council has discussed period dignity. The consultation in these surveys to date has been used to inform on the choice of products and it is also envisaged that a team of Well-Being Ambassadors will take an active role in the replenishment of supplies. Pupils will continue to be informed of the scheme during Year Assemblies and will be encouraged to review the draft Period Dignity Policy during Extended Registration Time.

Teaching and non-teaching staff will continue to be informed of the scheme by the Period Dignity Leads and encouraged to review the policy and provide feedback.

Parents will continue to be informed of the Period Dignity scheme by means of Headmaster's Friday letter or other correspondence from the Period Dignity Leads, as required. A two-week consultation window will allow parents to access the policy on the school website and subsequently return feedback to the Period Dignity Leads within the school.

8: Period Product Provision

- A selection of period products (sanitary towels and tampons; and, when available, reusable period pants) may be available in the following areas in school on both campuses:
 - Girls' and disabled access toilets;
 - Nurture/Well-Being rooms;
 - School receptions;
 - Head of Faculty offices;
 - Period Dignity Leads' teaching classrooms;
 - Learning Support rooms;
 - Library (LR).
- The Well-being Ambassadors and non-teaching staff will help to monitor and replenish the period products on a weekly basis. This will include checking of dates on tampon products.
- A designated member of staff will carry out spot checks of dates on tampon products throughout each term to minimise the risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS).
- Pupil Well-being Ambassadors will liaise with the Period Dignity Staff Leads and Bursar when supplies are running low so that an order can be processed.

9: Key Staff

- The Period Dignity Leads in the school are Miss Lynn Magee and Mrs Sarah Taggart, Senior Teachers.
- Pastoral Leaders will assist in co-ordinating the Period Dignity education within their Year Group and they will be a point of contact for pupils to approach with any issues they may have.

10: Communication

The Period Dignity Policy will be available on the school website.

11: Monitoring and Review

The Board of Governors will be responsible for reviewing the Period Dignity Policy. Initially, it will be reviewed annually and subsequently every 2 years alongside the review of the RSE Policy. The policy will also be updated in response to:

- relevant circulars and publications provided by the Department of Education, the Education Authority or CCEA;
- recommendation(s) by the Education and Training Inspectorate;
- specific issues arising from the implementation of the Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing Programme in school; or
- reviews of other related school policies such as the Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy or Pastoral Policy. The policy's effectiveness will be monitored through:
 - WWW/EBI of Period Dignity scheme at School Council Meeting as required;
 - Feedback from pupils, staff and parents/carers via focus groups or surveys at end of school year.