



KNOCKBREDA
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Period Dignity Policy

Ratified by Board of Governors: January 2023

Review Date: January 2026

Rationale

The rationale for this policy is taken from CCEA, Period Dignity Policy/Guidance September 2021. Please see below;

What is Period Dignity?

1. 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.

2. Period poverty generally refers to poor menstrual knowledge and/or access to period products.

4. Plan International¹ describes what it calls a toxic trio of: • the cost of sanitary products; • a lack of education about periods; and, • shame, stigma and taboo.

5. 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.

6. 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. Northern Ireland has been highlighted as being behind the rest of the UK on this issue.

7. 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.

8. The pilot scheme addresses the specific needs of the school sector and will be 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.

9. 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.

This policy has been developed using guidance available and is a policy which is relevant to the lives of pupils today. RSE, in general, is embedded in the curriculum taught in Knockbreda Primary School to help and support pupils through their physical, emotional and moral development. Our successful approach to Period Dignity will help our pupils to respect themselves and others and move with confidence from childhood to adolescence.

School Ethos

Knockbreda Primary School aims to provide a positive and purposeful environment for pupils in which young people will experience the best possible learning opportunities so that they are well prepared for life. Central to this is the uniqueness and value of each individual. We will encourage pupils to accept responsibility, to look for the truth in all situations, and to value generosity, kindness, politeness, compassion, excellent hard work and courage.

Why Period Dignity is important:

According to the NHS, most girls start their periods when they are about 12 years old, but they can start as early as eight years old. It's therefore important to talk to girls and boys about periods from an early age to make sure they are aware of what is involved and how girls can be prepared for their first period.

Menstrual wellbeing fits into the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding Area of Learning at Key Stage 2 under Theme 4: Health, Growth and Change. This includes:

- knowing how the body grows and develops;
- being aware of the physical and emotional changes that take place during puberty; and
- knowing how babies are conceived, grow and are born.

Both boys and girls should be taught about menstrual wellbeing. By teaching all pupils together, you can send a powerful message that periods are not secret or shameful. They are not 'girls' business' and are normal and natural. It's important that boys have knowledge of and understand what girls experience before and during menstruation, and how their mood might change as they go through the menstrual cycle each month. It is an individual school's decision on how much boys are included in the lessons and how the topic is discussed. Age of pupils and maturity must be given careful consideration.

Teachers should cover:

- facts about menstruation;
- menstrual wellness – physical and emotional wellbeing leading up to and during periods;
- menstrual hygiene – essential facts and how to deal with related situations; and
- challenges – pain, anxiety, fear, embarrassment and myths.

Knockbreda Primary School will therefore through teaching and consultation with stakeholders;

- Ensure that pupils, staff and parents/carers understand the term 'period dignity'.
- Raise awareness of the toxic trio and how this impacts children and young people;
- 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 emotional, mental, social and educational well-being 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;
- Enable learners to understand how to deal with period issues, hygiene and disposal of period products;
- Promote respect, understanding and open discussion about what people may experience when menstruating; and
- Have a positive impact on pupil confidence, well-being, attendance and attainment.

Respecting the Rights of Children

The United Kingdom Government, including Northern Ireland, is a signatory to the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and has agreed to uphold the rights of children and young people as set out in the convention. This means that all children and young people in Northern Ireland have a right to a good quality education in accordance with the Convention.

Teaching Period Dignity in Knockbreda Primary School

Approaches to Teaching and Learning

In Knockbreda Primary School, Mrs L Smyth is the appointed Period Dignity Champion. Mrs Smyth organises a P6 Girls' Talk annually and resources used are shared with parents beforehand. Parents also have the option of removing their child from the chat. Pupils are provided with sample sanitary products during this talk. All P6 and P7 girls are aware that Mrs Smyth has products for their use and teachers are aware of this also. Sanitary bins are provided in a separate toilet available to the girls for privacy. Products are kept in this toilet also.

Love for Life are booked annually to run a 'What's Inside?' workshop with P7 pupils allowing the children to discuss all aspects of Relationships and Sexuality Education at an appropriate level. This also includes separate puberty talks for the boys and girls. In Knockbreda Primary School this is how we begin to engage boys in the conversation of period dignity.

Underpinning Goals of Teaching Period Dignity

- For learning in this area to be meaningful and engaging teachers will adopt a learner-centre approach. Lessons will be enquiry based when approaching sensitive and complex issues. These approaches are underpinned through Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities (TSPC) and will allow the children to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding and really engage in the learning process.

Teaching Resources

- Resources sourced from others must be checked to ensure they reflect the ethos of the school, are age appropriate, sensitive and inclusive and make clear distinctions between fact and fiction. P7 use activities provided by Love for Life and P6 girls use resources provided by LilLets. All teaching resources that are considered sensitive in nature will be shared with parents.
- CCEA have provided suitable lessons for boys and girls on Period Dignity and these will be utilised appropriately in Key Stage 2, if deemed appropriate.

Teaching Sensitive Issues

- Sensitive issues are part and parcel of life. Children are aware of them, and want to talk about and understand them, particularly those sensitive issues which are also topical. Pupils should not be denied the opportunity to explore such issues simply because a teacher feels uncomfortable discussing them, and they should not be sheltered from discussing sensitive issues in an age-appropriate way. To do either is to leave children ignorant and unprepared to engage and deal with the diverse and complex range of issues facing them in society today. In Knockbreda Primary School we will endeavour to support our staff and children when dealing with sensitive issues and topics.

Confidentiality

- The Safe Guarding Procedures of our school will be followed if any disclosures are made during lessons. Please see our Safeguarding Policy.

Withdrawal from Period Dignity Lessons and Discussions

In Northern Ireland, parents or carers have the right to have their children educated in accordance with their wishes. Therefore, whilst 'there is not legislative provision permitting parental withdrawal from sex education', schools can grant these requests on an individual basis (Lundy, Emerson, Lloyd, Byrne and Yohanis 2013, page 25). Schools should consider how they can support parents or carers who choose to withdraw their child from all or part of Period Dignity.

If a parent or carer chooses to withdraw a child from all or part of Period Dignity lessons, they must discuss the potentially detrimental effect that this can have on the child with the school (Lundy et al, 2013, page 25). They should consider the social and emotional effects

of being excluded, as well as the likelihood that the child will hear their peers' version of what happened or what was said in the classes, rather than the safe and reliable source of the teacher's. Ultimately, however, the school must respect the wishes of the parent or carer.

Young People with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Schools must ensure children with SEN in mainstream schools have appropriate, accessible and relevant Relationships and Sexuality Education. Schools may need to engage in the careful planning and adapting of resources and teaching activities to ensure that there are no barriers to participation or learning for pupils with SEN compared to their peers. It is particularly important that schools communicate with parents or carers of young people with SEN about the content of lessons and the date when classes will cover certain teaching activities/themes. This communication will allow for parents or carers to reinforce learning at home.

When Period Dignity lessons are being planned, parents of children with SEN will be contacted and provided with additional resources to help them support their child/children at home. Some examples of resources available are listed below.

- Link to Autism Friendly Guide to Periods
<https://wuka.co.uk/products/the-autism-friendly-guide-to-periods>
- Visual Booklet to explain periods to girls with SEN.

Responsibilities for Teaching Period Dignity

Responsibility of how the teaching of Period Dignity in Knockbreda Primary school will be delivered lies with the Board of Governors and will be decided on consultation with staff, representatives of parents and pupils.

Mrs L Smyth is the co-ordinator of Period Dignity in our school and will work with a designated governor to ensure access to all.

Class teachers have a responsibility to deliver age appropriate lessons using the CCEA materials provided but in Knockbreda Primary School the Period Dignity co-ordinator, Mrs Smyth will organise the delivery of the appropriate lesson with P6 pupils.

Primary 7 Programme – What's Inside? Is delivered by Love for Life.

Access to Period Products for Pupils

- Period products are ordered through the school iProc system as well as deodorant for hygiene purposes. This is the responsibility of the Period Dignity Co-ordinator.
- All girls have access to a private toilet with products at hand so girls do not need to ask for them. These include spare items of underwear.
- Pupils are given a 'gift bag' with free samples at the P6 girls' talk along with a useful leaflet to read in their own time at home, with their parent/carer.
- Period products should be brought on school trips with P6 and P7 pupils.
- Sample products of all kinds should be made available to show to the girls during their P6 talk.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it is fit for purpose by the co-ordinator, principal and Board of Governors. The recommendation is every two to three years.

Other Policies

This policy does not stand alone it should be considered along with our following policies ;

- Anti Bullying Policy
- Safe Guarding Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Relationships and Sexual Education Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Educational Trips or Visits

Appendices

- Menstrual Well-being Primary Links – www.ccea.org.uk
- Letter to parents on Period Dignity

References

This policy was written with reference to the following documentation:

- CCEA Guidance on Period Dignity Policy/Guidance September 2021
- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. (www.legislation.gov.uk)
- UNCRC – www.unicef.org.uk
- Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy in Schools – DE Circular 2013/16
- Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Guidance – DE Circular 2015/22