



WBU

Promoting Privacy and Dignity Of Residential Pupils

Date:
September 2015

Updated:
October 2020

Review Date:
October 2022

Staff Responsible: Headteacher & Head of Care

Background

At Wyre Forest School, every member of staff has a fundamental responsibility to treat individuals with dignity and respect. This is summarized in the “WBU Pupils Policy” as: being valued as an individual and being treated with dignity and respect:

Being valued as an individual means:

- being cared for and treated as unique;
- being talked to and about by my preferred name;
- being consistently cared for across settings;
- being encouraged to be me;
- being given enough time to take part, to do things for myself, to understand and be understood.

Being treated with dignity and respect means:

- being addressed with respect; never referred to or about as if I am my disability, nor as if I am one of my needs, nor finally as if I am hardly a person at all;
- being involved in conversations; never being talked about as if I am not there;
- having my privacy respected at all times and in all places (see **Search**, page 4);
- having all information about me treated carefully, kept safe and shared only with those people who need to know; never discussing me in the presence of another pupil;
- being given the best possible care that can be provided;
- being involved in decisions that affect me; being actively encouraged to express my views and where these cannot be taken into account, then told why being loved and cared for as a person first means:
- having the same rights and choices and as far as possible the same kind of life as other people of my age and culture;
- consistent care from staff who really care about me and know me well;
- being actively supported as part of a family; having my carers/parents fully involved in any planning for me and acknowledged as ultimately responsible for me;
- having access to communication equipment at all times, and being listened to and heard when I need to communicate, even if I am not easy to understand;
- being given information about what is happening before it **happens**, being given explanations of procedures before they occur;
- being given opportunities to play, learn and develop.

And this means and is achieved by the staff members’ responsibility to:

Valuing pupils as individual’s means:

- care for and treat every pupil as unique;
- talk to and about every pupil by their own preferred name (not always as one of many: the group, the class, the kids, that lot).

Treating pupils with dignity and respect means:

- addressing every pupil with respect; never having a ‘favourite’; never referring to **or**

about a pupil as if they are their disability (e.g. as SLD/MLD/Autistic/PMLD/etc.), nor as if they are one of their needs, nor as if they are a piece of equipment, nor finally as if they are hardly a person at all;

- involving the pupils in conversations; never talking about them as if they were not there ("has she been to the clinic?" "has he been done?" "does she want a drink?");
- respecting every pupil's privacy at all times and in all places. It is required for all school members to politely 'knock on doors' before entering;
- treating all information about pupils carefully, keeping it safe and sharing it only with those people who need to know; never discussing one pupil in the presence of another pupil;
- giving the best possible care that can be provided;
- involving pupils in decisions that affect them: actively encouraging pupils to express their views and where these cannot be taken into account, then explaining why.

Guidelines for Good Practice in Intimate Care

(See WFS "Intimate Care" Policy and "Pupils Policy")

All of the pupils we work with have the right to be safe and to be treated with dignity and respect, as set out in the "Boarding Pupils Charter Statement". These Guidelines are designed to safeguard both pupils and staff, and apply to every member of staff involved with the intimate care of pupils within Russell House. They aim to support good practice in intimate care.

Pupils with disabilities can be very vulnerable. All staff involved with their intimate care need to be sensitive to the pupil's needs and also aware that some care tasks or treatments could be open to possible misinterpretation. False allegations of sexual abuse are extremely rare, but certain basic guidelines will safeguard both pupils and staff. Everyone is safer if expectations are clear and approaches are consistent as far as possible. If you cannot work within these Guidelines for any reason, please talk with the Head of Care or Deputy Head of Care.

1. Treat every pupil with dignity and respect and ensure privacy appropriate to the pupil's age and situation

Privacy is an important issue. Much intimate care is carried out by one staff member alone with one pupil. Having people working alone does increase the opportunity for possible abuse, however, this is balanced by the loss of privacy and lack of trust implied if two people have to be present - quite apart from the practical difficulties. So, staff are supported in carrying out the intimate care of pupils alone unless the task requires the presence of two people.

2. Involve the pupil as far as possible in their own intimate care

Try to avoid doing things for a pupil that he/she can do alone and if a pupil is able to help, ensure he/she is given the chance to do so. Support the pupil in doing all that they can do themselves. If a child is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give them choices where possible.

3. Be responsive to a pupil's reactions

Check your practice by asking the pupil, particularly a pupil you have not previously cared for, e.g. "Is it OK to do it this way?" "Can you wash there?". If a pupil expresses dislike of a certain person carrying out his/her intimate care, try and find out why. If a pupil appears to have a "grudge" against you for some reason ensure the Head of Care and Head Teacher are aware of this.

4. Make sure practice in intimate care is as consistent as possible

The Head of Care and the Headteacher have responsibility for ensuring their staff has a consistent approach. This does not mean that everyone has to do things in an identical fashion, but it is important that approaches are not markedly different between different staff. For example, is care during menstruation consistent across different staff? Do all staff encourage students to wash themselves appropriately and consistently?

5. Never do something unless you know how to do it

If you are not sure how to do something, ASK. If you need to be shown more than once, ask again. Certain intimate care or treatment procedures, such as rectal examinations must only be carried out by nursing or medical staff. Other procedures, such as giving rectal Valium, suppositories or intermittent catheterization must only be carried out by staff who have been formally trained and assessed as competent.

6. If you are concerned, report it:

If during the intimate care of a pupil you accidentally hurt them, or he/she seems unusually sore or tender in the genital area, or appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, or misunderstands or misinterprets something, or has a very emotional reaction without apparent cause; report any such incident as soon as possible to another person working with you and make a brief written note of it. Some of these could be cause for concern about the pupil, or alternatively the pupil or another adult might possibly misconstrue something you have done.

7. Encourage the pupil to have a positive image of their own body

Confident, assertive pupils who feel their body belongs to them are less vulnerable to sexual abuse. As well as basics like privacy, the approach you take to a pupil's intimate care can convey lots of messages to him/her about what their body is "worth". Your attitude to the pupil's intimate care is important. Keeping in mind the pupil's age, routine care should be relaxed and as much fun as possible. Where appropriate, playing games with pupils, tickling and cuddling as part of a pupil's care is actively encouraged as long as the pupil's right to say "no" is respected.

Guidelines for Working with Pupils of the Opposite Sex

These Guidelines are based on the following principles:

- a. That there is positive value in both male and female staff being involved with the pupils at the Wyre Forest School.
- b. That ideally, every pupil would be offered the choice of a carer of the same sex for all of their intimate care.
- c. That the individual pupil's safety, dignity, privacy and right to exercise choice are of paramount importance.

The practical Guidelines set out below are also written in the light of the following realities:

- i. The current ratio of female to male staff and female to male students at the Wyre Forest School, which means that we are far less likely to be able to offer the choice of same sex carer to boys and young men.
- ii. The wider context: group care in mixed sex groups with mixed staff teams is increasingly the norm in adult residential services and we have a responsibility to prepare young people at the Wyre Forest School for the future.
- iii. Male staff will not do lone, one to one intimate care with female students.

Therefore, these Guidelines must be implemented sensitively and with respect for the feelings of all involved.

General Care:

Male and female staff can be involved with pupils of either sex in:

- a the planning and running of services
- b key working and liaison with families
- c coordination of and contribution to a pupil's review
- d meeting the developmental, emotional and recreational needs of the pupils
- e escorting the pupils between sites, on outings and to clinics unless intimate care is needed
- f helping pupils with eating, drinking, hair washing and brushing, teeth cleaning, etc.
- g dressing and undressing of outer clothing

- h lifting or positioning a pupil who is dressed or in night clothes

Intimate Care Summary:

Wherever possible, boys and young men should be offered the option of a male carer. However, given the ratio of male to female staff and male to female students, this is often not possible, and by necessity female carers may have to carry out all the care. For girls and young women, male staff can be involved as the second carer, if there is not a second female available, wherever the girl or young woman is comfortable with this, eg lifting in and out of bed, on and off the toilet if the girl can be covered or clothed. In specific situations, the intimate caring for a girl can be carried out by a male member of staff in the presence of a female member of staff. This must always be with the advance agreement of the Head of Care, and there needs to be reasons for this (e.g. the male member of staff's skills/experience/knowledge of the pupil).

Where there is any doubt that a pupil is able to make an informed choice on these issues, the pupil's parents/carers are in the best position to act as advocates.

Risks Relating to Privacy/Liberty Within the Environment

In order to ensure that pupils are well cared for and safe whilst residing at Russell House, there are occasions whereby a normal level of freedom of movement around the building and/or a limited need for monitoring pupils appropriately when they are in their bedrooms, outweighs what would be considered as the nominal levels of personal privacy and liberty within the home. Such circumstances would be recorded in detail on each pupil's risk assessment as appropriate and could include such levels of safety as:

- **Bedroom Door Alarms.** These are fitted to all bedroom doors in Russell House but are only used where there is an identified need for a pupil to be monitored, or where a pupil may be vulnerable, during the night hours as stated on their risk assessments.
- **Access Control Fob-Locks.** These are fitted to certain internal and external doors within Russell House. These locks require the use of a fob and restrict access for pupils between some areas of the building/gardens. Where this restricts a pupils' liberty for safety reasons, this is identified on the pupil's individual risk assessment. In some cases, pupils may be given an access fob to allow them access through certain doors whereby their ability and understanding of risks or danger outweighs that of their peers.
- **External Access.** External doors into the gardens at Russell House on the whole allow free access from the building into the fenced gardens. There is one exception whereby an access control lock is fitted to the door leading to the garden in one of the lounges. In this instance, pupils can still access the garden via the Calm room but where there might be a need to restrict this during certain weather conditions or late evening, the calm room door can be locked.

Russell House staff promote independence as much as possible and the two wings of the building can be used to progress pupils as they become more independent in their life-skills and safety awareness. This is achieved and monitored using the life- skills curriculum and key targets identified within the care plan and through the review cycle.

References:

“The Dignity Of Risk” Council for Disabled Children 2004
“Working Together to Safeguard Children” (2015)
“Worcestershire Safeguarding Children”
WFS “WBU Pupils Policy”
WFS “WBU Intimate Care Policy”