



BALLYORAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Period Dignity Policy

June 2025

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Background

Period Dignity refers to the accessibility and availability of essential care needed to support a period, in conjunction with the removal of stigma 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. Period Poverty refers to poor menstrual knowledge and/or access to period products. Feedback collated from CCEA's online Period Poverty surveys (June 2021) forms the basis of the project and falls under three main themes known as the Toxic Trio:

- the cost of period products
- accessibility of period products; and
- shame, stigma, and taboo

The Period Dignity Scheme aims to promote period dignity and tackle period poverty, helping learners who menstruate to stay in school and reach their full potential.

Overall Aims and Objectives of the Period Dignity Policy

The policy aims to set out how we promote Period Dignity and how it complements other aspects of the wider school life. The overall aims of the policy are to:

- reflect our school ethos by promoting the moral, intellectual, personal and social development of pupils. We endeavour to provide a positive and caring learning environment, where pupils feel secure and free to discuss their problems and feel confident they will receive a supportive response.
- educate and promote awareness around Period Dignity/Menstrual Wellbeing in an inclusive and equitable manner by providing strategies to ensure all pupils regardless of age, ability, gender, religion, or culture reach their full potential
- ensure implementation of the Period Dignity scheme by highlighting its importance in the School Development Plan.
- take account of The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations Northern Ireland 2006 by ensuring the needs of all pupils are met equally regardless of sexual orientation
- promote every child's right to a free primary education (UNCRC Article 28)
- take account of the guidance set out in Every School a Good School, Together Towards Improvement, Community Relations, and Equality and Diversity in Education Policy.
- support children and young peoples' strategy for Northern Ireland.

The Legislative Context

The Period Products (Free Provision) Act (NI) was made by the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2022 and requires that period products will be made available from May 2024. The requirements of the Act go beyond seeking to make provision for those in financial difficulty. Rather, there is a recognition that period products are necessary and essential items that should be available free of charge and accessible by all persons who need to use them. The arrangements put in place must allow individuals to obtain products in a way that respects their dignity, privacy, and confidentiality. Public service bodies, including schools, must provide free period products for use by staff and visitors whilst on their premises. 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.

The general principles which underpin our work are:

- Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2022/25/enacted>
- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 www.legislation.gov.uk
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child www.unicef.org.uk
- Every School a Good School, Together Towards Improvement and Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy www.education-ni.gov.uk
- Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030 <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/children-and-young-peoples-strategy-2020-2030>
- Menstrual Well-Being in the RSE Curriculum <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/period-dignity>
<https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse/menstrual-wellbeing>

Every School a Good School:

Key principles (related to the Period Dignity scheme)

- The interests of pupils rather than institutions must be at the centre of efforts to improve educational achievement and tackle underachievement.
- Equity of access and equity of provision as well as a continuum of provision for a diversity of need.
- Recognition that the improvement process is a collaborative one, requiring communication and co-operation within the school and between the school and its parents and the wider community that it serves.

Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education:

The legislation covers all section 75 groups and recognises the role that schools can and do play in encouraging learners to become personally, emotionally, socially and physically effective; to lead healthy, safe and fulfilled lives; and to become confident, independent and responsible citizens, making informed and responsible choices and decisions throughout their lives. This policy, in which equality and inclusion are one of the cornerstones of our education system, enables every learner to fulfil their potential. It also complements the curriculum by providing staff with the capacity to address what are often difficult and sensitive issues:

- by ensuring good practice is disseminated and relevant materials are available
- by equipping children and young people with the skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to recognise, understand and respect difference in all its forms.
- and by providing opportunities for children and young people to put these skills into practise.

The International Context:

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

All children are entitled to their rights, and these cannot be taken away from them. This Period Dignity Policy specifically links to the following rights:

- Article 3 – The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.
- Article 6 – Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.
- Article 24 – Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy.

Policy formation and consultation process

- This policy has been drawn up following guidance laid out by CCEA.
- Senior leadership, pastoral care staff and governors have been involved in the consultation
- The policy is available to all teaching, non-teaching staff and CAs.

- The policy will be reviewed annually by senior leadership staff and the Period Dignity coordinator contact.
- The Vice Principal is the contact for comments and feedback on the policy.
- The Period Dignity policy supports current school policies such as the Pastoral Care programme, Confidentiality, Child Protection, Anti -bullying, SEN and the Positive Behaviour policy.

Key staff and roles and responsibilities

School governor with oversight of the Period Dignity Programme	Mrs Laura Sergeant (Safeguarding Governor)
Pastoral Care Leader	Mr Woolsey
Period Dignity Key Contact	Mrs McGuire
Learning Support Coordinator	Mrs McGuire
Safeguarding Designated Teacher	Mrs McGuire

The Period Dignity programme is a whole school initiative involving pupils, parents, staff and governors. The policy is available on our website and paper copies available on request via the school office. Parents are given information about Period Dignity and the sanitary items available for pupils through email communications, letters, the school website and consultation processes. 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, teaching materials and liaise with key members of staff. It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors, along with the Principal, to monitor the effectiveness of this policy.

The policy will be reviewed every 2 years, but may be updated sooner in response to:

- Relevant circulars or publications provided by the Department of Education, the Education Authority or CCEA;
- A recommendation from the Education Training Inspectorate;
- Issues arising from the implementation of the Period Dignity and Menstrual Well-Being Programme in school; or
- Reviews of other related policies such as Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy, Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Pastoral care Policy, Intimate Care Policy etc

Mrs McGuire, is the Period Dignity Key Contact. She works closely with Key Stage 2 teachers and Classroom Assistants to ensure a whole school approach.

Staff will continue to follow CCEA guidance and any further Period Dignity circulars to equip themselves for teaching effectively using relevant information.

Whole-school approach to period dignity:

In Ballyoran Primary School, we will support period dignity by;

- Taking a whole school approach to communicate about period dignity and related issues
- Visibly promoting the importance of period dignity in an age and stage appropriate way;
- Challenging negative views, stereotypes, gender inequality and stigma around periods;
- Communicating period dignity and related issues through a whole school approach;
- Educating all children in an age and stage appropriate way about periods, period dignity and menstrual well-being;
- Supplying free menstrual well-being products to those who need them.

Ballyoran Primary School supports pupils by:

- providing Pastoral Care to address issues that affect young people in relation to periods or period dignity
- providing appropriate support for pupils with SEN.
- considering gender, culture, religion, and age range when planning and implementing the scheme
- engaging with pupils when determining how and where period products are available
- evaluating the impact of period dignity scheme through pupil feedback.
- easy access to sanitary products

The Period Dignity Scheme

Free products are not aimed at providing a blanket provision for all pupils, rather the scheme aims to ensure products are available to menstruating pupils when they need them. This may include pupils who struggle to afford products, those who have forgotten to bring products in and those who have unexpectedly started their period in school.

- **Early consultation with pupils to launch the scheme**

Girls in Yr 6 and Yr 7 are informed of the Period Dignity Scheme and the items available to them in school in the first term. Yr 5 children may be informed as

required. They are advised of the teachers they may approach if they have any issues. This initial engagement is key as it provides the opportunity for pupils to discuss where they feel is best to store and access period products. Research shows that pupils are embarrassed to ask members of staff for products. The scheme is for the pupils and their concerns should be listened to, so as to protect dignity and to avoid anxiety, embarrassment, and stigma. If pupils are invested in the project, they are more likely to support it rather than misuse it.

- **Promotion**

Period dignity will be discussed with Yr 6 and Yr 7 girls. They will know who the contacts are within school and where they can get sanitary products when required. Important considerations are the:

- degree of trust, respect and positive regard for pupils;
- relationships between the teacher and pupils, and between the pupils themselves;
- All pupils are made to feel safe and secure and in accordance with relevant pastoral care and safeguarding policies.
- Ensure adequate support is in place for pupils, taking into consideration CLA (Children Looked After) pupils, children with SEN requirements and pupils living in difficult home circumstances.
- An atmosphere of inclusion and understanding is promoted consistently, regarding differences in race, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, culture.

Parents/carers and all staff (male and female) will be informed about the project. A Period Dignity Letter will be sent home each September to outline the programme to the parents of Yr 6 and Yr 7 girls.

- **Free Period products (term time)**

CCEA advise against the use of tampons in primary schools. Sanitary towels will be ordered by the principal on an annual basis. Pupils will be provided with relevant advice on how to use the product safely and dispose of correctly.

- **Storage of Period Products and Practicality**

A range of sanitary products will be available in the girls' bathroom in a free vending cabinet which is attached to the wall in the end toilet. Sanitary products are also kept by Mrs Brown (Year 7 teacher). The products are replenished by Mrs McGuire and Key Stage 2 classroom assistants when necessary.

- **Free period Products (holidays)**

Provision does not include school holidays, however if budget allows, then arrangements can be set in place to provide for pupils for whom this is essential. The local library has a supply of sanitary products and the pupils will be informed of this.

- **Key Staff**

Pupils should feel confident in knowing they can approach Mrs McGuire, (Key Contact), (Learning Support Coordinator / Designated Teacher) Mrs Brown (Yr 7 Teacher) and/or their class teacher and assistants with any sensitive/period/scheme related issues they may have.

Period Dignity and Menstrual Well-being Education and Learning

The teaching of Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing supports the school's ethos and reflects moral and religious principles of parents/carers and school management by promoting not only the intellectual, but also the moral, personal, and social development of the child. The teaching of Period Dignity is inclusive and focuses on equality, health and hygiene, self-esteem, respect and understanding. It complements Ballyoran Primary School's ethos through encouraging the provision of a safe and secure learning environment to assist all children, including menstruating pupils, to reach their full potential.

Through the education of Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing, Ballyoran Primary School aims to.

- enable learners to achieve their full potential by reducing barriers they may experience due to periods.
- ensure parents, staff and pupils understand the term 'Period Dignity'.
- inform pupils on the facts of menstruation.
- break the stigma/taboo surrounding periods and promote respect and understanding.
- address challenges such as pain, anxiety, fear, embarrassment, and myths.
- inform pupils on menstrual wellness (physical and emotional).
- allow open discussions about what people may experience when menstruating.
- support good health and prevent young people wearing the wrong product, substituting for a poor-quality product or toilet roll, or wearing a product that is no longer safe.
- encourage the uptake of free period products in school when needed.
- enable pupils to understand how to dispose of period products.
- help keep young people in school and increase concentration in class through not having to worry about lack of period products or leaking.
- promote confidence to participate in sports and other extra-curricular activities when menstruating by having access to products.

- have a positive impact on the self-esteem, confidence and well-being of menstruating pupils.
- provide advice/care for pupils with sensitive period related issues.

TEACHING ARRANGEMENTS

Teaching about period dignity is important to help pupils feel safe and comfortable with their bodies, and to dispel the stigma around menstruation.

Ballyoran Primary School will ensure that pupils have access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals and to relate to other individuals in a mature and respectful way.

➤ PDMU & RSE

The understanding and knowledge of period dignity and menstrual well-being will be taught mainly through our PDMU (Personal Development & Mutual Understanding) and RSE curriculum (Relationships and Sexuality Education). RSE is an integral part of the curriculum and will be delivered in a sensitive manner which is appropriate to the age and understanding of pupils and the ethos of the school. (See RSE Policy)

The provision of RSE is an equal opportunities issue. All pupils have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life, and RSE plays an integral part. Health, education and social services professionals have identified a need for boys and girls, to receive an adequate preparation for the emotional and physical changes at puberty. Every child is unique and develops physically and emotionally at his or her own pace. However, as the average age for puberty is 8–12 years old for girls and 9–14 years old for boys, schools must schedule learning about puberty before its onset, during Key Stage 2. On average, most girls begin menstruating when they are 12 years old; however, approximately 10 percent begin menstruating in primary school, some as young as eight years old. Research shows that one third of girls are not told about menstruation by their parents or carers, and 10 percent of girls have no preparation at all before their first period. For any girl, menstruating in school can be distressing, particularly if it happens unexpectedly. However, this distress is magnified for girls of primary school age, particularly if they are not prepared for the physical, emotional and practical consequences. It is extremely important that pupils are provided with appropriate factual information and have opportunities to discuss their feelings and concerns.

This preparation should help pupils to be better able to manage the emotional and physical changes at puberty. Pupils will have opportunities to learn and understand how and why the body grows and develops. This knowledge forms part of the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding theme of 'Health, Growth and Change' in the latter part of Key Stage 2.

See **Appendix 1** for ‘Relationships and Sexuality Education through the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding Curriculum- Statutory Curricular Requirements for PDMU-RSE’

➤ Love For Life

Ballyoran Primary School Primary School will also access the skills and expertise of outside agencies and professionals for example, Love for Life, to help develop the pupils’ understanding and knowledge of period dignity and menstrual well-being.

Choices and Changes

Love For Life will deliver the “Choices and Changes” programme to Yr 6 pupils. Choices & Changes aims to introduce pupils to the changes they will face as they go through the process of puberty. This will be the focus throughout the one - hour presentation and will include a reassuring gender-specific puberty talk. The presentation will also remind pupils of their uniqueness, value and worth as well as highlighting the importance of thinking through decisions on the basis of what is best for them personally.

Topics covered in this presentation:

- Self-esteem & uniqueness
- Making healthy choices
- Puberty: what to expect
- Kindness & supporting others during puberty
- Who they can go to for help and support

What’s Inside

Love For Life will deliver the “What’s Inside” programme to Yr 7 pupils. This interactive programme aims to equip pupils in Yr 7 to deal with the changes that so often cause concern and anxiety at their age. We remind pupils that they are all unique by looking at the process of conception, the amazing construction of our bodies and the continuing process of growing up. The gender-specific puberty talk is often the most reassuring part of the day for pupils who are worried about changes in their bodies. Target setting, friendship and assertive behaviour skills are also addressed in the presentation. The fun and interactive ‘What’s Inside’ programme aims to equip the Yr 7 pupils to make healthy choices and is a vital part of their learning before their transition into secondary school. The workshop includes a separate boys and girls puberty talk, positive qualities in friendships, bullying and how to make good decisions. The main focus of the programme is to affirm the uniqueness of the individual and to encourage respect for themselves and others.

In the Yr 7 “What’s Inside?” programme, the gender-specific puberty talk explores an introduction to the changes biological males and females, both physical and emotional, go through during puberty. While the sessions are specific to male and female, there are consistent topics e.g. hair growth, changes to the shape and size of the various body parts and hygiene skills. The female session provides age- appropriate information about periods and how to manage them, a theme which is also covered in appropriate detail in the male session.

The rationale for splitting the sexes is to maximise the comfort and security that the children feel. We want to create an environment in which there is as little fear or embarrassment as possible, as well as creating a safe space where questions can be asked and answered with clarity and compassion. In particular, we want to be able to give the girls information about their periods that instils confidence in them as they prepare for the changes ahead.

It is not about secrecy but sensitivity, recognising that the biological differences will be explained more fully in Year 8, and parents, carers or trusted adults are encouraged to fill in on any gaps in information that they feel is appropriate for their child regarding their body and that of the opposite sex.

Topics covered in this presentation:

- Self-esteem & uniqueness
- Conception and pregnancy
- The rollercoaster of growing up
- Coping with change
- Puberty: physical and emotional changes
- Assertiveness under pressure
- Target setting
- Healthy relationships
- How to get help (helping them identify their trusted adults, from whom they can seek help)

Some of the ways Ballyoran Primary School will teach about period dignity include:

- **Remove stigma-** Talk about periods and menstrual wellbeing in a way that removes the stigma and taboos that surround them.
- **Promote confident attendance-** Provide free period products to help students feel confident about attending school.
- **Teach about the menstrual cycle-** Explain that the menstrual cycle is a four- week cycle when hormones rise and fall.
- **Teach about healthy habits-** Teach pupils about healthy habits, such as changing sanitary pads every few hours. Pupils will be taught that products should be disposed of correctly using the facilities provided in the school toilets. Flushing any period product down the toilet is not only harmful to the environment but may also result in drain blockages and or damage to plumbing.
- **Teach about mood swings-** Explain that hormones can affect emotions and moods, and that there is no reason to be ashamed of these changes.
- **Teach about managing mood swings-** Teach students about ways to manage mood swings, such as exercising, deep breathing, and stretching.

Inclusive Learning

The teaching of Period Dignity is inclusive and focuses on equality, health and hygiene, self-esteem, respect and understanding. Pupils must feel comfortable and confident in themselves and have the right to learn in a safe and secure environment and to be treated with respect and dignity. Ballyoran Primary School will ensure inclusive learning by considering gender, culture, religion, ability and the age of learners when planning lessons and rolling out the scheme.

SEN Provision

We will ensure that children with SEN in Ballyoran Primary School can access appropriate, accessible and relevant Period Dignity education.

Period Dignity lessons for learners with SEN should be accessible, appropriate and relevant to them and their life experiences. We will adapt resources and teaching activities to ensure that there are no barriers to participation or learning for pupils with SEN compared to their peers. We will ensure that Period Dignity education is accessible to all and is sensitive to the different needs of individual pupils in respect to pupils' different abilities, levels of maturity and personal circumstances.

Staff Training

- The Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing Education Key Contact (Mrs McGuire) will attend training by CCEA and use recordings of the Teacher Professional Learning and/or PowerPoint presentations to cascade learning to other members of staff, ensuring a whole school approach to the implementation of the scheme.
- Teachers shall have access to resources from CCEA's website.

Involving and Consulting with Parents / Guardians

The effectiveness of this policy and its implementation is dependent on a collaborative process involving teachers, parents/carers, governors and other educational and health professionals. Each of the partners has distinctive contributions to make.

Balyoran Primary School recognises the important role parents/guardians play in their child's education. Parents/guardians are encouraged to support the work of the school and to discuss the topics and issues raised by the programme with their children. Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact the school if further information or support is required. Parents/guardians will be informed of the Period Dignity scheme via letter/email.

Parents and Guardians have a key role in explaining periods to their child and explaining that this is a normal and natural part of growing up. It is important to acknowledge again, that children mature at different rates. The NHS recommends that parents should talk about periods as part of an ongoing process rather than a formal sit-down talk. Advertisements for sanitary products may be a place to start or simply asking their child what they know. We encourage parents to talk to their child about periods when they see early signs of puberty.

According to NHS the early signs of puberty in girls are:

- Spots or acne;
- More hair on legs and arms; and
- Breasts begin to develop

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 and links to ICT, WAU and Literacy. The emotional health & well-being of pupils is a key priority in our School Development Plan.

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 and staff will remain supportive and non-judgmental. Pupils will be given support and there will always be a stock of towels, disposal bins, underwear and extra clothes.

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.

Safeguarding

The safeguarding team meet monthly to discuss any issues that arise pertaining to the health and well-being of our pupils. We ensure that strategies are in place for any child who may need extra support when dealing with any topics covered within RSE lessons.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors, along with the Principal, to monitor the effectiveness of this policy. The policy will be reviewed every 2 years, but may be updated sooner in response to:

- Relevant circulars or publications provided by the Department of Education, the Education Authority or CCEA;
- A recommendation from the Education Training Inspectorate;
- Issues arising from the implementation of the Period Dignity and Menstrual Well-Being Programme in school; or
- Reviews of other related policies such as Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy, Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Pastoral care Policy, Intimate Care Policy etc

Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing provision will be monitored on an ongoing basis by Mrs McGuire, staff and pupils. Staff should report any concerning issues promptly to Mrs McGuire to find a quick and effective solution. Pupil feedback will provide a vital insight into the success of the roll out of the scheme.

Links to other policies

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- RSE Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Pastoral Care / Well-Being Policy
- First Aid Policy
- SEN Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Attendance Policy

Useful Resource Links

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/periods/starting-periods/>

<https://www.unicef.org/parenting/health/talking-about-periods-at-home>

<https://childrenshealthsurrey.nhs.uk/services/advice-talking-your-children-years-5-6-about-puberty>

<https://tampax.co.uk/en-gb/period-health/talking-to-your-daughter-about-puberty/>

<https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/living-learning-together>

Appendix 1

Relationships and Sexuality Education through the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding Curriculum

Statutory Curricular Requirements for PDMU - RSE

Foundation Stage

Theme 1: Self Awareness

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: themselves and their personal attributes.

Theme 2: Feelings and Emotions

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their own and others' feelings and emotions.

Theme 4: Health, Growth and Change

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: The importance of keeping healthy.

Theme 4a: Safety

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: How to keep safe in familiar and unfamiliar environments.

Theme 5: Relationships

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their relationships with family and friends.

Theme 8: Similarities and Differences

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: Similarities and differences.

Key Stage 1

Theme 1: Self Awareness

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Theme 2: Feelings and Emotions

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their own and others' feelings and emotions and how their actions affect others.

Theme 4: Health, Growth and Change

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: strategies and skills for keeping healthy.

Theme 4a: Safety

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: strategies and skills for keeping safe.

Theme 5: Relationships

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: and initiating mutually satisfying relationships.

Theme 8: Similarities and Differences

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: Similarities and differences between people.

Key Stage 2

Theme 1: Self Awareness

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their self-esteem, self-confidence and how they develop as individuals.

Theme 2: Feelings and Emotions

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their management of a range of feelings and emotions and the feelings and emotions of others.

Theme 4: Health, Growth and Change

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: how to sustain their health, growth and well-being.