



Acorn Integrated Primary School and Nursery Unit

Period Dignity Policy

November 2021

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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. Acorn endeavours to provide a positive and caring learning environment, where pupils feel secure and free to discuss their problems, 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 realise 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.

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 will be made available to all teaching, non-teaching staff and CAs. A parent/carer and pupil friendly version can be accessed via Acorn's website.
- The policy will be reviewed annually by senior leadership staff and the Period Dignity coordinator contact.
- The school 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 Roles and Responsibilities

- School Governor: TBA
- Period Dignity Key Contact: Mrs J Keane
Mrs Keane will attend Professional Teacher Training and relay back to staff.
- Period Key Coordinator: Mrs Keane
will oversee the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the scheme
- Pastoral Care Lead: Mrs A Rolloos
Mrs Rolloos, in the roll of Pastoral Care lead, will assist with the rollout of the scheme by addressing any sensitive, period related issues that may arise with individual pupils
- SENCO: Miss McCosh
Miss McCosh to be involved in coordinating provision of the scheme for children with SEN who may require additional support.
- SEN Staff: SEN Assistants
SEN assistants to be familiar with the policy and provide the appropriate support to those pupils who require it.
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Lead: Mrs A Rolloos

Whole School Approach to Period Dignity

i School Ethos

Acorn supports Period Dignity through:

- taking a whole school approach to communicate about period dignity and related issues.
- visibly promoting the importance of period dignity
- challenging negative views, gender inequality, stereotypes, and stigma around periods.
- educating all pupils on period dignity, period equality and menstrual wellbeing.
- complementing the provision of free products with education around periods, period dignity and menstrual wellbeing.

ii Child-Centred provision

Acorn 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

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**

Conversations should be held with all female pupils from year 5-7 to inform about the scheme. 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**

Inform all pupils (male and female) about the project. Positively promote the scheme through posters and assemblies. The content of posters and assemblies should avoid stereotypes around girls and use imagery and language which reflect the diversity of school. Avoid words associated with periods that may cause embarrassment or sound negative e.g., 'sanitary/hygiene' as learners may associate with being unclean and 'poverty/affordability' as this may imply products are only for those who cannot purchase products. Parents/carers and all staff (male and female) should be informed about the project. Ensure everyone knows where products can be accessed and that pupils are aware of the key staff involved.
- **Free Period products (term time)**

We have chosen to supply Slimline towels as free period products. This follows guidance from CCEA advising against the use of tampons in primary schools. Products will be ordered by the principal on an annual basis. Pupils should initially be provided with relevant advice on how to use the product safely and dispose of correctly.
- **Storage of Period Products and Practicality**

After consultation with pupils, it was decided that period products, should be made available in the Key Stage 2 toilets, the Medical Hygiene room and the Key Stage 1 toilets as required. Research shows that including other items such as wet wipes, bobbles and tissues may help to destigmatise access to storage.

The main supply of products is stored in the Principal's office. The Key Contact and delegated pupils monitor and replenish period product supplies on a weekly basis. This includes monitoring the products to ensure pupils are not taking more than they need, checking for tampering and expiry dates. Ensure all products remain individually wrapped and dispose of any expired products.
- **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.

- **Key Staff**

Pupils should feel confident in knowing they can approach Mrs Rolloos (pastoral care) or Mrs Keane(Key Contact) with any sensitive/period/scheme related issues they may have.

Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing 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 Acorn'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 Acorn aims to;

- 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
- 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
- build general self-esteem and self-confidence of menstruating pupils
- provide advice/care for pupils with sensitive period related issues.

Teaching Arrangements

- All male and female pupils from P4/5 to P7 will be educated about Period Dignity with the focus on respect and understanding. General lessons will be taught in mixed gender classes and be linked with elements of PDMU and RSE. Consultation on the launch, access and use of products will be female only classes. Lesson content will be guided mainly by CCEA and will include a mixture of child-centred teaching resources relevant to primary level.

Inclusive Learning

- Acorn will ensure inclusive learning by considering gender, culture, religion, ability and the age of learners when planning lessons and rolling out the scheme.
- Provision for transgender and non-binary pupils who may have periods must be considered so as not to discriminate when planning lessons, accessing products and implementing the practicalities of the scheme.
- Consider how learning provision can be inclusive through images/language e.g. a gender-neutral mascot, the term 'period products' as opposed to 'feminine hygiene products'.

SEN Provision

- Required support for children with SEN should be addressed and an appropriate plan drawn up between SENCO, class teacher and parent/carer. Reasonable adjustments may be set in place to alleviate disadvantage and ensure pupils with SEN are given appropriate provision.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing provision is currently a pilot scheme and should be monitored on an ongoing basis by key contact, staff and pupils. Staff should report any concerning issues promptly to the coordinator to find a quick and effective solution. Pupil feedback will provide a vital insight into the success of the roll out the scheme. Initially there will be a 'Follow-Up' survey issued to schools in December 2021 regarding the operation of the scheme including questions such as:

- The merits of the scheme
- The extent to which is being used by pupils and teachers
- How it is being rolled out within the school
- How it is being integrated with RSE
- The utilisation of the budget
- The perceived impact if the scheme on pupil's confidence, wellbeing, attendance, and attainment

The coordinator will be responsible for an annual evaluation and review of the scheme for the school's own records.

Staff Training

- The Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing Education Key Contact (Mrs Keane) 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 as they are added over the incoming academic year. Teachers will be able to explore resources via the TPL sessions.
- Educational professionals and support staff (male and female) all need to understand the policy behind the scheme, how it links to RSE within the curriculum, the processes involved in ordering products and how the products are utilised,

Involving and consulting with parents or carers

- Parents/carers have the responsibility to inform school if their child has previously experienced an allergic reaction to period products or their materials.
- Parents/carers should be encouraged to assist with the education of period dignity by having supportive and informative conversations with their own children.
- Parents/carers will be informed of the scheme via letter/email. Parent/carer friendly information leaflets may also become available.
- Parents/carers should be encouraged to contact the school if further information or support is required. Parents/carers should be happy with the way products are being supplied and their concerns listened to.
- Parent/carers with learning difficulties are consulted via email or other appropriate means
- Withdrawal from period dignity, equality, menstrual wellbeing?

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

- Learning and teaching of Period Dignity has links to RSE and PDMU
- The wider pastoral programmes support and complement the education of period dignity, equality and menstrual well-being through assemblies and class teaching
- Other school initiatives support period dignity such as RSE, Health and well Being and Personal Development

Managing Issues

- Encourage positive behaviour to help ensure products are not misused or tampered with.
- Staff should encourage all pupils to be respectful and watch out for and address signs of possible bullying (e.g. negative remarks, making fun of a menstruating pupil)
- Staff should watch out for warning signs that indicate a pupil may be experiencing emotional or physical distress due to having a period.
- Staff should be supportive and non-judgemental
- Store a clean set of clothes and have somewhere for pupil to lie down in case needed.
- When a pupil is missing school due to menstruation possible support and reassurance should be discussed with pupil and parent/ carer to encourage attendance.

Appendices

- Parent/Carer friendly summary of policy
- Pupil friendly summary
- Period Dignity CCEA www.ccea.org
- Plan International UK Break the Barriers www.plan-uk.org
- Period Product Scheme for Schools in England www.gov.uk