



ST. MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL, NEWRY

Period Dignity Policy

Revised: September 2025

Rationale:

Period Dignity refers to the accessibility and availability of essential care needed to support students during the time of their period, in conjunction with the removal of and 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. St Mary's plays an active role in helping our students have dignity, understanding and respect surrounding periods and menstruation.

"Menstruation is a normal and natural part of a girl's physical development. It should not be treated with secrecy or stigma, which can contribute to girls' feelings of embarrassment during their period."

(CCEA, 2021)

"Increasing access to period products is really important. Free products can keep young people in school, improve concentration, encourage participation in sport, and support good health."

(www.heygirls.co.uk, 2021)

"To make sure that our strategies, policies and programmes to support children and young people who have special needs or who face particular barriers to learning are developed in a way that maintains a clear focus on raising standards and on allowing every young person to reach his or her full potential." (Every School a Good School, 2008)

Definition:

Period Dignity means that everyone should have access to period products, as and when they are required. They should also be able to use period products in a private space that is safe and dignified. Period poverty refers to poor knowledge around menstruation and/or lack of access to period products. Eradicating period poverty helps to ensure that having a period does not lead to missed education or withdrawal from sporting activities. Period Dignity and Period Poverty are linked to the human rights of all children.

Aims:

In St Mary's, we aim to:

- + promote period dignity and tackle period poverty
- + ensure all students have access to essential care needed to support a period
- + educate students about menstruation, period products and intimate care
- + remove the shame, stigma and taboo surrounding periods and menstruation

Overview:

As a Rights Respecting School we strive to equip our students with the skills and knowledge necessary in relation to periods or period dignity. The strategies in place promote the dignity of all students.

Objectives:

1. Learning about menstruation and periods

Students develop their knowledge and understanding surrounding menstruation and periods. Students are encouraged to develop positive views and opinions regarding menstruation and periods. In Science and Personal Development lessons, students explore the menstrual cycle and personal hygiene. Learning is also supported by guest speakers.

2. Liaise with students

All students should be consulted about access to period products. This will help ensure that all students will have access to essential care products as and when required.

3. Availability of Period Products

Students should be aware of how they can access the free period products in school. All members of staff should be aware of where the period products are available in order to direct students to relevant places/people. There should also be period products available for students to access at home and during school holidays. Products should be ordered regularly to ensure there is sufficient products available when needed.

Organisation and Structure:

Period Dignity themes are delivered by Form Teachers within the Personal Development Programme and also within Science.

The expertise and skills of education and health professionals from statutory and voluntary organisations are regularly utilised. All such agencies will be asked to adhere to the school's Period Dignity Policy and to our aims being a Catholic and Rights Respecting School. Parents will be informed before all visits.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Senior Teachers, Mrs Hughes and Mrs Tankov along with the Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, Mrs Malone Ryan are responsible for monitoring and revising the Period Dignity Policy and strategies and when necessary makes recommendations as to changes that need to take place including the resources related to period dignity.

They will regularly:

- review the Period Dignity Policy;
- co-ordinate, monitor and review Period Dignity initiatives and activities;
- promote Period Dignity throughout the school by collaborating with a broad range of potential community based health agencies to develop resources and organise activities.

Form Teachers

Form Teachers will ensure:

- The effective delivery of Period Dignity themes within Personal Development lessons is the responsibility of individual Form Teachers;
- All students in their form class have equal access to the programme;
- Lessons are adequately planned for with high quality delivery;
- Students are encouraged to reflect on the knowledge and skills acquired during Personal Development and record these in their work books;
- Create a child centred supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable to discuss their feelings and emotions;
- Any concerns regarding the Personal Development of individual students are reported to the Year Tutor and if necessary the Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

All Staff

All staff will actively support, contribute to and be involved in the promotion of period dignity. Mrs Malone Ryan as Health and Wellbeing Coordinator will ensure the Period Dignity Policy and vision is articulated, shared, understood and acted upon effectively by all.

Students

- Students will participate in all aspects of the PD Programme across all key stages;
- Students will be encouraged to participate in discussion concerning relevant health issues;
- Students will be able to attend a range of seminars and talks on menstruation and periods.

Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers are asked to support the school in the promotion of good intimate care, period and menstruation education.

Use of External/Support Agencies:

We acknowledge the importance of ensuring that any external agencies used to support the delivery of Period Dignity Education adhere to the values and ethos of the school. All external and support agencies who are delivering Period Dignity themes, will receive a copy of the Period Dignity Policy before commencement of their work in the school.

Current external/support agencies include:

- Action Cancer
- Action Cancer ‘Your Body, Your Health’
- Joanne Callan, Changing Cycles
- Teenage Cancer Trust
- South Eastern Health Trust
- School Nurse
- School Counsellor

Related School Policies:

This policy is set within the broader school context of Pastoral Care and as such should be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies:

-  Pastoral Care Policy
-  Health and Wellbeing Policy
-  Child Protection Policy
-  Relationships and Sexuality Policy
-  Preventative Curriculum Policy

Consultation:

During the review of this document consultation took place with the following groups:

Students

Parents/Carers – through the Parent Teachers Friends Association

Staff

Board of Governors

Dissemination of the Policy:

Key Pastoral Policies are available for all parents/carers on the school app and website - www.stmarysnewry.com.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review:

Mrs Hughes (SLT), Mrs Tankov (SLT) and Mrs Malone Ryan, (Health and Wellbeing Coordinator) are responsible for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the implementation of the Period Dignity Policy. They will:

-  Co-ordinate the programme for Period Dignity;
-  Advise on relevant staff training and professional development;
-  Liaise with other staff, external agencies to enhance the programme;
-  Review the implementation of the policy and advise the Principal and SLT on a regular basis;
-  Liaise with Form Teachers, Year Tutors and other staff to evaluate and change provision as necessary;
-  Evaluate student's attitude towards Period Dignity and Menstruation through use of questionnaires

Signed by Chair of Governors: _____

Date: _____

Signed by Principal: _____

Date: _____

Date of Review: September 2028