

1. St Dominic's Grammar School



Period Dignity Policy

Procedure Details

Legal Status	Adopted	Version Date	Last Review	Next Review	Responsible
Statutory		May 2025	June 2024	June 2026	Barbara Wilson

Related Documents

1. Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
2. Ant-Bullying Policy
3. Staff Code of Conduct

PERIOD DIGNITY POLICY

Background

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. The pilot scheme to address period dignity in schools aims to promote period dignity and tackle period poverty, helping learners who menstruate to reach their potential.
3. 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.
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 is 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.

10. CCEA's Data Science and Statistics and Research Unit sought to gain an insight into the frequency and extent of period poverty and other issues relating to period dignity in Northern Ireland.

11. Online questionnaires were made available to pupils and teachers in primary and post-primary schools from 15 June to 2 July 2021.

12. 1,711 pupils and 770 teachers responded to the surveys.

13. A summary of the responses is listed below.

Pupil Survey – Responses received: 1,711

- **o Almost all pupils (98.2% N=1,681) who responded to this questionnaire supported the new government scheme that supplies free period products to schools.**
- **o** Over a quarter of pupils (27.5% N=382) who have a period have had difficulty accessing period products.
- **o** 83.2% (N=318) of pupils who have had difficulty accessing period products experienced this because they didn't have what they needed with them in school.
- **o** 11.8% (N=45) had difficulty accessing period products because their parents couldn't afford them, while 6.5% (N=25) said they themselves could not afford them.
- **o** 8.12% (N=113) of pupils with a period have missed school because they didn't have access to sufficient period products.
- **o** 9.7% (N=11) pupils have missed school many times because they did not have sufficient period products.
- **o** Over half of pupils (56.7% N=789) who menstruate have had to ask a friend or teacher for period products while in school.

- o 44.2% (N=756) of pupils' schools provide some period products at present, with 48.9% (N=318) having to use these at some point.
- o Over half of pupils (53.0% N=737) were embarrassed when buying period products.
- o Almost a quarter of pupils who responded (24.4% N=417) agree that eco factors are important when choosing period products.

Teacher Questionnaire – Responses received: 770

- o **Almost all teachers who responded (98.8% N=761) agreed with the new government scheme to provide free period products to schools.**
- o The majority of teachers (96.8% N=745) have heard of period poverty.
- o 70% (N=539) of teachers who responded had noted a pupil asking another pupil or member of staff for period products.
- o Over half of teachers' (55.3% N=426) schools already provide free period products.
- o 40.6% (N=313) felt that pupils considered eco factors when buying period products.
- o 67.0% (N=516) of teachers agreed they would find training on menstrual wellbeing and period poverty useful.

Introducing the scheme 2021

Previously, in 2017 I signed up to the Always period poverty scheme. They delivered education packs free of charge and these were placed in pupil toilets and given out during EFL (education for love) classes.

When I heard about the CCEA scheme for period dignity I signed up and contacted the team at CCEA.

I ordered the full allocation of products and set up a team to help me roll out the scheme.

2021/2022 provision £3675

I invited pupils to volunteer to join a Period Dignity Group. We had an introductory meeting where the pupils were asked for their ideas and opinions on how best to make the products available

Access to free products can:

- promote equality;
- help keep young people in school;
- increase concentration in class through not having to worry about lack of period products or leaking;
- increase confidence to participate in sports or other extracurricular activities;
- support good health; and
- prevent menstruating young people from having to make decisions to either wear the wrong product, substitute a poor-quality product or toilet roll, or wear a product for longer than is safe.

The pupils were tasked with stocking the boxes in the toilets on a weekly basis and helping to promote positive attitudes around menstruation.

Some information gathered from our pupils

- Young people in schools do not want to ask staff for products – in the classroom, in the school office, in pastoral care. It is embarrassing.
- Young people can find using the toilet at school embarrassing – many will avoid going to the toilet altogether. Changing a pad can be noisy, and pupils in neighbouring stalls might hear the rustling, and know they have their period.
- Locking toilet doors during lesson times prevents pupils from changing their period products in privacy.
- Young people often feel unable to collect products from communal sinks and public areas for fear someone sees them take one.
- Sometimes products are stocked in some toilets but not others, resulting in a long walk to fetch products from the opposite side of the school site.
- Pupils need to be excused from class when they ask to use the toilet without being questioned publically

- Pupils have asked for awareness to be raised among staff or problems they might face when menstruating

The 2021 group are listed below;

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I sent Pastoral Care lessons to Year Heads and began working on Assemblies with the team.

I attended a webinar in February 2022 held by the CCEA team. This training focused on the following;

Overview of the Period Dignity Pilot Scheme in Northern Ireland schools;

- The toxic trio and its impact on menstruating pupils;
- Challenging negative attitudes, stereotypes and gender inequality around periods;
- 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;
- Challenges – pain, anxiety, fear, embarrassment, myths;
- How Period Dignity links to Relationships and Sexuality Education within the curriculum; and
- Developing a *Period Dignity School Policy*.

What I considered in 2021/22

1. Consult with your students at an early stage

- The scheme is for them, and their ideas and concerns should be listened to.
- They are best placed to say which period products they would like to see provided as well as how they would like them distributed and accessed.
- Student toilets have their own unique social dynamics. Listening to your students can reveal hidden barriers to access.
- This project creates leadership opportunities for young people. Creating a student steering group empowers young people and ensures student buy-in.
- If students are invested in the project, then they are more likely to support it.
- Engaged groups of young people monitor each other and help prevent abuse and vandalism.

2. Ordering and practicalities – keep the needs of your menstruating students at the forefront

- Make a range of products and different qualities available, giving students choice about the products they want to use.
- Ensure:

- there are sufficient period products available, and they are routinely restocked;
- period products are easily accessible; and
- anyone who menstruates can access products, including transgender men or non-binary individuals, and that language is gender neutral.
- Allow students, where possible, to lead on the roll out of the pilot scheme, raising awareness, monitoring provision and restocking.
- Above all, protect students' dignity, avoiding anxiety, embarrassment and stigma.

3. Raise awareness

- Inform all students (male and female) about the project.
- Inform parents and all staff about the project.
- Ensure everyone knows what period products are available and where they can be accessed.
- Students should be aware of the school's Period Dignity key contact (member of staff).

4. Education

- Complement free period product provision with education about periods, period dignity and menstrual wellbeing.
- Awareness raising and education should:
 - promote the availability of free period products;
 - increase knowledge about the menstrual cycle, periods and menstrual wellbeing; and
 - challenge negative attitudes, stereotypes and gender inequality around periods.
- Consider opportunities for peer-led learning.

Moving forward

2022/2023 provision £6153

Order to be paused until current stocks are depleted due to storage concerns.

Facts about menstruation

- Menstrual wellness – physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing, leading up to and during periods
- Period products – the different types, advantages, and disadvantages, how to dispose of them
- Menstrual hygiene – essential facts and how to deal with related situations
- Challenges – pain, anxiety, fear, embarrassment, myths
- Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS)
- Endometriosis – symptoms, support and treatment
- Other menstrual cycle issues, for example Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) or Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD).

I have conducted a number of informal surveys with classes from various year groups in June 2022.

I aim to formalise an evaluation survey using Google docs to evaluate the 2022/23 year.

St Dominic's Period Dignity Policy

VISION STATEMENT

St Dominic's is a community committed to mutual respect where every individual is valued, respected, encouraged and empowered to reach her/his potential in an atmosphere of love, forgiveness, honesty, openness and optimism.

We are committed to celebrating difference, to promoting equality, self-belief and a culture of confidence where success is celebrated. We strive to unlock our individual and collective potential and to be prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century, reflecting our strong Dominican Ethos.

*St. Dominic's School is committed to being a self-evaluating and
self-improving school*

Aims and objectives of the policy	This policy aims to address period poverty to promote period dignity. It aims to improve confidence and reduce the stigma around menstruating for our pupils.
Policy formation and consultation process	<p>Led by Mrs Wilson and the RE department. Volunteers from various year groups formed a period dignity steering group. Their opinions were sought and their experiences were considered. We decided to place baskets in every toilet block and to restock them weekly. Pads and tampons were added to every block. Parents were informed of the scheme via social media and pupils were emailed. Posters were put up in every bathroom explaining where the products came from and pupils were advised to see Mrs Wilson if they needed anything extra.</p> <p>(Mrs Wilson has tights, wipes and clean underwear in the RE department)</p> <p>The team will meet each year to evaluate how well the scheme is working.</p>
Key Staff	RE Department
Whole School Approach	We aim to challenge negative views, stigma and stereotypes around periods. Poster campaigns, assemblies and pastoral care classes will be introduced to help with this.
The Scheme	<p>Allocation for 2022/23 is £6153</p> <p>A mixture of pads and tampons will be purchased and made available in each toilet block. Year Heads will also be given packs for children who may be more vulnerable to period poverty.</p> <p>Products are stored in the basement. Some supplies stored in RE office for weekly replenishment of boxes.</p>
Education and Learning	<p>https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/you-your-body/puberty/periods/</p> <p>https://www.heygirls.co.uk/education/why-period-education-matters/</p> <p>Lessons will be delivered in RE via the EFL programme</p> <p>Assemblies and Pastoral care programme</p>

Links across the curriculum	<p>Teaching about period dignity, period equality and menstrual well-being links across the curriculum. The RSE programme, pastoral care programme, biology.</p>
Managing issues	<p>Staff should be alert to warning signs that a pupil may be experiencing physical or emotional distress due to having a period.</p> <p>Staff should try to be supportive and non-judgemental</p> <p>Some pupils suffer with severe cramps, headaches and PMS – teachers should be alert to this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How the policy takes account of The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. This is available at www.legislation.gov.uk ○ Reference to the relevant sections of UNCRC, available at www.unicef.org.uk ○ How the policy contributes to Every School a Good School, Together Towards Improvement and Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy. These documents are available at www.deni.gov.uk ○ How the policy supports children and young peoples' strategy for Northern Ireland ○ St. Dominic's CP policy The voice of the child or young person should be heard. In St Dominic's we recognise that young people have a right to be heard, to be listened to and to be taken seriously, taking account of their age and understanding. Through 'Student Voice' and the Student Council, self-evaluative questionnaires and the students' evaluation of policies and pastoral care provision, we aim to consult and involve them in matters and decisions which may affect their lives. ○
