



# Toilet Checklists for Schools



# Foreword

"If you get the toilets right, you get the teaching right."

*David Miliband MP, Minister of State for Schools (2002-2004)*

"You can tell a school by its toilets: they say an awful lot about a school and tell you about the value the school places on its environment and pupils."

*Susan Lewis, Chief Inspector of Schools for Wales*

"Toilets are important. Everybody needs to use them. Access to decent toilets is a fundamental human right and necessary for good health and well being."

*Joanne Almond, Healthy Schools coordinator, Sandwell*

"The pupils were actively involved from surveying the pupils, auditing the toilets, planning the refurbishment to on-going maintenance. The toilets are now open and freely available throughout the day and this is no longer a problem. In fact it's been a great success. It shows that if you involve the pupils in creating and maintaining good quality toilets, then the pupils will look after the toilets and respect them."

*Miriam Mole, Headteacher, Manor Foundation College (comprehensive age 11-18), the first school awarded the Bog Standard Gold School Toilet Award*

The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 makes it a statutory requirement for schools to safeguard their pupils' health, safety and welfare.

## **Safeguarding pupils' health and welfare**

Schools need to encourage children and young people to drink healthy amounts of water regularly throughout the day and to empty their bladder and bowels regularly and fully when they need to. During term time, time spent at school is the bulk of any child's day, so how much they drink and how often they go to the toilet are extremely important. If the toilets are repellent or out of bounds, pupils will not drink adequately or go to the toilet frequently enough. In addition, for the 1 in 12 children of school age known to have urinary and bowel problems (the actual number may be much higher), simply improving water intake during the day and enabling regular toilet access without restrictions can, in many cases, solve these problems. Safeguarding pupils' health and welfare requires toilets that all pupils are happy and able to use when they need to

## **Safeguarding pupils' safety**

Children and young people need to feel safe and comfortable entering and using school toilets. This means working with pupils to provide and maintain toilets that encourage respect and good behaviour and reduce anti-social behaviour such as bullying and smoking (see 'Tips for improving and maintaining school toilets', page 12). Good hygiene is also essential in schools because school children are recognised as being at particular risk of contracting and transmitting infection, exacerbated by close proximity and the sharing of facilities. Organisms can survive on environmental surfaces. Viruses, in particular, can be excreted in large numbers in respiratory secretions and stools and their persistence on surfaces for hours and days is common. (see Good Practice Guidance for Cleaning of School Toilets available from [www.bog-standard.org/adults\\_resources.aspx](http://www.bog-standard.org/adults_resources.aspx))

Providing and maintaining good quality toilets that are accessible throughout the school day is an achievement schools can justly be proud of and the benefits go beyond health, safety and welfare. They have been found to have a positive influence on pupils' willingness and ability to learn, their behaviour, self-esteem, morale and attendance levels.

## National campaign to improve school toilets

This set of school toilet checklists has been written and produced by the Bog Standard campaign and are designed to promote high standards in the cleanliness and maintenance of pupils' toilets. It is one of a number of resources produced for schools and pupils to help them to improve and maintain their toilets. These can be found on the campaign website [www.bog-standard.org](http://www.bog-standard.org).

The Bog Standard campaign for better toilets for pupils and the Water is Cool in School campaign for better drinking water for pupils are organised by ERIC (Education and Resources for Improving Childhood Continence), a national children's health charity. The two campaigns are linked because to encourage pupils to drink at school, it is important that they be allowed to visit user-friendly toilets when they need to. Information about the Water is Cool in School campaign can be found at [www.wateriscoolinschool.org.uk](http://www.wateriscoolinschool.org.uk).

ERIC works in partnership with School Councils UK (school councils list toilets as their top complaint), the Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association (represents over half of school nurses in the UK), and the British Toilet Association (campaigns to raise the standard of all away from home toilets). The campaign is also supported by a large steering group of education and health experts. The campaign is grateful for the funding it receives from its major sponsor Armitage Shanks and supporting sponsor Pendock.

The checklists can be freely photocopied by schools.

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### Acknowledgements:

Particular thanks to Vivien Cleary, Locum Consultant in Health Protection, South West London Health Protection Unit, and core member of Bog Standard, for her information and advice on infection control and hygiene in schools.

Essential for any school or local authority wanting to refurbish or build new toilets is the 48 page guidance 'Toilets in Schools' ISBN: 978-1-84478-925-2, published in 2007 by the former Department for Education and Skills as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme. The guidelines promote toilets designed to a high quality and aesthetic to encourage pupil respect and pride and to provide toilets that are cleaner and safer for pupils to use. The publication includes appropriate locations and effective layouts, what to look for when choosing fixtures and fittings, and strategies for effective maintenance and operation of toilets. They are principally aimed at secondary schools - whether new build, extension or refurbishment - but there are useful ideas for other educational buildings. (See [www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/))

## How to use the checklists

It is recommended that school management (including pupil representatives) ensure that pupils' toilets are inspected to ensure good standards of maintenance, hygiene, cleanliness and stocks of consumables throughout normal usage hours using the checklist as appropriate. The checklists have a space at the top to record which set of toilets is being inspected.

### Quick toilet checklist

This checklist is designed for quick spot checks. Each week a fresh checklist should be displayed for the week within the toilet/washroom area, one per set of toilets. Each set of toilets should be inspected and signed three to four times a day (depending on the length and organisation of the school day), including after peak periods of use.

If inspectors find any problems, they should complete the separate Form for Reporting Deficiencies and take it to the school office for a member of the site management team (or caretaker) to deal with. The site managers can initial the problems when remedied, or tick if the school has a sole caretaker. These inspections are designed to be carried out by pupils. We suggest that inspections are shared out amongst pupils and not just assigned to members of the School Council.

Toilet flushing can be done by whoever checks the toilets. A 'toilets need flushing' category is included in the list in case of problems such as the flushing mechanism failing to work properly or the toilets being blocked.

To discourage spoiling of the checklists, we suggest laminating them and establishing a system for pupils to comment on the toilets, such as a suggestions box at the school office. To avoid frustration, it is important that any problems are dealt with promptly.

### Daily, monthly and termly checklists

As their name suggest, these formal checklists are designed to be carried out on a daily, monthly and termly basis. The daily checklist is more comprehensive than the 'quick toilet check' and it can replace one of the 'quick toilet check' inspections. While we encourage pupil involvement in these more formal inspections, we recommend adult supervision.

### What does "sufficient" mean?

The term "sufficient" is used in the checklists. With regards to consumables, it means that there should always be a supply of toilet paper, soap etc throughout the school day for each pupil. You need to put into place an effective system to maintain supplies. With regards to environment and facilities, "sufficient" means that ventilation, lighting etc should conform to regulations and guidance and ensure pupils feel comfortable and happy to use the facilities. If still unsure, consult amongst pupils. If you are an adult, ask yourself if you would be happy to use solely the pupils' toilets?

### Pupil involvement

Involving pupils in the management of the toilets encourages pupils to value the school environment and reduces anti-social behaviour. To avoid disillusion or frustration, it is essential that any suggestions or problems identified by the students are taken seriously and dealt with.

From the outset it is advisable to discuss pupil involvement with the School Council (such as having responsibility for carrying out regular toilet inspections) and for the councillors to canvass views of the proposal.

## Principles of cleaning and maintenance

Toilets should be clean, in good repair, well-ventilated and monitored regularly.

Toilets should be cleaned at least twice a day, including between peak periods of use.

There should be provision for extra cleaning if necessary (e.g. by premises manager) and responsibility for this should be on the relevant person's job description.

Any emergency maintenance should be carried out promptly to minimise disruption to the service.

Toilets should remain open throughout the school day. Any closures should be temporary for cleaning purposes. There should always be a set of toilets open to pupils of both sexes. All toilet areas should have hand washing facilities including warm and cold running water, soap and towels.

Toilet paper, soap and towels should be restocked throughout the day.

Liquid soap, unlike bar soap, is less likely to become contaminated. Ideally, liquid soap should be wall mounted and disposable cartridges are considered to be the 'gold standard'. Liquid soap that is simply "topped up" can become contaminated.

Ideally, recycled paper towels should be used for hand drying. However, electric hand dryers reduce washroom litter and reduce the risk of washbasin/toilet blockages. Dryers should be the high efficiency, high velocity hand dryer type. If roller towels are used, they should be regularly maintained, changed or cleaned.

Drinking water supplies and facilities must not be located in toilet areas.

For more information see Good Practice Guidance for Cleaning of School Toilets available from [www.bog-standard.org/adults\\_resources.aspx](http://www.bog-standard.org/adults_resources.aspx)

## Tips for improving and maintaining school toilets

See [www.bog-standard.org](http://www.bog-standard.org) for more information and suggestions.

Educate pupils; ideally start when they're young. PSHCE lessons and the Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme, which encourage behaviour and respect, provide opportunities to focus on behaviour in toilets such as respecting privacy, leaving the toilets clean and tidy, and not hanging around in them.

Use ideas from the Bog Standard website to work with the pupils on improvements, behaviour, and respect. Then, take a leap of faith and encourage a whole-school humane policy on open toilet visits (restricted practices not only harm health and welfare, but upset and anger pupils and encourage anti-social behaviour). Allow children to quietly sign in and out of class to use the toilet.

Recognise that toilet needs are highly individual and do not conform to school timetables. Restricting access to set times can cause constipation and, secondly, encourage "I'll go just in case" practice which can initiate bladder problems.

Having regular and frequent enough opportunities for toilet breaks (45 – 60 minutes at secondary school level), when pupils can go if they need to, will cut down on the need for pupils to leave lessons. It should be recognized, however, that some pupils only feel comfortable going to the toilet when others are not around.

Involve the whole school in introducing a school toilet management and access policy and ensure it's discussed regularly.

High-quality toilets, odour-free with good décor, cleanliness, fixtures, fittings and supplies are all essential to ensure that school facilities are valued.

It's important for schools to keep on top of maintenance. Once a toilet becomes run down, you get copycat behaviour. People tend to drop less litter in clean places and graffiti is reduced if removed immediately.

Make budget allocation a priority for toilet repairs, maintenance and cleaning. If toilets are in a bad state, it is not much of a deterrent to anti-social behaviour.

Cleanliness and supplies should be checked regularly throughout the day and checks should be recorded visually within the toilet facility. Given the high volume of users in school toilets, most toilets need cleaning at least twice a day.

Involve the pupils in management. After peak periods of use, pupils can check the toilets and report any deficiencies.

Make the best-maintained toilets the first to get a refurbishment. Introduce on-going recognition and/or prizes for the best-maintained toilets. Involve the pupils in planning and refurbishment design.

Introduce a pupils' toilet comments/complaints procedure and deal with the problems promptly.

Play classical music (can calm, deter lingering and helps provide aural privacy).

Install smoke alarms - wired to the school office.

## Tips for improving and maintaining school toilets cont'd

Supervision of toilets is a contentious issue, with some staff arguing that it is not their role to go into pupils' toilets. However, if staff do not go into the toilets then these can deteriorate into an adult-free zone where bullying or other illicit activities have free-rein.

Good design and careful siting of school toilets in new-build schools can avoid the use of CCTV, as can supervision in existing school toilets. CCTV cameras should only be used when other options have failed. As they are contentious, they are best discussed widely and conspicuously with the pupils and the whole school before their introduction and must ensure full privacy for users.

Provide attractive indoor social areas. If pupils have to spend breaks outside, even when it's cold, they will naturally want to escape and the toilets provide a place to congregate.

Investigate the root causes. It's easy to blame the pupils, but misuse of toilets may be symptomatic of poor toilets or even of wider issues within a school. Communicating with the pupils (perhaps initially via questionnaires available from [www.bog-standard.org/pupils\\_print.aspx](http://www.bog-standard.org/pupils_print.aspx)) may help reduce problems.