



GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE FOR CLEANING OF SCHOOL TOILETS



This advisory information is for the cleaning of school toilets. It is adapted and updated from a longer document Good Practice Guidance for Cleaning of Schools which advises on the cleaning of the whole school and was produced in partnership with the South East London Health Protection Unit and the South West Health Protection Unit.



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Introduction for schools and contractors

The issues

Studies on toilet facilities have shown children are reluctant to use toilets because of poor sanitary conditions. Pupils may also avoid drinking in order to avoid having to use the toilet. Poor toilets or low fluid intake may cause or exacerbate health problems in children. These problems include incontinence, constipation, urinary tract infection and kidney damage. Other studies show the potential spread of infectious diseases.

Potential benefits

The potential benefits to schools of providing hygienic toilets and properly furnished handwashing and drying facilities (and encouraging pupils to use these as appropriate) include:

- Fewer school days missed – which can have a knock on effect on parents for childcare arrangements together with education lost for children
- Fewer illness for children especially diarrhoea and vomiting and respiratory illness
- Less visits to GPs, hospitals, and continence clinics
- Potentially less use of antibiotics
- Fewer outbreaks of infectious disease

A study in America gathered baseline data for a year on infections in children before an infection control intervention. The findings from this study were a significant decrease in total illness, with downward trends in respiratory illness, gastrointestinal illness, visits to the GP, antibiotic use and school days missed. Another study showed how a comprehensive handwashing programme reduced absenteeism.

Keeping toilets and washrooms clean

- Toilets should be clean, in good repair and monitored regularly. High quality toilets are essential to ensure school toilets are valued.
- An audit checklist should be located in the toilets and signed at regular intervals throughout the day
- All toilet areas should have hand washing facilities including warm and cold running water, soap and towels
- Liquid soap and paper towels are recognized as the most effective hand washing method. 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 "topped up" can become contaminated
- Some schools use roller towels or hand dryers. Ideally recycled paper towels should be used. However, if roller towels are used they should be regularly maintained, changed or cleaned. If electric hand dryers are used, they should be the high efficiency, high velocity hand dryer type. Electric dryers reduce washroom litter and reduce the risk of washbasin/toilet blockages.
- Drinking water supplies and facilities must not be located in toilet areas.



Advisory Information

General – standard requirements

The following guidelines can be used as a template for cleaning school toilets: they can be given to cleaning supply contractors, in-house cleaners and caretakers.

Contractors should ensure that their employees understand and are trained to follow the guidelines. Regular supervision of cleaners should be provided by contractors.

Cleanliness and maintenance of toilets should be checked regularly throughout the day and checks should be recorded visually within the toilet facilities. These regular daily checks as well as more comprehensive daily, monthly and termly checklists are available to print out and photocopy from the Bog Standard campaign website www.bog-standard.org. (Adult section /What you can do /Resources). It is desirable for pupils to be actively involved in carrying out the checks.

The benefits of using cleaning products specifically designed for the job cannot be over emphasised. All cleaning supply contractors will be able to supply you with cleaning agents to meet your school's needs.

1. **Services to be provided**

The Contractor is to provide a daily cleaning service of the school and a twice or three times daily toilet cleansing service, including between peak periods of use (such as between morning break and lunch) between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. to ensure that the school toilets are kept clean, safe and hygienic. (Some schools may need less while others may need more, depending on what is currently happening in the school e.g. breakfast clubs, extra-curricular activities, extended day etc).

Toilets should remain open throughout the school day. Toilets should not all be cleaned at the same time to ensure adequate access. Any closures should be temporary for cleaning purposes.

The Contractor should be responsible for the cleaning service five days per week during term time and deep cleaning during school holidays.

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

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

2. **Prior to opening daily**

All major and minor defects and deficiencies should be reported to the Premises Officer

3. **Cleaning in the school environment**

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. Environmental hygiene is thus a vital part of good infection control.

Good hygiene is particularly important in schools. Toilets and washrooms should be clean and well-ventilated. They should be cleaned regularly as part of a documented cleaning rota and policy. Regular cleaning means cleaning more than once a day during peak periods of use.

Definitions:

The level of decontamination needed depends on the circumstances and will dictate what procedures are required. A number of procedures can be used to achieve good levels of hygienic decontamination. These include:

- **Cleaning** – In many instances, e.g. for hand washing and surfaces, decontamination can be achieved by using a cleaning product (detergent) and hot water. Decontamination is only achieved if applied in conjunction with mechanical action (e.g. wiping or scrubbing) and a rinsing and drying process afterwards.
- **Heat** – Heating is an effective method of decontaminating items such as clothes, cleaning utensils and fabrics (e.g. hot washing cycle in washing machines and dishwashers). Heat is also used to reduce microbial contamination of foods to a level that is safe for consumption. Generally, the higher the temperature achieved, the more germs are killed.
- **Hygienic cleaners and chemical disinfectants** – These can be used to effectively decontaminate sites and surfaces where the above methods are inadequate or impractical, e.g. to decontaminate washroom surfaces, to decontaminate toilets or for use as an extra measure of decontamination when infection occurs in the childcare setting.

The benefits of using cleaning products specifically designed for the job cannot be over emphasised. All cleaning supply contractors will be able to supply you with cleaning agents to meet your school needs.

General cleaning information

Overall, school toilets should be clean and well ventilated, including mechanical ventilation. All areas should be cleaned regularly as part of a documented cleaning policy and rota (see Table 2). Toilets and frequent hand contact surfaces should be cleaned frequently and preferably more than once a day, and more often if visibly dirty. Frequent hand contact sites, such as toilet handles, taps and doorknobs are likely to be contaminated with germs and have a high risk of transferring infection. It is therefore essential to clean and disinfect these sites frequently.

Where there is known blood or body fluid contamination (e.g. spills of vomit or faecal material), spills should be cleaned immediately and any contaminated surfaces cleaned and disinfected.

General purpose utility gloves (e.g. 'Marigolds') should be used for general environmental cleaning tasks. These should be changed when there is evidence of peeling, cracking and tears. Hands should always be washed after removing gloves/cleaning.

Environmental cleaning cloths should be disposable, made from a non-shedding fibre and used within a colour-coded system (e.g. red for toilet pans, cisterns and urinals; blue for washroom areas including basins, taps and cubicle locks). If re-useable cloths have to be used they must be decontaminated after each use and at least once a day. They should also be routinely replaced. Cloths can be decontaminated by hot machine washing (at least 60 °C) and then drying them as rapidly as possible either flat or hanging. Cloths/mops used to clean the toilet area must not be used in other areas of the school.

Ideally, mops with heads that can be removed should be used and then washed at high temperatures in the washing machine (as above) at the end of each day. If this is not possible, mop heads should be cleaned and rinsed with a disinfectant, wrung as dry as possible and then dried quickly, preferably at high temperatures and stored with mop head facing upwards (inverted) or hanging. They should not be cleaned in a sink that is used for food preparation nor should they be left soaking in dirty water. All mop buckets should be easily cleanable (plastic) and kept clean and dry after use.

Chemicals

All chemicals should be handled and stored in accordance with manufacturers' instructions and product safety data sheets. These can be obtained free from product manufacturers. Any staff who handle chemical cleaners should be given instructions on their safe use. These instructions should also include the first aid measures required in the event of accidental ingestion, inhalation or contact with skin or eyes. Contractors should be aware of the requirements of COSHH Regulations. All chemicals used on the premises should be used stored in an identified cool, dry and well-ventilated place (room/cabinet) that is lockable; out of reach of the children/visitors/the public; in their original containers. Expiry dates should be routinely checked.

It is important when using bleach (hypochlorite), in particular, that COSHH regulation and manufacturers' instructions are adhered to. Gloves should always be used when handling bleach. Any contact with bleach to skin, eyes and mouth should be avoided and bleach should not be used on urine spillages, carpeted, metal or wooden surfaces. Bleach should always be used in a well-ventilated room/area.

It is important that the correct type of cleaning agent (see Table 1) in the correct concentration is used for the type of decontamination/cleaning required, as per manufacturers' instructions. Manufactured detergent/disinfectant product containers with spray nozzles should ideally be purchased for easy use. Commercial brands are advocated over 'home made' squeeze bottles or containers with spray nozzles which can readily become contaminated during the 'topping up' process.

If the latter are used they must be labelled with the safety instructions and hazard warnings that appear on the original container and fresh solutions used daily. These spray bottles should also be washed and dried daily. Always clean an area after removal of disinfectant with a freshly prepared solution of detergent and water

Protocol for cleaning

Table 1: Recommended cleaning agents

Recommended Cleaning Agents	
Disinfectant spray	Used for cleaning surfaces between use
Detergent + hot water	Used for cleaning surfaces at end of sessions/day
Cream cleaner	Used for cleaning surfaces
Bleach (hypochlorite)	1000 ppm (parts per million) available chlorine – a 1 in 100 dilution of household bleach. Not for use on metal surfaces.

Table 2: Example of Protocol for Environmental Cleaning of Toilets

ITEM	FREQUENCY	METHOD
General environmental surfaces	At least daily	Surface area manually cleaned and dried between uses and/or at end of day (depending on surface) using general purpose detergent & hot water. Use disposable cloths/paper towels. Dry thoroughly. Disinfectant/hypochlorite to be used if known infection risk and then rinsed. NB disinfectants will not work on dirty surfaces.
Hand wash basins, sinks, urinals and toilets. Frequent hand contact sites, such as toilet flush handles, taps and door knobs.	At least daily and it is advisable for toilets to be cleaned twice or three times daily	As above re: detergent and hot water. Cream cleanser can be used for sinks and basins. Ensure both sides of toilet seats and handles are cleaned. Clean and dry basin taps. Clean toilet flush handles and door knobs. Attention should be made to the underside of hand dryers. All surfaces of urinals are to be washed down using a detergent and hot water. Attention should be paid to the underside and surround of urinals.

		<p>Disabled persons' grab rails should be cleaned with detergent and hot water.</p> <p>All surfaces to be cleaned with detergent and dry polished. Disinfectant/hypochlorite to be used if known infection risk and then rinsed.</p> <p>NB disinfectants will not work on dirty surfaces</p> <p>Hand soap, preferably liquid soap, should be available for all hand washbasins. Hygienic hand drying facilities should be in close proximity to hand basins.</p>
Drinking water facilities	Daily	<p>Water facilities should be cleaned daily. If children drink directly from a spout, the detergent needs to be safe. Peroxide sprays and/or proprietary wipes (of a kind intended for water cooler use) should be used daily to keep cooler taps/spouts in hygienic condition.</p> <p>Drinking water facilities (including taps, fountains and coolers) must not be located in toilets areas.</p> <p>Drinking water facilities should be cleaned daily, including outdoor facilities.</p>
Floors	Daily	<p>Wash with hot water and detergent.</p> <p>Disinfectant is required only after contamination with blood spillages.</p>
Bins	Daily	<p>Empty bins at least twice daily. Clean outside bins daily, Clean inside with hot water and detergent, if contaminated. Liners to be renewed daily.</p> <p>Sanitary product disposal bins are emptied and cleaned sufficiently, often by a registered company to prevent them becoming over-full or odorous.</p>
Walls/ceilings/ windows/ lights/mirrors/ air vents/ fittings/ pipework	Periodically	<p>Routine cleaning not required. Clean periodically with hot water and general purpose detergent. Clean with bleach if contaminated with blood. Mirrors to be polished. Stainless steel should be kept bright.</p>