



YSGOL BRO IDRIS

Child Soiling – guidelines for schools

Background –

Soiling is not an uncommon problem – it may affect as many as 1 in 30 children between the ages of 4-5 years, and it can feel enormously stressful for all those that are affected by it, which include the child, the parents, and the school.

Children soil in their pants, on the floor, or in other inappropriate places. Most children however can control their bowels before their bladders, and can achieve night and day control by the age of 3.

As children spend the bulk of their day in a school or early years setting, it is important for educational establishments to understand why children soil and how schools can help.

Reasons why children may soil –

- Lack of toilet training
- Poor diet/lack of water, resulting in constipation (especially in older children)
- Learning or physical difficulty
- Gastrointestinal illness e.g. diarrhoea
- Ignoring signs that they should 'go'
- Stressful events or experiences
- Too shy to ask if they can go to the toilet
- Psychological – bad past experience; fear of using the toilet

Effects soiling may have on children –

- Social isolation;
- Bullying;
- Embarrassment;
- Low self-esteem;
- Temperament;
- Behaviour;
- Avoiding activities;
- Stress;

How *parents* can help in a school situation –

- Discuss any problems the child may have, in confidence, with the class teacher.
- Promote general hygiene practices at home, which include hand washing.
- Provide a 'change bag' ready so that the child can change without fuss at school.

- Check with the class teacher that there are no problems with using the toilet at school.
- Gradually encourage your child to take over the toilet routine with less supervision.
- Help your child to think positively that he/she will achieve bowel control. Arrange an assessment by trained health official (school nurse) in consultation with school staff, or family doctor. *(With older children, this should be a priority).*

How *staff* can help in a school situation –

- Encourage parents to access the school nurse service, which is there for assessing and promoting wellbeing, and which offers advice and treatment if needed.
- Allow children access to drinking water throughout the day, and good quality, well maintained toilet facilities that should not be scary, cold or inaccessible.
- Promote general hygiene practices at school which include hand washing.
- Keep a ‘change bag’ provided by parent so that the child can change without fuss at school.
- Respect confidentiality, and promote a ‘no blame’ culture as far as soiling is concerned.
- Explain to parents that there are ‘exclusion periods’ following a number of childhood illnesses including diarrhoea and vomiting.
- No child should however (outside of the above) be excluded from normal educational activities solely because of incontinence.
- Be part of the Healthy Schools Initiative.
- No child should be told off or disciplined for soiling.

Other important ‘*staff*’ matters to be considered within a policy:

- It is not part of a teacher’s professional duties to clean up children. Such a responsibility cannot, therefore, be added to a teacher’s job description. Such a responsibility can be added to a classroom assistant’s job description.
- Despite the fact that there is no expectation that routine and predictable incidents are dealt with by teachers, the vast majority of teachers would assist in an emergency situation.
- The importance of building a supportive and sensitive relationship with the parent/carer, the class teacher, SENCO and school nurse/first aider.
- The procedure to be followed when incidents occur - parents should be informed how their child will be dealt with at school.
- Identify an isolated and easy to clean area where children will be taken to be cleaned/changed. This should be a totally private and well ventilated area.
- Although there is no legal requirement for 2 adults to be present in such circumstances, it would be good practice to have two adults present if

possible – of course, parents should be advised as to these procedures and asked for their written acceptance.

- There are good reasons for encouraging all children to go to the toilet before embarking on a school visit.
- Schools should consider how to maintain order and discipline in this area so that there is no abuse of the 'going to the toilet' policy.
- Pupils should be encouraged, through the school council, to take responsibility for, and ownership of, toilets in order to keep them in a reasonable state.
- Use latex gloves (no powder) and a plastic apron if possible to change a child, remembering to conceal any cuts or abrasions to the skin.
- Maintain high standards of hygiene, and wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after attending to a child.
- If accidents happen regularly, or if a child is still in nappies for medical reasons, then schools should put in place a procedure whereby nappies, etc. are disposed of properly and, taking environmental issues into consideration by providing suitable containers, e.g. clinical bags and bins.
- The affected area should be cleaned as soon as possible using a disinfectant.
- There is always a risk of the transfer of viruses in the blood (BBV - blood borne viruses.) This is a very low risk of BBV through urine or excrement but increases if blood is present. Schools should refer to the Council's BBV policy for further information.
- If you think that a child suffers from a contagious medical condition, e.g. hepatitis, medical advice should be sought.

Summary ending –

Many suggestions are given above – some of which might not fit comfortably into how the school day is structured - but many have already helped many schools and families deal with the situation.

Hopefully the above will only add to the **many things that are already carried out in schools** – schools and early years settings have such an important role in trying to prevent such problems occurring or being exacerbated.



Ysgol Bro Idris Soiling at School Policy



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