

The personal care policy

Including all children in schools, childcare and play settings

Children and their families should not be excluded or treated less favourably because they have personal care needs, for example, wearing nappies, having occasional 'accidents' or needing ongoing support with personal care. We will work to ensure that every child and young person can easily access care and play and learning experiences in our schools, pre-school settings, out-of-school settings and children's centres.

We believe that children are entitled to:

- Be consulted about their personal care in accordance with their age and maturity
- Have personal care needs met by people they know and trust.

We believe that parents/carers are entitled to:

- Be consulted about their child's personal care to ensure that it is sensitive to the family's culture and matched to the child's needs
- The assurance that their child will, whenever possible, only receive personal care from people who know him/her well
- Support in managing toilet training.

We believe that staff are entitled to guidance or training to enable them to:

- Listen to children's preferences regarding personal care and respect their rights to privacy and dignity
- Meet children's individual needs
- Protect children and themselves from infection or inappropriate handling
- Feel informed and confident about their responsibilities for personal care with regard to current guidance and legislation.

Managers (including head teachers, governors and management committees) are responsible for ensuring that changing areas are appropriately adapted and equipped.

Endorsed by the Oxfordshire EYDCP, Early Years and Childcare Service and School Development Service – April 2005.

Frequently Asked Questions

CHILD PROTECTION

How can staff change nappies or clothing and ensure that they are protected against allegations of child abuse?

- Consider asking parents to sign an agreement that staff should care for their children in this way if necessary
- Staff should discreetly inform a colleague that they are leaving to change a child's nappy. They should also let colleagues know of their return
- They should ideally not change the child behind a closed door with no 'vision panel'. A curtained-off area close to the classroom should be used – perhaps an area in the washroom or in the room itself.

We cannot use two members of staff to change nappies. This brings our ratios down lower than those required by Ofsted.

There is no requirement that two members of staff should be present when a nappy is changed. Indeed this would contravene the child's right to dignity and privacy.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Most children are out of nappies by the time they are 3-years-old, so why is this an issue?

Children develop at vastly different rates, especially in the case of toilet training. Some have an atypical pattern of development that affects toilet training, such as a communication impairment.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

We have a child in our setting whose development is delayed and who still wears nappies. Do we have to change him?

Yes. It is against disability discrimination legislation (the Disability Discrimination Act [1995] and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act [2001]) to exclude or deny access to a child who is in nappies.

CONTACTING PARENTS

When a child is soiled or wet can we call the parents to come and change them?

No. It is important that settings take responsibility for caring for children in this way. It is neither practical nor fair for parents to have to come to the setting for this purpose. It is also not appropriate for a child to have to wait for these physical needs to be met.

ENVIRONMENT AND EQUIPMENT

We have no designated changing area. Are we therefore able to exclude these children?

No. You are required to make all reasonable adjustments to include children in your setting.

We have no space to lay children down to change them. What can we do?

Older children may be happy to be changed standing up. This may be the most appropriate position for these children – protecting their dignity and giving them more control.

What equipment do we need?

Equipment varies according to individual children. The core list is:

- Changing mat
- Nappies of various sizes
- Wet wipes or cotton wool
- Single-use gloves in appropriate sizes
- Single-use disposable aprons
- Sealed lidded bin
- Antibacterial spray.

Keep spare clothes in appropriate sizes that reflect the ethnic mix of your setting and that are appropriate for girls and boys.

You may also need a changing table, potty, toilet seat, toilet step and nappy disposal unit. Resources that make the changing area appealing to children include mobiles, tape or CD players, posters, and gentle lighting.

Keep all changing equipment close to the changing mat to ensure the child is not left alone.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

How do we make sure that staff are not infected when changing nappies?

- A risk assessment should be carried out to minimise the risk of infection
- Appropriate gloves and aprons as described above should always be used
- The changing mat must be washed after use
- Ensure that all staff members understand the importance of thorough hand-washing.

DISPOSAL

How do we dispose of nappies safely?

- A risk assessment should be carried out to minimise danger to staff, parents and children
- Disposable nappies, gloves and aprons should be put in a sealed plastic bag in the main dustbin bag. These are not classed as clinical waste
- If a nappy disposal unit is used the contents should be placed in a sealed bag and put in the main dustbin bag
- Soiled nappies should not be given to parents at the end of the session as this is unhygienic and demeaning.

'REAL' NAPPIES

Some parents prefer reusable nappies. Should we accommodate this?

There are sound environmental reasons for choosing reusable nappies (see 'Waste and recycling' at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk). Some nurseries use reusable nappies (with disposable liners) for babies and children whose parents provide them. You will need to consider storage of used nappies during the day.

PRACTICAL ADVICE AROUND OLDER CHILDREN

How do we manage the changing of older children?

Older children vary considerably in their needs and wishes around personal care. At all times settings should liaise with parents and respect their wishes. Dignity and privacy are especially important as children become older.

Some children can become upset when they have accidents. How do we manage this?

It is crucial that all members of staff, following a clear management lead, are positive in their attitude to personal care. As with all emotional experiences, children benefit from acceptance of their feelings and an empathic and solution-focused response.

CONSISTENT CARE

How do we make sure that children feel safe when having their nappies or clothing changed?

Ideally a key person who is familiar to and respected by the child should do this. The parent should know who this is and should be able to visit the changing area with the child beforehand.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

It is not part of my job description to change nappies or pants. Do I still have to do this?

- All settings have a duty of care to their children. Attending to personal needs falls into this category
- While there is no duty on teachers and school support staff to change nappies or pants you may wish to volunteer.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS

Toilet training is a job for parents. Surely we are going to take this role from them if we agree to change nappies?

- Partnership with parents is important in all areas of a child's development
- Parents should be encouraged to contribute information to the setting about the child's progress with personal care and, as with all developmental areas, plans for progress should be agreed together
- Settings should understand a child's need to have, for example, her/his own potty for the critical period when she/he is learning to be out of nappies and accommodate this in their changing or toileting area
- Some settings have produced step cards to help with being out of nappies, which they lend to parents and undertake to work on together.

