

Toilet Ready for School

The majority of children should be toilet trained by the time they start school. Where this is not the case, schools and parents should work together to understand the reasons for this, including seeking medical assessment if appropriate - in some instances this can take time depending on the condition. Admission cannot be refused on the grounds of continence needs, in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Toilet training before starting school is an important milestone in a child's development. When children enter nursery or Reception class, in most cases, schools can expect that parents/carers will have helped them in meeting their continence needs and in becoming comfortable with using the toilet independently. This includes knowing how to recognise when they need to go, using the toilet, wiping, flushing and washing their hands. However, for various reasons, this is not always the case. All children develop differently. Some may achieve bladder and bowel continence quickly, while others might find it more challenging to develop the skills they need alongside other developmental milestones.

It should be understood that delayed continence is not necessarily linked with learning difficulties, ALN or disabilities but that children and young people with continence needs can be affected in their ability to take part in everyday school life. However, when needs are managed appropriately, children and young people should not be disadvantaged in any way.

1. Distinguishing Medical and Non-Medical Incontinence

It is important where possible, to distinguish between incontinence linked to medical conditions (including ALN and disabilities) and that which is not medically based. This distinction can influence the allocation of resources and support within schools, ensuring that statutory duties are met and that children with medical needs are not disadvantaged.

2. Resource Impact

While the aim is to ensure no disadvantage to learners, it is recognised that schools with higher numbers of pupils requiring intimate care support may face additional pressures. This can have an impact on the allocation resource in terms of teaching assistant support where time is used to support pupils with intimate care needs.

3. Schools cannot deny admission to a child still in nappies

In line with [the Equality Act 2010](#) children and young people cannot be refused entry into settings on the grounds that they have continence needs. Any admissions practice that sets a blanket standard of continence would be discriminatory and therefore unlawful. Settings must make adjustments in order to include children and young people with continence needs and should not exclude or treat them differently because of this.

In line with [Welsh Government supporting learners with healthcare needs guidance](#):

It is unacceptable practice to prevent learners from attending an education setting due to their healthcare needs and require parents, or otherwise make them feel obliged, to attend the education setting, trip or other off-site activity to administer medication or provide healthcare support to the learner, including for toileting issues.

[The Children and Families Act 2014](#) places a statutory duty on schools to support pupils with medical conditions, including bladder and bowel problems. If a child has an identified continence issue which will not be resolved before they start school, whether related to toilet training or not, the school cannot refuse entry.

4. Toilet training and starting school

Toilet training can be a stressful time, especially if school is looming. If it does not happen easily, it can create a lot of anxiety for parents and children.

While schools have a duty of care to all children, it is essential for parents/carers to understand their role in supporting their child's development, including mastering toilet training. Collaboration between school staff and parents and health care professionals is key to providing the necessary support for children who may require assistance in becoming reliably clean and dry before attending school. By working together, both parents and educators can create a supportive environment that promotes the well-being and success of every child.

5. Data Collection

Schools are encouraged to collect anonymised data on the prevalence of continence needs among pupils. This information is vital for developing responsive guidance and evaluating its effectiveness over time.

If any child has a medical condition or additional learning needs that make this difficult, parents should let the school know so they can work together to provide the necessary support. See Parental Comms further below.

6. Recent Policy Context

Recent statements from Welsh Government highlight the increasing pressures on schools to support children's wider needs. This guidance seeks to balance statutory duties with the practical realities faced by schools, ensuring that support for continence needs does not unduly impact teaching and learning or create unrealistic expectations among parents.

7. It's generally considered impractical to request parents to come into school solely for the purpose of changing their child.

While school staff can exercise discretion and consider each situation based on the child's individual needs e.g. their healthcare plan, it is usually preferable to manage such incidents within the school. This is linked to WG guidance stated above in section 3.

8. Safeguarding

For safeguarding, it is not a legal requirement for two staff members to be present when changing a child however this can be the preferred arrangement in building staff confidence. If changing alone, staff must inform a colleague when providing personal care, and another adult should be nearby or within earshot. Procedures should be documented and parental consent obtained. The number of staff present may vary depending on the child's specific needs, the school's intimate care policy, the individual intimate care plan/individual healthcare plan, and the child's specific needs, such as behaviour, safeguarding concerns, or manual handling requirements.

It is good practice to ensure that all aspects of continence care in school are documented in advance using an intimate care plan (ICP) or within the individual healthcare plan (IHP) itself.

9. ALN guidance

Toilet training for children with additional needs can be quite daunting and may seem like an impossible goal, however, research and experience would indicate that for many children with additional needs, becoming toilet trained is an achievable goal. Every child is unique, and toilet training may take time. Stay positive, patient, and supportive throughout the process.

When toilet training children with additional needs, follow these simple rules:

- Take it at their pace.
- Make everything as fun and as light-hearted as possible and give masses of praise and encouragement.
- If it's not working, stop trying for a few weeks or months and start again at another time where the child seems ready.
- Don't set them up to fail or make them feel bad about themselves in any way.
- Do not let it become a chore or allow them to sit for too long.
- Count successes, not when it does not happen. Sitting on the potty or toilet is a success.
- Seek advice from Specialist Health Visitors where appropriate & attend "Supporting Learners with Intimate Care" provided by Swansea Council's ALNIT.

Useful Guidance

[Toilet or potty training \(suitable from their second year of life\) | GOV.WALES](#)

[Tips for parents of young children - Potty training English \(gov.wales\)](#)

[NHS 111 Wales - Pregnancy Guide](#) – Learning Potty

[NHS 111 Wales - Pregnancy Guide](#) – Potty Problems

[Potty Training - Swansea Bay University Health Board \(nhs.wales\)](#)

Parental Comms (1st stage)

???????????? Primary School looks forward to welcoming your child to Nursery in September 20???. It is an expectation that children are toilet trained when they begin Nursery, however we understand that all children are different and although most children will be toilet trained when they start Nursery, some will still require adult support.

If you feel your child may require support with their intimate care needs at school and you haven't spoken to the school yet, please speak to us and we will work together to meet the individual needs of your child. We can also point you in the right direction for further support from Health services. Some of these are available below:

[Toilet or potty training \(suitable from their second year of life\) | GOV.WALES](#)
[Tips for parents of young children - Potty training english \(gov.wales\)](#)

Parental Comms (once child is in school)

Since ?????????????????? (enter name of child) started with us we have been supporting him/her with some personal/intimate care (toileting). We are keen to ensure that all our learners are toilet trained before starting school or as soon as possible after this time unless they have specific medical needs.

If you feel your child has any additional needs or you want to discuss this issue further, and you haven't spoken to the school yet, please speak to us and we will work together to meet the individual needs of your child. We can also point you in the right direction for further support from Health services. Some of these are available below:

[Toilet or potty training \(suitable from their second year of life\) | GOV.WALES](#)
[Tips for parents of young children - Potty training english \(gov.wales\)](#)