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Public Health  
England

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Cleaning of the environment, including toys and equipment, is an important function for the control of infection in childcare settings. It is important that cleaning schedules clearly describe the activities needed, the frequency and who will carry them out. Cleaning standards should be monitored regularly by the school. Cleaning staff should be appropriately trained and have access to personal protective equipment.

## Cleaning contract

Essential elements of a comprehensive cleaning contract include daily, weekly and periodic cleaning schedules, based on national guidance. A proper colour coding system is recommended by the Health and Safety Executive<sup>1</sup>. Choosing to employ a colour system in your workplace can make cleaning easy, efficient and in turn, increase general hygiene and cleanliness.

Colour-coded equipment should be used in different areas with separate equipment for kitchen, toilet, classroom and office areas (red for toilets and wash rooms; yellow for hand wash basins and sinks; blue for general areas and green for kitchens). Cloths should be disposable (or if reusable, disinfected after use).

Cleaning solutions should be stored in accordance with Control of Substances of Hazardous to Health (COSHH), and cleaning equipment changed and decontaminated regularly<sup>2</sup>. Consideration should be given to situations where additional cleaning will be required including during term time (for example in the event of an outbreak) and how the school might carry this out.

A nominated member of staff should be chosen to monitor cleaning standards and discuss any issues with cleaning staff.

## Cleaning blood and body fluid spills

All spillages of blood, faeces, saliva and vomit should be cleaned up immediately, wearing personal protective equipment. Clean spillages using a product which combines detergent and disinfectant, and ensure it is effective against both bacteria and viruses. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Use disposable paper towels or cloths to cleaning up blood and body fluid spills, and dispose of after use. A spillage kit should be available for blood spills.

## Toys and equipment

Toys can easily become contaminated with organisms from infected children so it is important that a written schedule is in place for regular cleaning. The cleaning schedule should identify who, what, when and how toys should be cleaned and be monitored.

If toys are shared, it is strongly recommended that only hard toys are made available because they can be wiped clean after play. The condition of toys and equipment should be part of the monitoring process and any damaged item that cannot be cleaned or repaired should be discarded.

Soft modelling and play dough should be replaced regularly or whenever they look dirty and should be included in the schedule.

Sandpits should be securely covered when not in use to protect from animals contaminating the sand. Sand should be changed regularly; 4 weekly for indoor sandpits and as soon as it becomes discoloured or malodorous for outdoor sandpits. Sand should be sieved (indoor) or raked (outdoor) regularly to keep it clean.

The tank should be washed with detergent and water, and dried before refilling with sand. Water play troughs or receptacles should be emptied, washed with detergent and hot water and dried and stored inverted when not in use. The water should be replenished either daily or twice daily when in use and it should always be covered when not in use.

## Enhanced cleaning during an outbreak of infection

In the event of an outbreak of infection at your school, your local health protection team will recommend enhanced or more frequent cleaning, to help reduce transmission. Advice may be given to ensure twice daily cleaning of areas (with particular attention to door handles, toilet flushes and taps) and communal areas where surfaces can easily become contaminated such as handrails. Plans should be developed for such an event on how the school might carry this out which could also include during term time. Dedicated cleaning equipment must be colour coded according to area of use.

## References

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1. Health and Safety Executive (2006) [Manual cleaning and disinfecting surfaces](#) \_

## 2. Health and Safety Executive (1988) [The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations](#) \_

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