

Quality Standards for Toothbrushing in Nurseries and Schools

Revised September 2021 (supersedes previous versions)

For nursery and school staff trained by Designed to Smile staff, for supervised toothbrushing of children aged 2 years and older.

The purpose of this revision of these toothbrushing standards is to update the infection prevention and control aspects of the Designed to Smile supervised toothbrushing programme in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to manage the public health risk of COVID-19 against the significant oral health benefits of the toothbrushing programme. The risk of COVID-19 should be managed by good hygiene measures and physical distancing.

These quality standards need to be used in conjunction with:

- Welsh Government Operational Guidance for schools and settings
<https://gov.wales/school-operations-coronavirus>
- UK Government guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings outside the home
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings> The detail in this guidance would be relevant to environmental cleaning and disinfection required to supervised toothbrushing programmes.
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures#infection-prevention-and-control>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#section-1-public-health-advice-to-minimise-coronavirus-covid-19-risks>

Prior to recommencing programmes, local assessments should be conducted with your local Designed to Smile team. If further infection prevention control advice is needed, this should be sought from your local Designed to Smile team, working in collaboration with health protection colleagues.

Toothbrushing programme models

Until now, two main models have been used for supervised toothbrushing:

- dry brushing model where children brush their teeth without the use of water or sinks; children could be seated or standing.
- wet brushing model where children brush their teeth using water, usually stood at sinks

The wet brushing model is no longer recommended¹ during the COVID-19 recovery phase as it is considered more likely to risk droplet and contact transmission and offers no additional benefit to oral health over dry brushing. The dry brushing model is described in this document.

¹ Childsmile. *National Standards for Nursery and School toothbrushing programmes*. 28th July 2020.

Much advice and support has been provided by the Childsmile programme in Scotland in the development of D2S. Thank you to NHS Scotland for permission to use Childsmile resources as a basis for developing D2S resources.



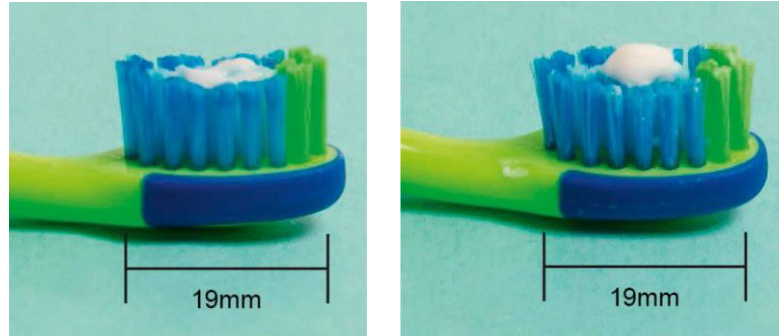
Preparation of the programme

01. These full toothbrushing standards should be available at each setting and well-understood by any adults involved providing the toothbrushing programme.
02. The programme is available to all children, regardless of whether they attend nursery full-time or part-time.
03. Children brush their teeth daily in the programme. Each child brushes once a day at the setting (in addition to home brushing). Toothbrushing takes place at a time which is most suitable for each setting. Whilst it is usually recommended that toothbrushing should not directly follow the consumption of acidic foods or beverages, it is acceptable for settings providing toothbrushing programmes to opt to brush at any time throughout the day. In these circumstances it is considered that the benefits of decay prevention outweigh concerns about dental erosion.
04. All settings should have a designated lead person who is responsible for the toothbrushing programme.
05. Support and guidance is available to all settings from Designed to Smile staff.
06. Regular contact will be maintained between the setting and D2S staff.
07. All staff involved in the toothbrushing programme must have received up-to-date training in effective toothbrushing and infection control procedures provided by a member of the Designed to Smile team.
08. Staff training must be recorded and monitored.
09. Performance against the Standards will be monitored in each setting at least once a term by a member of the Designed to Smile team with a checklist. More frequent visits will be undertaken when appropriate (e.g. if the programme is just starting or if the D2S team or school staff have concerns). Monitoring should include observation of the toothbrushing session and the cleaning process; discussion of the Standards with the nursery or school lead; feedback to the overall programme lead and arrangement of a follow-up visit.
10. Appropriate arrangements of consent must be in place and records maintained. Only those children with positive consent can participate.
11. Parents/ people with parental responsibility should use the consent process to notify D2S of any medical reasons why participation may not be suitable. If participation is still requested, the risk for individual children can be discussed with the public health nursing staff who support the school, and the D2S team.
12. In specific cases where there are signs of infection or oral ulceration noted by setting staff, children may be temporarily excluded from the programme. Toothbrushing at home may be able to continue as this will usually aid healing.

Equipment and Storage

01. D2S-provided supplies must be used for the programme.
02. Toothpaste containing 1000ppm (parts per million) fluoride is used for children under the age of 3 years. Toothpaste containing 1450ppm (parts per million) fluoride is used for children aged 3 years and over.
03. A smear (0-3 year olds) or small pea-sized amount (3-6 years) of toothpaste is used, as shown in the photographs. The supervisor is responsible for dispensing the correct amount of toothpaste.

Source: Public Health England - Delivering Better Oral Health



04. Toothpaste must be stored safely where children cannot access it.
05. Toothbrushes provided are appropriate to the age and ability of the child. They should be replaced at least once a term or earlier if required (for example, if the bristles are splayed).
06. Toothbrushes should be individually identifiable for each child, either with the child's name or a symbol, enabling the supervisor and the child to recognise their own brush. The list to cross check names with symbols should be readily available when toothbrushing.
07. Toothbrushes are stored in appropriate storage systems, which enable brushes to stand upright when positioned and allow sufficient distance between toothbrushes to avoid cross-contamination.
08. Storage systems should allow air flow around the toothbrush heads to enable the toothbrushes to dry. Therefore, any covers used should allow sufficient ventilation to allow drying or only be placed on the system once the brushes have dried.
09. Storage systems which do not have covers are stored within a designated trolley or in a clean, dry cupboard.
10. Storage systems display symbols corresponding with those on the toothbrushes to allow individual identification of toothbrushes, and allocated space on the storage system.
11. There should be a separate storage system for each group or 'bubble' of children where applicable.
12. Opened brushes that are in use and storage systems must never be stored in toilet areas. It may be possible to store sealed boxes of unopened toothbrushes in toilet areas but only if there is no other storage area and after a risk assessment.
13. Ideally, participating nurseries and schools should have sinks designated for toothbrushing and personal hygiene. Where only one sink is available, settings should be encouraged to work towards the provision of a second, dedicated sink for toothbrushing and personal hygiene as best practice.
14. Whilst some tap water supplies in nursery and school settings are not technically of drinking water quality, it is considered suitable for rinsing toothbrushes as the water is not ingested.

During Toothbrushing

01. If the setting/class is organised into groups or 'bubbles', toothbrushing should be organised so that individuals in a bubble brush together and separately from any other bubble.
02. There should be good ventilation of the area where toothbrushing takes place.
03. Storage systems should not be placed in the vicinity of the children whilst toothbrushing takes place in order to prevent contamination.
04. The supervisors and children should wash their hands with soap and warm water, and thoroughly dry them (or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser) before and after the toothbrushing session.
05. Supervisors should cover any cuts, abrasions or breaks in their skin with a waterproof dressing prior to commencing.
06. Supervisors should wear PPE appropriate to their role; if considered to be providing personal care, disposable gloves and aprons, fluid-resistant surgical masks, and eye protection should be worn in line with Welsh Government guidance.
07. Children should be supervised at all times.
08. Each toothbrush should be individually identifiable for each child, either with the child's name or a symbol, enabling the supervisor and the child to recognise their own brush.
09. Supervisors should dispense the toothpaste onto an individual paper towel to allow each child to apply toothpaste to their brush.
10. Toothpaste must only be dispensed at the time the child is ready to brush.
11. Care is taken to ensure that the toothbrushes do not cross-contaminate when being removed or replaced in the storage system.
12. Each child, under supervision, should either collect their own toothbrush (clean and dry) from the storage system or be handed their toothbrush by the supervisor, and receive their portion of toothpaste on a paper towel (which is also used for wiping away any excess toothpaste after brushing).
13. Children may be seated or standing still whilst toothbrushing takes place.
14. Any toothbrushes dropped on the floor are immediately discarded in water-resistant refuse bag, within a bin with a lid.
15. After toothbrushing is completed, children should wipe away excess toothpaste into a disposable paper towel. Children are discouraged from swallowing toothpaste during or after brushing. Reinforce the "spit don't rinse" message.
16. Encourage children to raise the paper towel to their mouths before spitting out the toothpaste, and to wipe their mouths. They may require a fresh towel for this.
17. Paper towels must be disposed of immediately after use in a water-resistant refuse bag, ideally within a bin with a lid.
18. Toothbrushes should be rinsed straight away after use; the toothpaste should not be allowed to dry on the brush.
19. The method for rinsing brushes will be decided by discussion with the Designed to Smile staff member helping to set-up the toothbrushing scheme in each classroom. It will take into account the age/maturity of the children, and availability and height/suitability of the sink and be decided after the individual classroom assessment.

20. Toothbrushes can either be:

a) Prior to returning to the storage system:

- Rinsed at a designated sink area where each child is responsible for rinsing their own toothbrush and its handle under **cold** running water.
- The supervisor should observe each child in turn and be responsible for the control of the running tap. The water should be left running to avoid each child touching the tap.
- Toothbrushes should not come into contact with the sink or tap.
- After rinsing of the toothbrushes is complete, the child should pat the toothbrush dry with a clean paper towel.
- Each child should return their own toothbrush to their appropriate place in the storage system to air dry. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the brush is placed in the correct location (matching names/symbol of brush to the storage system. There should be no contact between brushes.
- Storage system lids should be replaced at this stage, provided that there is sufficient air circulation to allow the toothbrushes to dry before next use.

b) Returned after brushing to the correct position in the storage system either by each child or by the supervisor collecting the brushes individually from the children:

- The system is then taken to an identified sink area by the supervisor who is responsible for rinsing each toothbrush and its handle individually under **cold** running water, and then patting each toothbrush dry with separate pieces of paper towel.
- The brushes should be placed separately on clean paper towel, whilst the storage system is cleaned each day before replacing the brushes into their appropriate place to air dry. (Refer to cleaning section of these standards).
- The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the brushes are replaced in the correct location (matching names/symbol of brush to the storage system). There should be no contact between brushes.
- Storage system lids can be replaced at this stage, provided that there is sufficient air circulation to allow the toothbrushes to dry before next use.

21. Toothbrushes must not be washed together in the sink, and must not be soaked in bleach or other cleaner/disinfectant.

22. Adaptations to the process should be considered if a child has additional support needs.

23. Paper towels should be used to mop up any drips visible on the storage system.

24. Children and supervisors should wash their hands with soap and warm water, and thoroughly dry them (or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser) after the toothbrushing session.

25. The area where toothbrushing occurred and the sink used should be cleaned immediately after the session. Desk surfaces should be wiped clean after brushing if children brush sitting down.

26. The toothbrushing storage systems should be stored out of reach of children in between brushing sessions.

Cleaning

01. Nursery/ school staff must clean the equipment.
02. Thorough hand hygiene must be performed before and after cleaning. All cuts, abrasions and breaks in the skin are covered with a waterproof dressing before cleaning is carried out.
03. For supervisors involved in cleaning, appropriate PPE: disposable aprons, fluid-resistant surgical masks, and eye protection (if there is a risk of splashing to the eyes) should be worn in line with Welsh Government guidance. <https://gov.wales/school-operations-coronavirus>
04. To protect hands, dedicated household gloves must be worn when cleaning storage systems and sinks, as the person should use hot water.
05. After toothbrushing is complete, supervisors are responsible for cleaning sinks following the guidance for non-healthcare settings, specifically environmental decontamination. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>
06. Toothbrushes must not be soaked in Milton, bleach or other cleaner/ disinfectant.
07. Tubes of toothpaste can be cleaned with a damp, disposable cloth/tissue.
08. Manufacturers' guidelines should be followed when cleaning and maintaining storage systems, including dishwasher cleaning where appropriate.
09. If using option 20a above:
 - Storage systems are cleaned, rinsed and dried at least once a week, if children are rinsing their brushes prior to returning to the storage system.
 - They should be cleaned more frequently if soiled.
 - Cleaning of the storage system should ideally occur when the toothbrushes are in use during the toothbrushing session.
 - If not during the session, the brushes should be removed individually and lay on clean paper towel, with no touching between brushes. Care is taken to ensure that toothbrushes do not cross-contaminate when being removed or replaced in storage systems.
 - Rinse the storage system with hot water then clean using standard household cleaning products (detergent/disinfectant which is active against bacteria and viruses) with warm water, then dry with paper towel.
10. If using option 20b above:
 - Storage systems are cleaned, rinsed and dried daily if the brushes are rinsed after being returned to the rack.
 - After rinsing each brush individually, they should be placed separately on clean paper towel, whilst the storage system is cleaned.
 - Rinse with hot water then clean using standard household cleaning products (detergent/disinfectant which is active against bacteria and viruses) with warm water, then dry with a paper towel.
11. Trolleys and storage areas are cleaned, rinsed and dried at least once a week, and more frequently if soiled. Rinse with hot water then clean using standard household cleaning products (detergent/disinfectant which is active against bacteria and viruses) with warm water, then dry with a paper towel.
12. Baby and antiseptic wipes are suitable for skin but are unsuitable for plastic surfaces. Disinfectant wipes are not recommended for storage systems. Household detergent is recommended since it removes the vast majority of relevant micro-organisms and is the first stage in any decontamination process. Manufacturer's instructions should be followed for dilution, application and contact time for all detergents and disinfectants.
13. Storage systems should be replaced if cracks, scratches or rough surfaces develop. Rough surfaces can encourage the growth of harmful micro-organisms. Damaged items therefore need replacing.

Staff Verification

GOOD CROSS INFECTION CONTROL MUST BE OBSERVED AT ALL TIMES

I/ we have read and understood the above protocol and will adhere to it at all times.

Please sign and date below:

Print Name	Signature	Date