

# School Health and Hygiene

## Purpose

The purpose of procedures for health and safety is to ensure that students and staff experience the safest and healthiest environment at school.

## Responsibility

The Head Teacher is responsible for the health and safety of students and staff in the school. Teachers are responsible for day-to-day care including ensuring safety of their students.

## Policy

Good health practices contribute to better learning.

Daily routines of basic good rules of health and hygiene will be emphasised in schools.

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health will work together to promote health in schools for the sake of the nation.

## Procedure

### General hygiene

A Head should always be aware of the need to promote health and hygiene in the school. The Head must make sure that the latrines or toilets are working efficiently and are not placed so as to become a health problem to the school. Children should be given the chance to bathe after hard physical work in the school garden or after an energetic sports session. If a child develops symptoms which are known to be contagious (for example "red-eye" or scabies or head lice) the Head should send the child home so that the disease will not spread to other children in the school.

If children develop serious illnesses like malaria they should be taken home rather than sent home. If no member of staff can be spared for this, sensible children in Year Six can sometimes be relied upon.

Other things to watch for are that children have fresh clothing as often as possible, that they carry and know how to use a handkerchief and that they do not spit around the school.

### Setting a good example

It is important that the Head and teachers should set a good example at all times. As in so many other ways, children will follow the example of their teacher.

Appearance. The Head and teachers should always be clean, neat, tidy and properly dressed. If the teacher is clean and his or her clothes are clean, the children will follow the example. If the teacher's nails and hair are clean and properly cared for, the children will follow the same example. **Remember - set a good example.**

Behaviour. Again the teacher's example will be followed. Teachers should not spit, throw rubbish on the ground, smoke or eat chewing-gum in the classroom. These last two

things may sound impossible for a professional teacher to do, but it does happen and then all teachers get a bad name. **Remember - set a good example.**

House And Compound. The houses of the Head and teachers should be clean and properly looked after at all times. Chickens, pigs or other animals should not be allowed in the garden (or house!) but should be properly penned away from the house. Rubbish should be buried or burned at frequent intervals. Tin and glass are particularly dangerous forms of rubbish and have no place whatever in the school compound. Neighbourhood animals should not be allowed to wander freely in the school compound. If this becomes a problem, the School Committee should be able to help

Children will notice the condition of staff housing. If it is dirty and not cared for, they will pay little attention to any lessons on hygiene. If it is properly looked after they will follow the example. **Remember - set a good example.**

## School Cleaning

### Classrooms

Where possible, each classroom should have:-

- Large waste-paper basket or some other container (cabin biscuit tin or kerosene tin),
- Coconut brooms (children could be taught to make these),
- Dust-pans (half a large tin) to collect dust and dirt, and
- Clean calico to dust the desks and shelves.

Children should be responsible for cleaning their own desks and classrooms.

A roster of cleaning monitors could be set up so that each day there are two or three children responsible for the cleanliness of each classroom.

All rubbish should be put straight away into the waste-paper basket and not thrown on the floor. Much time will be saved by not having to clear up floors with paper or other rubbish on them. Praise should be given to pupils who quickly learn the habit of using the waste-paper basket. In time children will become proud of their classrooms and their school.

At the end of every afternoon session, chairs should be placed upside-down on desks and the room should be thoroughly swept. All rubbish should be put into the waste-paper basket and then this should be emptied into a dustbin or empty kerosene drum for later disposal by fire or by burying.

The following morning those children who are monitors for the week should be in the classroom a little earlier to put back the chairs and arrange the room ready for the day.

A clean and tidy classroom encourages good teaching and efficient work.

### The compound or playground

Experienced school visitors can usually tell a good school before they go inside. Good schools look well cared for. Everything seems clean and tidy.

It is easier to keep compounds clean if each class is given set duties. work is best allocated according to the size and age of the children.

Work will need to be supervised by Heads and staff, but older children can often be trusted to help with this.

When teachers have been asked to supervise, Heads should check that they are doing this. Teachers will lead the children by working with them, and not by giving orders from a chair, or shouting at them through a window while books are being marked. It happens!

There are many jobs to be done. Among them are grass cutting, drain clearing, path-making, kitchen and dining-room cleaning, latrine cleaning, rubbish clearing, supervising the incinerator and the rubbish hole, cleaning the sleeping quarters and so on.

Tools can be dangerous if not used with thought and care. Where possible, Heads should keep tools in a central store which is lockable. All tools should be cleaned before they are returned to the store. In humid climates such as we have in Vanuatu, it is a good idea to smear the metal parts of tools with an oily rag to prevent rust and corrosion.

### **Kitchens and Dining Areas**

Pupils should not be allowed to eat in the kitchen.

Kitchens and Dining Rooms should be kept particularly clean at all times. All rubbish and waste food should be taken away after every meal. Flies, cockroaches and rats are not attracted to really clean kitchens. These creatures spread disease and Heads should do all they can to keep rooms where food is prepared as clean as possible.

Children who are not boarders but who stay at school over the lunch-break should have a safe place to eat their lunch. Like dining-rooms, however, the place that is chosen must be kept very clean.

### **Rubbish Disposal**

It is very important that all rubbish and waste material in the school is properly disposed of. Never allow your pupils to throw away their rubbish in the compound or the river bank or the undergrowth.

The following will be needed:-

- Dustbins or large leaf baskets.
- A large and deep hole to bury the rubbish.
- An incinerator to burn the rubbish

#### **Dustbins and waste-baskets**

The number of these will depend on the size of the school.

Dustbins should be kept outside not inside buildings.

Ideally there should be one outside every classroom, kitchen, dining-room and sleeping quarter.

Rubbish from the waste-paper baskets should be put in the dustbins.

Where possible the bins or baskets should be tightly covered to stop insects and other animals from getting at the rubbish before it is made harmless.

Dustbins should be emptied into the incinerator or rubbish pit every day.

### **Rubbish Hole or Pit**

Outside municipal areas all schools, where possible, should have a deep hole or pit where all rubbish which can not be burned can be thrown and buried.

Tins should be flattened before they are thrown into the pit. Otherwise they will take up too much space.

Bottles can be useful elsewhere, like at the local dispensary. Any that are thought to be useless should be thrown into the pit. If they smash on impact at the bottom, they will, like the flattened tins, take up less space.

Tins which have contained food should be burned before they are thrown in the pit. This ensures that no food will remain to attract animals like rats.

Regularly, perhaps once a week, a layer of earth should be sprinkled on the rubbish. This will help the rubbish to decompose in time.

The hole should be well away from school buildings and down-wind of the entire compound. This way, if there is an occasional smell, it will be carried away from the school.

A new hole will probably be needed every year - more frequently for a large school. Teachers and older children can plan and dig the holes, and in rural schools the parents can help out.

### **Incinerator**

This is the name of the container where all burnable rubbish is disposed of by burning.

A simple incinerator can be made from an old oil-drum or dustbin set on some stones. The drum must be punctured all around with large holes so that air can be drawn in to help with the burning.

The incinerator should be placed near the pit and well away from the school buildings. Any rubbish which remains after burning can be thrown in the pit while the ash will be useful if sprinkled on the school compost heap. (See later notes on the School Garden) It is probably wise to entrust the care of the incinerator to one person. It will be safer and the drum will probably last longer if cared for. This method is to be used in urban areas and other regional centres.

## **Toilets and Latrines**

It will be a good idea for the Head to keep in close touch with the village sanitarian who should be able to offer good advice about both the construction and the maintenance of toilets and latrines.

It is important that all schools have good, clean latrines and toilets which the children will use.

Good latrines are very important in a school's organization and show pupils the practical use of hygiene.

Latrines should be built in a shady place away from the school buildings. They should be far enough away to be private, but close enough to avoid a long walk.

Latrines should be well built with a proper roof.

Trees and bushes around the latrines will make them more private, though care must be taken not to attract mosquitoes.

Make sure that both latrines and toilets are kept clean. They should be washed out every day with disinfectant or strong soap. If this is done with care, smells should be kept to the minimum.

Toilets should be divided into cubicles, with doors. Latrines should be completely covered in and a lid used. This will prevent both flies and bad smells from becoming a problem.

All pupils must wash their hands after using the toilet or latrine. If there is no water nearby, a bowl with soap and water should be provided.

Heads and Teachers should make sure that latrines are used properly. If they do this, many illnesses will be avoided. **Please be sure that children use the latrines properly. They should replace the lid and wash their hands after every use.**

A separate urinal should be made for boys.

Separate latrine blocks should be made for boys and girls. They should be in separate parts of the school's grounds.

A separate latrine block should be built for members of staff.

Teachers should inspect latrine blocks several times per day.

Different types of latrine are:

- (a) Flush Latrine (WC)
- (b) Water-seal and Dry-seal toilets
- (c) Bucket Latrine
- (d) Pit or Trench Latrine

**(a) Flush Latrine (WC.)**

1. This type of toilet will be found in towns and municipal areas.
2. A toilet of this kind should be flushed after every use to avoid possible blockages.
3. Be sure that no material is used (sticks, twigs, newspaper) which will cause a blockage.
4. Toilet blocks should be inspected daily to ensure that everything is all right.

**(b) Water-seal and Dry-seal Toilets**

1. The Local Government Council's Sanitarians could be asked to advise on how to build water or dry-sealed toilets. The PEO builders could make these sealed toilets with the help of the LGC Sanitarian.
2. Sealed toilets are more hygienic than latrines. They are safer for the children. The top of these toilets should at all times be covered with a flat piece of timber so that flies, rats and other creatures are not attracted to the area.
3. If Heads need financial help to Pay for construction materials for sealed toilets, they should seek the help of the PEO.

**(c) Bucket Latrine**

1. This does not make a satisfactory latrine.
2. Only use this method if you have nothing but swampy ground around the school. Otherwise use a pit latrine.

**(d) Pit or Trench Latrine**

1. This is best for areas where there are no flushing latrines.
2. The pit should not be less than 2m deep. Teachers and older children can dig it.
3. The width of the pit should be about 60cm.
4. Heads should calculate the length allowing 1m for every 25 pupils.
5. Be sure that the hole is properly sealed off at the sides. A cover spanning the whole latrine is best. Holes should be cut for each latrine and then covered with lids. Block any other holes with earth so that flies can not get inside.

**Personal Hygiene**

A regular daily hygiene inspection should be carried out by teachers.

In Year One this could be the hygiene lesson.

Teachers should inspect children's hands, hair, nails, teeth, eyes, ears and clothing.

If children are dirty the teacher must see that they wash, brush their teeth or what ever. The Dental Department in Vila recommends that all children in Primary Schools should brush their teeth at set times at school each morning.

Inspections are useless if no action is taken afterwards.

Inspections should be done in a friendly manner.

Children should not be paraded as bad examples.

Firmness but tact are the most effective tools.

The whole purpose of the inspection is to help the children to develop good hygiene habits - not to embarrass them. Children should be allowed to put matters right on their own.

There should be demonstrations of how to wash clothes, bodies and hair. children should be shown how to clean their teeth and their nails.

Always praise children who are clean and tidy -as well as those who are trying hard. Make children feel proud if they are clean.

Children should be asked to bring their own soap to school if necessary. Washing without soap is not an effective way of killing germs.

### **The Immunization Programme**

Heads should offer full co-operation with the Ministry of Health's programme of immunization in schools. The scheme covers children in Years 1 and 6 throughout Vanuatu.

Children are given protection, usually by injection of vaccine, from the following dangerous diseases:-

1. T. B. - a dangerous disease of the lungs
2. Diphtheria and Tetanus (lock jaw).
3. Polio. A disease that can cripple.

A form issued by the Ministry of Health in English, French and Bislama is reproduced in the section on school records.