

Good Practice Guidance

Getting changed for PE and School Sport

Additional safer working practice guidance for schools

(Updated July 2014)

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the school's child protection policy, intimate care policy, staff code of conduct and guidance for safer working practice. They have been developed by the Education Safeguarding Standards Advisor in conjunction with the Dorset advisor for PE, for the reasons outlined below. They are not intended to be comprehensive guidelines about safer practice in PE and Sport.

1. Rationale

- 1.1 It is acknowledged that the vast majority of people who work with children are safe to do so. However, in 2011 a Dorset teacher was sent to prison for child sexual abuse (not of pupils he taught) and the subsequent scrutiny of his past behaviour within school raised concern in relation to his conduct in the changing rooms. This, and similar cases in neighbouring authorities, has prompted the consideration of the need for additional clear local guidance. It is recommended that Headteachers review changing arrangements, particularly where they pre-date their own arrival in the school and/or take place on another site. This might include visiting the off-site venue as part of the review.
- 1.2 Being in a state of undress can cause some children to feel vulnerable, particularly those who have experienced abuse, and cause them to misunderstand or misinterpret the actions of an adult.
- 1.3 Changing for PE can cause anxiety for some pupils, can influence their perception of the subject and determine whether it is an enjoyable and positive experience. The concern caused by changing can influence a pupil's participation and lead to a variety of avoidance strategies.

- 1.4 For staff there can be confusion and/or worry about supervision and how it accords with safer working practice. There can be a tension between the need to ensure that bullying or teasing does not occur and the risk of being accused of acting inappropriately or even being perceived as someone who might pose a sexual risk to children.

2. **Principles**

- 2.1 Adults must always change or shower privately; never in the same space as children.
- 2.2 It is recommended practice that pupils should change for PE, particularly when the exertion rate will necessitate a change of clothing for reasons of hygiene.
- 2.3 Schools should make adequate and sensitive arrangements for changing which take into account the needs of pupils from different religions, beliefs and cultural backgrounds.
- 2.4 Particular consideration might need to be given to, and alternative arrangements made (where possible) for, the requirements of individual pupils with needs relating to sexuality or sexual orientation.
- 2.5 All pupils should be treated fairly and with respect for their privacy and dignity.
- 2.6 Wherever possible designated single sex changing rooms or areas should be used. If this is not possible and boys and girls change together, in a classroom for example, consideration can be given to utilising furniture or screens to provide discrete areas. Also consider covering windows if practicable. Governing bodies should be aware of and approve such arrangements.
- 2.7 Mixed gender changing areas clearly become less appropriate as children get older and staff need to have due regard for those who mature at a much earlier or later age than their peers. Ideally, boys and girls should change separately after they reach Year 2.
- 2.8 Parents should be aware of arrangements, particularly in situations where designated changing rooms are not available.
- 2.9 Pupils who express disquiet or concern about the behaviour of a member of staff should be listened to and appropriate enquiries conducted by the Headteacher.

- 2.10 Allegations about a member of staff, from any source, must be reported promptly to the Headteacher, who will act in accordance with the school's procedures.

3. Should the member of staff remain in the changing room?

- 3.1 This judgement will be based on the age and developmental needs of the pupils but there should not be an assumption that adults need to remain in the room in order to maintain good behaviour. This can also be achieved by being in close proximity and pupils being aware of it. They should also know that adults will enter the room if necessary - in response to a disturbance, for example.
- 3.2 It is often possible to leave the door of designated changing rooms slightly ajar; their layout makes it unlikely that the occupants can be seen in this way.
- 3.3 If there is a need for adults to enter the room it is recommended they should alert pupils to this by announcing it to give them the opportunity to cover up if they want to.
- 3.4 All adults, but particularly those of the opposite sex, must avoid just standing in the changing room watching pupils, or repeatedly going in and out without good reason.
- 3.5 A code of behaviour should be established with all pupils so they are clear about expectations about their conduct whilst they are unsupervised.

4) What if pupils need assistance with getting changed?

- 4.1 Refer to the Intimate Care Policy for assisting children who are disabled or require additional support.
- 4.2 Pupils of all ages should be encouraged to be as independent as possible; adults should consider prompting and giving verbal help/encouragement before they offer assistance.
- 4.3 Adults should be especially vigilant when helping children with underclothes, tights and swimming costumes.
- 4.4 Assistance should take place openly, not out of sight of others.
- 4.5 It should be undertaken to meet the pupil's needs, not the adult's.

5) What about when off-site changing rooms are used, such as at a public swimming pool?

- 5.1 The principles detailed above still apply.
- 5.2 It is not appropriate for school swimmers to share changing facilities with members of the public (unless this is part of a special school programme of community integration which has been carefully risk assessed). If school sessions precede or are followed by public sessions, enough time should be booked either side of the swimming session to allow pupils to get showered and changed.
- 5.3 As far as possible, members of staff should supervise or assist pupils of the same sex.
- 5.4 If changing areas are shared with pupils from another school, particularly those who are older/younger, adults from both/all schools should take this into consideration and properly risk assess together.

Further guidance on safer practice in PE and sport:

NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit

www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/cpsu/cpsu_wda57648.html

Association for Physical Education

www.afpe.org.uk

Active Dorset – County Sports and Physical Activity Partnership

www.activedorset.org

British Association of Advisers and Lecturers in Physical Education (BAALPE) publication: *Safe Practice in Physical Education and School Sport*, 2004.