

School Toilets: exec summary

much more information, research data etc., available at <http://rubble.heppell.net/places/toilets/>

The problems:

- **attainment:** children seek to not urinate in school: consequences they drink less, dehydration damages concentration, diction and more. Of surveyed 13 to 16 year olds 25% had **never** used school toilets to urinate
- **attendance:** children seek to not defecate in school: consequences are increased absences - concerns about loose bowels lead to non attendance. Of surveyed 13 to 16 year olds 80% had **never** used school toilets to defecate.
- **privacy / child protection:** doors that do not fit the frame, either by design or by dilapidation, offer no privacy, and they are thus rarely used. With personal mobile devices largely camera enabled, and welcomed as learning devices, this has now become a child protection issue too. Also not having washbasins inside the cubicle means if a child has an “accident” there is no private way to clean themselves.
- **behaviour:** poor toilet design means they are constantly reported as places for bullying, fear, and inappropriate behaviours (smoking, drug purchase)
- **scale:** the large scale “industrial” toilets cannot be located close to all learning areas. As a consequence “going” to the toilet involves permissions, time out of class and when they are used by everyone at break times the volume of use results in mess
- **respect / esteem:** just about all school councils (or similar) bring up the state of toilets, the lack of privacy etc and we need engaged learner voice. Ignoring these regular pleas merely confirms that seeking learner voice is a token, not a reality.
- **damage:** school toilets are vandalised - from paper in bowls, spat paper “pellets” and graffiti, to physical damage and flooding - too often a culture of “acceptable” vandalism can begin in the toilets.
- **lack of supervision:** tradition industrial school toilet design separates staff from students and staff rarely enter the toilets. The toilets additionally have an “ante room” to further hide miscreants.
- **transgender:** a more enlightened approach to transgender students, and staff, needs support by non-gendered toilets.

and anecdotally almost every parent with “old style” toilets report their children arriving home from school “bursting” for the toilet. This inability to tackle a simple but damaging problem dismays and puzzles parents too.

The solution:

Many new schools, in Australia and Europe have adopted “airline toilets”. They are characterised by these features:

- fully enclosed cubicle - small in scale
- wash basin in the cubicle
- easy clean floor and floor - wall intersection
- distributed cubicles - usually in twos - so that they are adjacent to all learning areas - often one is an accessible cubicle.
- unisex and staff / student joint use
- no external “ante room” - or if hygiene regs insist (very rare), then a full glass door on that room.
- as with airline toilets clearly signalling “occupied / vacant saves the embarrassment of turning back from a locked door, or the fear of a rattled door when you are inside.

Decisions:

Many schools are doing this, new built and refurbish, without offending various regulations; however choices include:

Do you separate staff / student cubicles (but why? you would want the staff to be passing by and there is no child protection risk - much less in fact. They are simply toilets.

Similar with gender: very few cultures (any?) separate male / female toilets in the home and see transgender point above. Also, separation on gender and age leads to blocks of four cubicles: accessible, male, female, staff. Since these still need to be very near the learning spaces, you would need to build a lot more toilets and worry about scale impacting in use. The very youngest, pre-school and kindie, need a whole different provision, of course.

Examples:



unisex paired cubicles, plus an accessible cubicle at Mark Oliphant 0 - 18 College in S. Australia



unisex paired cubicles, plus an accessible cubicle at Island of Portland Aldridge Community Academy, 2 - 18 in Portland, England



unisex trio of cubicles, in Jesmond Gardens Primary School, Hartlepool, England