

# **Dromore Nursery School**



## **Policy Statement and Parent Advice**



# Toilet Training

## INTRODUCTION

From my experience as a parent, I know toilet training is a very individual matter. Individual differences, physical and emotional readiness, as well as family circumstances all contribute to the mix. Successful toilet training – that is, training complete with as little emotional upheaval as possible, in a time frame attuned to the child – requires a blend of techniques on the part of the parent and readiness on the part of the child. Most children are successfully trained by the age of 3 or 3 ½. For some, training happens easily, for others, many accidents and power plays between parent and child occur along the way. Each child has his/her own time frame for training. The parent's job is to determine when his/her readiness alarm goes off and guide him/her to toileting success. For some children the alarm is loud and clear; you know exactly when they're ready. For others, it's more like a snooze alarm – the child wakes up to the idea of learning to use the toilet, but keeps drifting back to sleep; and needs waking up again and again!

No matter how you approach guiding your child to use the toilet, there are 3 points to keep in mind before you start.

1. Show respect for a child's private body part and proceed in a respectful manner (If parents yell, scream, express frustration, or act disgusted, children may develop negative associations with toileting). Urinating and having a bowel movement are natural and necessary parts of everyone's day. We all eat, sleep and eliminate. We want children to have a pleasant association with this natural process. So stay positive and pleasant during toilet training.
2. Cultivate your child's interest in using the toilet. If your child senses this activity is mainly for your benefit, he/she might resist. Do not make toilet training more important to you

than it is to your child. If you are doubtful about how to proceed, it is generally better to do less rather than more. Always remember the ultimate control lies with your child.

3. As you proceed with toilet training do not let the process dominate your relationship. Yes it is important, but you still need to read stories and talk with your child about topics unrelated to toileting.

### **THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION: IS IT TIME YET?**

Just as children eventually learn behaviours like sitting at the table to eat, or sleep through the night, and skills such as reading, or bike riding, children learn to use the toilet. Most of them do this between 2 and 3 years old. In general if your child has not made any progress in daytime toilet training by this age, bring it up with your doctor or health visitor.

When guiding children towards a new competency, it is important to choose the right time. We do not teach two year olds to read and we do not train three year olds to ride a two wheeled bike. Immature and under developed bodies and minds are not equipped to learn advanced skills, no matter how qualified the instruction. Education must mesh with a child's developing ability to learn a new task. If a child's physical maturation is out of sync with instruction for toilet training, frustration occurs rather than competence.

On the other hand, do not let the opportunity for learning slip by. If a child's body is ready to learn a new skill, teach it; just do not be too surprised if he/she objects. Reluctance is a common response to change. Give the child time to adjust to the new learning experience. The newness causes the emotional upheaval; it does not mean the child cannot learn the skill.

Most seven year olds learn to swim; most 6 year olds are ready to learn to swim; and most 2 ½ year olds can begin to learn to use the toilet. If you wait months, or even years longer, children get set in their ways and resist or fear the change that learning a new skill brings.

Knowing or sensing when the time is right for your child to learn a new behaviour is a key to effective parenting. Physical maturation of the body is often necessary before a child can master a new skill, but it is not isolated. A child is more complex. Parents must keep in mind the child's intellectual, social, and emotional development as they train their child to learn the skills required of them in our society.

Toilet training is not an isolated event of simply learning to urinate and have bowel movements in the toilet. The process involves four aspects of your developing child:

1. Physical
2. Intellectual
3. Social
4. Emotional

It is important to understand how each of these areas impacts the child being trained. Using the toilet is much more about learning than about the rote repetition the term 'training' usually implies. We use the term training because it is a common cultural term.

### **PHYSICAL READINESS**

Children cannot walk until their muscles are developed enough to carry them across the room. They cannot write the alphabet until their finger muscles are able to make intricate shapes. A child won't really be successful using the toilet independently until the bowel and bladder muscles are strong and under control.

In order to be toilet trained; these muscles must be developed sufficiently to hold in the urine and stool. For most infants and toddlers in nappies, pee and poop simply come out when the bladder and bowel are full. When a child is physically ready to be toilet trained, the muscles are strong enough to hold the urine and stool in and the child is able to relax and let go when the time is right.

If your child is constantly wet, he simply is not ready. Notice when your child's nappy is dry for an hour and a half or two hours at a time. This is your first indication that the bladder is growing and its muscles are developing control. Most toddlers pee four to eight times a day.

Independent physical readiness includes being able to pull pants down and up. Make sure clothes are easy to manage. When you are looking for signs of physical readiness, it is important to note if your child is over the thrill to walk and run. The sturdy walker or confident runner who now sits on the floor to play with toys will be more willing to sit on the toilet than the child who still wants to practice running.

## **SOCIAL READINESS**

Your next step is to recognise that steering children towards toileting is easier if they participate in it as a social experience. It really helps if your child can watch another child, who is similar in age. Remember however, that children together in the bathroom always need adult supervision. Modelling by peers is often all it takes for toileting success to occur. For children in a child care setting, social readiness is naturally encouraged since children want to participate in the bathroom activities along with the others.

Another sign of social readiness is imitation. Does your child mimic you shaving, cooking, or shopping? If so, he may be ready to imitate toileting practices too. This is a good sign.

## **INTELLECTUAL READINESS**

A positive social bathroom experience increases readiness, but your child also needs to make the connection between mind and body about "the need to go". This is intellectual readiness. Some ability to communicate about the process of peeing and pooping is also necessary – be it words, hand signs, or body motions. Children need a toileting vocabulary.

### *Key Steps In Intellectual Readiness*

- Uses toileting words
- Aware that he/she 'has gone'
- Aware that he/she 'is going'
- Aware that he/she 'needs to go'

## **EMOTIONAL READINESS**

Inborn temperament traits affect emotional readiness. Curious, adaptable children often look for, take on, and enjoy new challenges. If your child has a very regular body and has a bowel movement at the same time each day, it will be easier to make that potty stop a part of your basic routine. Adaptability and regularity are traits that make toilet training a little easier.

Change is much harder for some temperament types than for others. It is a myth that all children want to give up wet or soiled nappies. Wearing nappies is all they have known from birth and it feels normal. Using the toilet can be scary, especially for more cautious children. Some children fear they will fall in and be flushed away! Other children do not like the idea of something falling out of their body and disappearing! If children appear fearful and reluctant, pushing them to perform does no good. Non – compliance and negativity are normal and important parts of this developmental stage. Statements such as, ‘No! Me do it!’ and ‘Leave me alone’ usually peak around 2½ years of age. It seems unfortunate that physical and intellectual readiness for potty training often come together just when rebellion is on the rise. However, believe it or not, there is a benefit to toilet training and the ‘Terrible Twos’ going hand in hand. Children control their attitudes and emotional response to any situation. They alone control what their bodies do. Ultimately, it is the child who decides to be trained – he/she is in control of his/her body. Instructing your child to use the toilet really shows you where your influence begins and ends! You have to learn how to positively direct your child toward the desired goal, all the while respecting him/her as a separate individual with his/her own unique temperament and style of learning. This is a valuable parenting skill to acquire.

Ultimately, emotional readiness means day-in, day-out willingness to respond promptly to bodily needs. Don’t let one success lure you into believing your child is now completely trained. You will hear parents claim their child was trained in one day. This may be true for a few children, but most learn to use the toilet gradually over about one month’s time. Expect back sliding. Paying attention all day, every day, requires much more emotional maturity. Build on your child’s successes, but don’t believe that one success will lead to complete training. Rather recognise each successful step as part of the process.

## **READINESS CHECKLIST**

### *PHYSICAL*

- Nappy is dry at least an hour and a half at a time.
- Child has already mastered walking and running so has energy for new learning.
- Child enjoys sitting in one place for a few minutes playing with toys.

### *SOCIAL*

- Shows interest in toileting. Follows you and others into the bathroom to watch you in the toilet.
- Plays at toileting, placing dolls and stuffed animals on the potty.

### *INTELLECTUAL*

- Imitates your behaviour – cooking, shaving, shopping.
- Understands place – likes to put shoes, coats, and books where they belong.
- Shows awareness of elimination – ‘has gone’-‘is going’-‘needs to go’

#### EMOTIONAL

- Is comfortable with, rather than afraid of, the toilet, or of sitting on the potty.
- Is willing to sit briefly on the toilet.

IF YOU CAN CHECK OFF MOST OF THE ABOVE, YOUR CHILD IS READY FOR TOILETING INSTRUCTION



#### TACTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL TRAINING

Here are some steps to ease your path through the training process – setting aside time, dealing with setbacks and criticism, as well as maintaining a good relationship with your child. Planning ahead will help things go more smoothly.

##### *FIND TIME*

An important ingredient required for training is time. Be prepared to set aside some of your regular activities because you will need extra energy to take on potty training. Teaching your child to use the toilet requires you to carefully and quietly monitor your child’s progress.

##### *STAY CALM DURING SETBACKS*

Toilet training proceeds easily for many parents and children. Some children, however, resist the whole process. This is very stressful for whatever parenting style is in play. Remember this: toilet training is important, but it is more important that your child develops positive associations with the toileting process. Your positive and pleasant demeanour is so important.

##### *COPE WITH CRITICISM FROM OTHERS*

Parents today must prepare themselves for an avalanche of unsolicited advice from friends, neighbours, and family members. Anyone who ever trained a child has advice and opinions. Remember, the age at which your child uses the toilet does not determine your skill as a parent. Additionally, there is little connection between the age of toilet training and a child’s IQ.

Toilet training can be frustrating and emotionally charged process. Parents need the support of others, not their criticism. **YOU KNOW YOUR CHILD BETTER THAN ANYONE.** Be confident that your careful thought and planning will serve your child well and get on with training.

### *MAINTAIN A LOVING RELATIONSHIP*

A positive, patient attitude about toilet training is essential. The better your overall relationship is with your child, the more influence you will have in your child's life and the easier it will be to teach him/her new skills. Never take it for granted that your child knows how much you love them. You must demonstrate it with your words and actions every day.



### **TO REWARD OR NOT REWARD: THAT'S THE QUESTION**

Smiles, hugs, applause and positive statements, such as, "Good for you, you're sitting on your little toilet" are social rewards. These kinds of social rewards are necessary for training all children. Sweets, trinkets, or stickers for toileting efforts or results are tangible rewards. Such tangible rewards can be used effectively to accomplish toileting tasks, but they are not essential for every child.

### **SOCIAL REWARDS**

Think about the positive attention you focus on your child as he learns to walk. It is so exciting to watch a child take those first brave steps and eventually toddle across the room. When he/she falls, you do not scold. You just wait and watch until he/she is ready to try again. Children need positive attention focused on them with all their new learning experiences including toilet training.

### **Positive Responses:**

- NOTICE – 'I saw your teddy bear on the toilet, He likes to sit there'
- SHOW LOVE – 'Get down on the child's level. Establish eye contact and give your child happy, approving looks as he/she sits on the toilet.
- TALK OR READ TOGETHER – Make sitting on the potty or toilet relaxed and enjoyable.
- GIVE PRAISE – Clap briefly, or say, 'You used your potty well done. Good for you. Mum and dad are proud of you.
- TELL OTHERS – Call dad or another family member and share the success letting your child hear how pleased you are with them.

## **CONTINUE POSITIVE PATTERNS**

Nappy changing is usually a positive time for a parent and child. You make eye contact, talk, and laugh. One-to-one positive attention is focused totally on the child. Parents need to continue this same level of focus and positive attention as the child gives up nappies and works towards toileting independence. This point is obvious. Give your child the same amount of attention for potty training as you did for nappy changing, and success will occur in a more timely fashion.

## **REINFORCE THE POSITIVE, NOT THE NEGATIVE**

If you give attention for positive actions, they continue to behave positively. If you pay too much attention to misbehaviour you will see children continuing to misbehave. Negative attention includes trying to talk children out of their inappropriate behaviour.

If your child refuses to sit on the toilet, do not ask. "Why won't you sit on the potty?" and do not go on and on about the importance of learning the task. Parents often over-explain toileting procedures, as if thinking the child will eventually say "I get it. No problem. I'll use the toilet since you explained it so well". These attempts to convince your child draw too much negative attention to the topic and seldom influence behaviour positively.

Instead, just say, "I know you don't want to practice, but you need to sit on the toilet for thirty seconds." Proceed, being firm and kind, but clear about what you expect. Then praise any effort made. "You tried, good for you".

If children get positive attention for toileting attempts and success they usually progress in a timely way, correct for their developing bodies. There is no need for negative comments or body language that communicates unhappiness or disgust.

### **Negative Responses that Hinder Toileting Success:**

- Labelling
- Comparing
- Reinforcing the negative
- Negative body language
- Scolding or yelling

Parenting would be easy if such negative comments actually changed children's behaviour for the better. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case. Disapproving statements typically leave children paralyzed and not knowing how to change their behaviour. Since they do not know what to do, or how to do it, they simply keep on behaving in the same old negative fashion.

## **TANGIBLE REWARDS**

Tangible rewards do not have to be expensive to be effective. There are many ways to use trinkets and other items to motivate children. A reward must be immediate. A plan that requires a child to

stay dry and clean for a week before getting a reward will not work. There is another factor important for the successful use of rewards. It MUST be something the child really wants.

Social rewards are essential to toilet training children. Tangible rewards can be very useful, but are not always necessary. Use your knowledge of your child to decide whether to use tangible rewards to motivate training. Rewards do not work for every child. If a power struggle is brewing, then rewards are unlikely to help.



#### **BOOKS FOR PARENTS TO READ TO YOUR CHILD**

- Your New Potty: By Joanna Cole
- Once upon a Potty: By Alona Frankel
- Everyone Poops: By Taro Gomi
- The Story of the Little Mole Who Went in Search of Whodunit: By Holzwarth, Werner and Erlbruch
- KoKo Bear's New Potty: By Vicki Lansky
- The Princess and the Potty: By Wendy Cheyette Lewison
- Where's The Poop?: By Julie Markes
- I Have To Go!: By Robert Munsch
- Toilet Tales: by Andrea Wayne

These books can be obtained through your local library service.



## DROMORE NURSERY SCHOOL'S POSITION ON TOILET TRAINING

All children who are in their pre-school year at Dromore Nursery School will be aged between 3 and 4 years of age. This is the age by which most children should be in the process of toilet training or be completely trained. We appreciate that all children are different and all children come from unique family situations. We expect parents to have begun to toilet train their child by this stage, providing they do not have additional or communication needs.

**WE DO NOT** expect all children to be completely accident free and will deal with toileting accidents in a sensitive and respectful manner as outlined in our 'Advice Section'. All children can have toileting accidents for a variety of reasons at this stage in their development, this is normal.

### **WE DO EXPECT**

- Parents to have started the process and devoted time and thought to a routine.
- Inform staff honestly of the stage their child is at and any difficulties encountered.
- Share the approach they are using with staff members.

- Be willing to work with staff to establish a home / school approach.
- Work consistently and sensitively towards their child's independence in all toileting needs including cleaning themselves after a bowel movement.
- Provide additional clothing for their children on a daily basis.

We will deal with toilet accidents in a sensitive manner and inform parents or carers when an accident occurs. If a child is having regular accidents we will discuss and agree an approach with parents and introduce a regular toileting programme in school which will be supported at home. This will be implemented for a set period of time and if accidents continue we would advise parents to seek medical advice to ensure that the child has no physical needs which are hindering progress. Health Visitors can also be a very useful source of advice and support if toilet training is not progressing as expected.

### **REDUCTION IN HOURS**

We would not take this step lightly and only after we have exhausted all other options. We will seek to support parents at every level to avoid the reduction in a child's hours. However, we have had the situation when a parent has not made any attempt to implement a regular routine and programme of toilet training at home; this is detrimental to the child and very demanding on the staff and can have a negative impact on the other children in the class. Under these circumstances we would reduce a child's hours of attendance. This would only happen after consultation between the Principal and parents.

Parents MUST sign and agree with the 'Toileting and Child Protection Agreement' in order to allow staff to implement a programme and change children when needed.

### **ADDITIONAL/SPECIAL NEEDS**

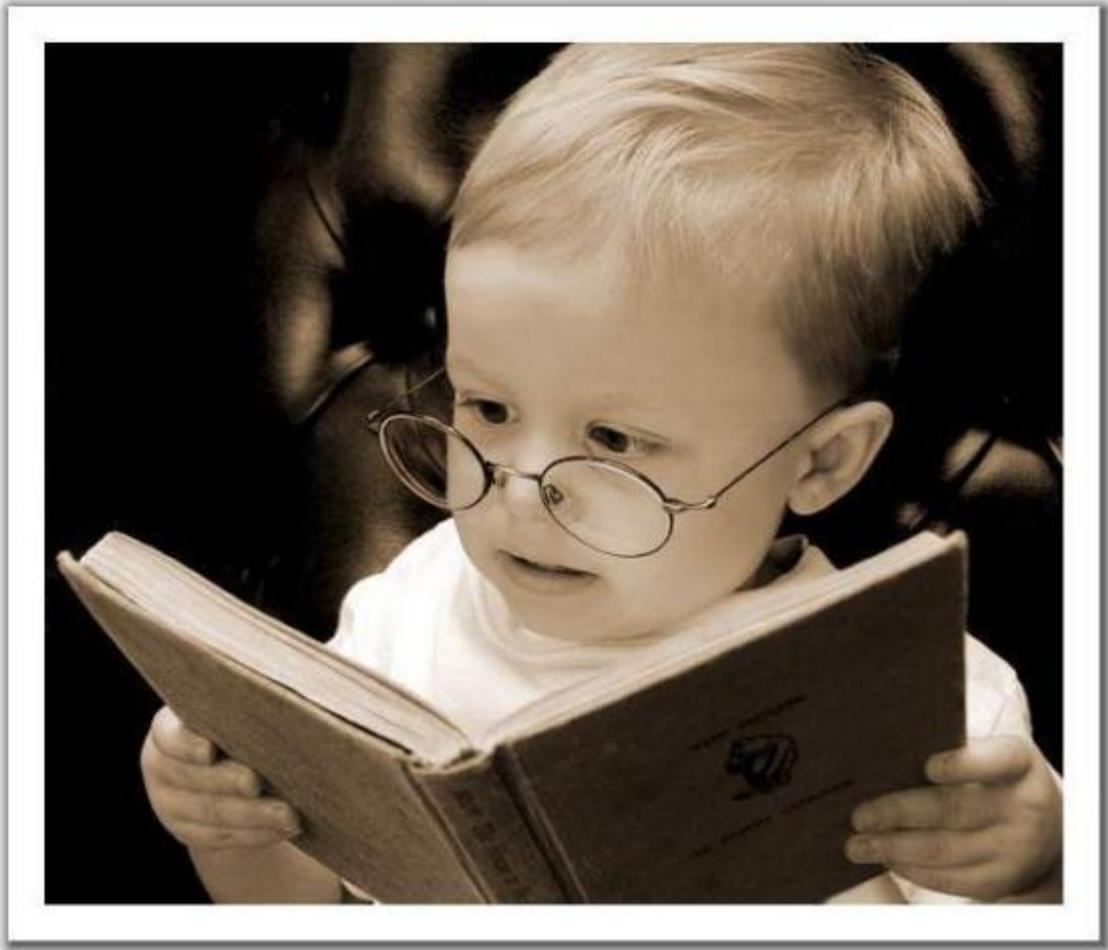
Children who have additional or special needs will be at different development stages and this can directly impact their ability to participate in toilet training. All key members of staff are trained to work with children with a wide range of physical, learning and medical needs and will support parents in every way possible to achieve toilet training if it is possible.

Families of children with disabilities or other special needs or communication needs have many of the same toileting issues as all other children. Those with mild symptoms may need extra time and help or may turn out to be very similar to children in general. At the moderate level, children will need more time, assistance, and creativity in order to reach toileting independence. Even with severe disability, many will become independent. A small number will continue to need assistance with some aspects of toileting.

Below is a table of varying needs:

| TYPES OF SPECIAL NEED   | EFFECTS ON POTTY TRAINING  | MILD | MODERATE | SEVERE |
|---|--|------|----------|--------|
| <i>LEARNING ISSUES:</i> Difficulty in expressing wants/needs or in understanding others. Examples are mild cognitive impairment, learning disabilities, sometimes autism, Down Syndrome, and pervasive developmental delay (PDD)                        | Children may have difficulty understanding why they need to use the toilet; they may have difficulty expressing the need to go; and it may be hard for them to understand how to use the toilet and perform hygiene tasks. The learning process will probably take extra time. |      |          |        |
| <i>SENSORY ISSUES:</i> Difficulty taking in information. This includes hearing and vision problems. Some children get very little sensation from skin, bowel or bladder. Others (including some cases of autism) get strong or overwhelming sensations. | Issues are as varied as the ability to find an unfamiliar toilet, aiming into the toilet (for boys), noticing wetness, feeling the need to go, or being overwhelmed by the sound of a flushing toilet.   |      |          |        |
| <i>MUSCLE ISSUES:</i> May affect strength, mobility, or ability to relax once on the toilet. Examples include cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, and spinal cord injury.   | The effort involved in getting on and off the toilet is probably the biggest issue here. May also have difficulty dressing, wiping, flushing or washing hands.   |      |          |        |

When children have obvious special needs, most adults understand that extra time and patience will be needed for toilet training. However, some children, who have no obvious disabilities, may still have special needs as far as potty training is concerned. At Dromore Nursery School we will endeavour to treat every child as an individual and work to meet their needs. We desire to see every child meet their full potential and will work in partnership with parents to achieve this end.



Toilet Training I HAVE FOUND THE ANSWER!!