



# **CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEPARTMENT**

## **SAFETY IN THE SUN**

### **GUIDANCE DOCUMENT**

**HS/ECS/056**

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## **1. Introduction**

### **Why have a sun protection policy?**

Schools have a responsibility to ensure that pupils are protected from overexposure to UV rays from the sun, and the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines for skin cancer prevention (2011) recommend that schools “develop, implement and monitor a specially tailored policy to ensure people are protected as much as possible”.

This is particularly important when engaging in school based activities such as sports days, outdoor PE lessons, outdoor excursions and water sports, where the potential for sunburn is higher. Although fair-skinned people have a higher risk of sun damage, sun protection is relevant to everyone.

Developing a sun protection policy is an important step towards encouraging good health in line with national healthy schools programmes. This guidance has been produced using guidance provided by the Cancer Research UK (SunSmart Campaign) with feedback from educators and health professionals working nationally and in the community.

Schools and Children and Young People’s Centres are encouraged to look at their existing arrangements and produce a policy for sun awareness using the information contained within this document and using the information listed on page 9.

## **2. Why is sun protection important for children and young people?**

The number of cases of malignant melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer is rising at an alarming rate. The good news is that the majority of these cases could be prevented. Most skin cancers are caused by too much ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. If we protect ourselves from overexposure to the sun then we can reduce our risk. This is particularly important for children and young people whose skin is more delicate and easily damaged.

There are simple steps you can take to enjoy the sun safely – cover up with clothing and a hat, spend time in the shade and apply at least SPF 15 sunscreen generously and regularly.

### 3. What is the SunSmart campaign?

SunSmart is the national skin cancer prevention campaign run by Cancer Research UK. The SunSmart schools initiative encourages schools to develop and adopt sun protection policies. They are part of a broader campaign communicating effective skin cancer prevention messages to the general public.

The five key SunSmart skin cancer prevention messages are:

**Stay in the shade 11-3**

**Make sure you never burn**

**Always cover up - wear a t-shirt, hat and wraparound sunglasses**

**Remember children burn more easily**

**Then use factor SPF 15 sunscreen.**

### 4. Why have a SunSmart sun protection policy?

We get around 80% of our sun exposure by the age of 21 and much of this exposure occurs when at school. Schools have a responsibility to ensure that pupils are protected from the harmful effects of the sun as much as possible during the school day. Although fair skinned people are more at risk from sun damage, sun protection is relevant to both fair and dark skinned children.

Developing a SunSmart sun protection policy is an important step towards encouraging good health in line with national healthy schools programme.

### 5. Developing your own sun protection policy

A sun protection policy works best if it is developed in consultation with the whole school community and is specific to your school. There are some elements common to all sun safety policies. These include:

- **PROTECTION:** providing an environment that enables pupils and staff to stay safe in the sun.
- **EDUCATION:** learning about sun safety to increase knowledge and influence behaviour.
- **COLLABORATION:** working with parents, governors and the wider community to reinforce awareness about sun safety and promote a healthy school.

The policy will work best if it is revised and updated every year. By monitoring and evaluating your policy on an ongoing basis you will be in the best position to make effective changes in the future.

**The following are five simple steps to developing your sun protection policy:**

1. Look at what the school is already doing to promote sun safety behaviour. This will help you identify what needs to be done and how much progress you are making. Think about:
  - How long pupils currently spend outdoors in the middle of the day.
  - What sort of shade is available (if any).
  - Whether pupils and staff wear protective t-shirts and hats.
  - Whether sunscreen is encouraged and correctly used in school (for advice on correct sunscreen use see [www.sunsmart.org.uk/advice-and-prevention/sunscreens](http://www.sunsmart.org.uk/advice-and-prevention/sunscreens)).
  - Whether sun safety is included in the school curriculum.
- 2) Setup a meeting to discuss the development of a school sun protection policy. Invite representatives from key groups such as governors, school nurses, health and safety coordinators, teachers and parents and your local health promotion service. You could create a council responsible for taking charge of all sun safety matters within the school and for the delivery and promotion of the policy.
- 3) Prepare a draft of your policy in consultation with users. Try to:
  - Check the policy is realistic given the budget and time available.
  - Be clear about who is responsible for implementing each task.
  - Agree timescales for implementing the different points on your plan.
- 4) Get feedback on your draft policy and present the final draft to key decision makers for their approval.
- 5) Implement the policy and publicise it so everyone is aware of what you are trying to achieve and why. Give regular updates on the progress you make.

## Monitoring and evaluating the policy

Evaluation is useful because it can help you to monitor how effective your sun protection policy has been and identify areas for improvement. For example, schools could:

- Ask pupils to fill in a sun safety questionnaire before you introduce the policy and then again a few months after the policy has been introduced, to measure changes in. Knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.
- Keep records of the implementation process: dates, costs and people's reactions
- Photograph changes in the school environment.
- Continue to gather feedback from all the people involved.
- Monitor incidences of sunburn to see if these are decreasing.

You will find that your school policy will change over time. It is important to keep updating your policy every year. Monitoring and evaluating your policy will help you to make effective changes.

## 6) Sun Protection Policy Checklist for Primary Schools

The checklist on the next page has been designed to help you start thinking about sun protection issues. These are suggestions – not all of them will be suitable for every school. So don't worry about implementing them all at once

### EDUCATION

It is important to raise awareness of why we need sun protection if you want to encourage children and young people to change the way they behave in the sun.

Sun Protection Strategy	In Place	Planned Soon	Not Planned	Comments
Sun protection and dangers of sunbed use are incorporated into curriculum for all ages				
All teachers and staff are made aware of this policy and the importance of sun protection				
Sun protection is actively promoted to pupils in other ways at significant points of the school year including before and during summer and prior to summer holidays(eg. assemblies, workshops, talks)				
Parents are informed of the importance of sun protection through information sent home in a letter informing them of our sun protection policy (see parent letter				

template in these guidelines)				
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## PROTECTION

Consider sun protection when planning all outdoor activities from April to September (the sun is at its strongest at this time of year).

Sun Protection Strategy	In Place	Planned Soon	Not Planned	Comments
<b>SHADE</b>				
Fundraising for trees and shade structures				
Seats and equipment are moved to shady areas				
Organised activities make use of the shade available				
<b>TIMETABLING</b>				
Outdoor activities and events are planned outside of 11-3 where possible and appropriate(if this is sometimes unavoidable, ensure hats, clothing and sunscreen are worn to minimise risk of sunburn).				
In the summer term morning break is extended and lunch breaks shortened to avoid the midday sun				
<b>CLOTHING</b>				
Pupils are encouraged to wear wide-brimmed (or legionnaire style) hats when outside				
Pupils are encouraged to wear tops that cover their shoulders (vests and strappy tops are discouraged)				
School uniform tops and hats offer suitable sun protection				
Pupils are allowed to wear UV protective sunglasses				
Teachers and TA's, middays also wear suitable hats and clothing to reinforce role modelling.				

**SUNSCREEN**

Sunscreen should be used for covering exposed areas of skin when shade may be unavailable and protective clothing is not practical eg. during outdoor swimming, PE lessons and school excursions. Choose a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 which is labelled broad spectrum to protect from UVA and UVB rays and ensure that sunscreen is applied regularly and generously.

Letters are sent home asking for parental permission for teachers to supervise application of sunscreen				
At least SPF 15 sunscreen is used in school and is applied generously and regularly. For the average person, this means two teaspoonful for the head, arms and neck or two tablespoonsful if in swimming costume.				
Sunscreen is reapplied regularly, by pupils as it can be easily washed, rubbed or sweated off.				
Each pupil has their own labelled bottle of sunscreen				
here is a school stock of sunscreen for pupils who forget /cannot afford their own				
The school/centre provides sunscreen free of charge for all children and young people				

This guidance document is based on the information and advice from Cancer Research UK and SunSmart.

## 7. **SAMPLE** Primary School Sun Protection Policy

### **Littlewood Primary School Sun Protection Policy**

At Littlewood School we acknowledge the importance of sun protection and want staff and pupils to enjoy the sun safely. We will work with staff, pupils and parents to achieve this through:

EDUCATION - these measures are in place from now on:

- All pupils will have at least one SunSmart lesson per year.
- We will talk about how to be SunSmart in assemblies at the start of the summer term and before summer break.
- Parents and guardians will be sent a letter explaining what the school is doing about sun protection and how they can help at the beginning of the summer term.
- Teachers will attend a special SunSmart training workshop at the end of the Easter term and information on sun safety will be provided in the staff room.

PROTECTION – this is an ongoing process.

Shade:

- When the sun is strong we will encourage pupils to sit/play in the shade where it is available.
- We are planting willow trees in the playground by the climbing frame (Spring 09).
- Mr Geeves has kindly offered to make us a canopy to provide shade in the parent's outdoor waiting area (by Spring 2012).
- We are fundraising to buy a free-standing permanent shade canopy and will hopefully have enough budget for this by Spring 2012 ready for the summer term.

Timetabling:

- In the summer months we will aim to schedule outside activities, school trips and PE lessons before 11am and after 3pm if appropriate. If this is unavoidable we will ensure hats, clothing and sunscreen are all worn to prevent sunburn.
- We will include sun safety in our school risk assessments for activities on and off site.

#### Clothing:

- When outside in sunny weather, children are required to wear hats that cover the ears, face and neck.
- We have changed our sports uniform from vests to t-shirts. This will be introduced over the next 2 years.
- All teachers have agreed to wear hats when on playground duty and teaching outdoors on sunny days.
- We will have spare hats available for pupils who do not bring a hat into school on sunny days.

#### Sunscreen:

- Sunscreen use will be encouraged on days when the sun is strong during summer at lunch breaks, during PE lessons and on school trips. Extra sunscreen will be made available in case children forget their own.
- We will send letters home asking for permission for pupils to apply sunscreen on days when the sun is strong during the summer months.
- We cannot currently supply sunscreen to all pupils on a daily basis because of cost. The sun safety council will review this annually.

This policy was developed with the help of staff, pupils and parents in February 2011. We will monitor our progress and review the policy annually.

8. **SAMPLE** Primary school letter to parents

Littlewood Primary School  
12 Grange Road  
Wessex WW3

26 April 2010

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Now the summer term has started, I wanted to write and tell you about our new sun protection policy. We have developed this with the help of parents, teachers and pupils to ensure that we can all enjoy the sun safely over the coming months.

The sun's rays are particularly strong over the summer and they can damage children's skin. This may not seem like a problem right now, but it can lead to skin cancer in later life. Your child's health and well-being are very important to us, which is why we have decided to:

- Increase the amount of school time spent learning about sun protection.
- Provide more shade in the playground.
- Encourage pupils to wear hats and t-shirts when outside.
- Encourage pupils to use at least SPF 15 sunscreen in summer months.

More details of these and other new sun protection plans can be found in our sun protection policy which I am attaching to this letter. I have also included a SunSmart information card which will explain how to keep your child safe from the sun at home.

Your support is very important if our new policies are going to work. You can help by:

- Talking to your child about the importance of sun protection at home.
- Sending your child to school with a wide-brimmed hat.
- Returning the sunscreen permission slip at the bottom of school trip letters home.
- Volunteering to help raise money for a new playground shade canopy.

Together I hope we can have a very happy and safe term to come!

All the best,

Robin Smith Head Teacher

**9. Additional Information can be obtained from:**

Cancer Research UK's SunSmart website

<http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/prevention-and-awareness/sunsmart/skin-cancer-resources>

The Sun Safe Schools Accreditation Scheme has been developed by national skin cancer charity; Skcin. The key objective of the charity is to prevent skin cancer through education, promote early detection and reduce the incidence rates in the UK. See <http://www.sunsafeschools.co.uk/>

**NHS Leaflets**

A Guide to Looking after Yourself and Others During Hot Weather available from:

<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/summerhealth/documents/looking%20after%20yourself%20and%20others%20during%20hot%20weather2010.pdf>

Health & Safety Executive Leaflets

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg337.pdf> Guide to Sun Protection

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg147.pdf> Keeping Your Top On

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/outdoor.htm>

**Meteorological Office**

[www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)