

Cancer Research UK's

Sun Protection Policy Guidelines for Primary Schools

Introduction

This document is intended as a guide for anyone involved in developing a sun protection policy for primary schools.

It includes:

- an explanation of why sun protection is important and how a policy can help
- ideas on how to devise your own sun protection policy
- guidance on monitoring and evaluating your policy
- suggestions for points you may want to cover in your policy
- an example school policy
- an example letter home to parents

More information about skin cancer and sun protection in schools, including this document, can be found on the Cancer Research UK SunSmart website at: www.sunsmart.org.uk

You can let Cancer Research UK know about your policy or make any enquiries about your policy by contacting sunsmart@cancer.org.uk.

These school guidelines have been developed by Cancer Research UK's SunSmart team with feedback from educators and health professionals working nationally and in the community.

A sun protection policy is intended to outline ways in which the school community can work towards minimising harmful effects from over-exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays. It only needs to be one page in length and should be designed to inform teachers, parents and students of this important issue.

Why is sun protection important for children and young people?

Skin cancer is one of the most common cancers in the UK and the number of cases 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 ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. If we protect ourselves from 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.

Studies have found that sunburn during childhood can increase the risk of skin cancer later in life. You may not see the damage immediately because skin cancer can take years to develop, but children who are over-exposed to the sun now are storing up problems for the future.

What about vitamin D?

We all need some sun to make enough vitamin D. Enjoying the sun safely, while taking care not to burn, can provide all the benefits of vitamin D without raising the risk of skin cancer. For more information on vitamin D, visit the SunSmart website: www.sunsmart.org.uk.

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 SunSmart skin cancer prevention messages can be promoted by using the SMART code:

S tay in the shade 11-3
M ake sure you never burn
A lways cover up with a t-shirt, hat and sunglasses
R emember to take extra care with children
T hen use at least factor 15+ sunscreen.

Why have a SunSmart sun protection policy?

Children have delicate skin that can be easily damaged by the sun's UV rays, particularly in the middle of the day. Schools have a responsibility to ensure that pupils are protected from the harmful effects of too much sun as much as possible during the school day. This is particularly important when engaging in school based activities such as ski trips, outdoor excursions, water sports, sports days, and outdoor PE lessons where the potential for sunburn is higher. Although fair skinned people are more at risk from sun damage, sun protection is relevant to everyone.

Developing a SunSmart sun protection policy is an important step towards encouraging good health in line with national healthy schools programmes. Schools are also legally required to have a health and safety policy in place. You can find out more about this at: www.teachernet.gov.uk/responsibilities

What is a SunSmart sun protection policy?

A sun protection policy works best when 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.

What support is available for developing a policy?

If you have any questions about creating a sun protection policy, please email us at sunsmart@cancer.org.uk. Your local health promotion service (e.g. Primary Care Trust in England) may also be a useful source of information and be able to help whilst developing your policy. Helpful information can also be found via the following websites:

SunSmart website – www.sunsmart.org.uk

Skin Cancer Hub website <http://www.swpho.nhs.uk/skincancerhub/>

Healthy Schools <http://home.healthyschools.gov.uk/>

Local Authority <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/?action=authority>

Please let Cancer Research UK know about your policy by contacting sunsmart@cancer.org.uk. This will help us to monitor the success of our campaign.

How to go about developing your own sun protection policy

The school community is much more likely to be enthusiastic and supportive about a policy if they are involved in developing it. These pointers may help you get started:

- 1 Set up a meeting to discuss the development of a school sun protection policy. Invite representatives from key groups including governors, teachers, school nurses, health and safety coordinators, pupils, parents and your local health promotion service.
- 2 At the meeting decide on a person or group who will be responsible for devising and championing the policy.
- 3 Look at what the school is already doing to promote SunSmart 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 <http://www.sunsmart.org.uk/index.htm>)
 - whether sun safety is included in the school curriculum.
- 4 Prepare a draft of your policy in consultation with users. Try to:
 - make sure every point is relevant to your school
 - check the policy is realistic given the money and time available
 - be clear about who is responsible for implementing each task
 - agree timescales for implementing the different points on your plan.
- 5 Get feedback on your draft policy and present the final draft to key decision makers for their approval.
- 6 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 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. Create a SunSmart council with representatives from staff, student and parent groups to lead this and take responsibility for all SunSmart matters within the school. Appropriate staff representatives could include the school nurse, PE teacher, P&C President or even the Head.

SunSmart 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!

SunSmart Sun Protection Policy Checklist for Primary Schools

EDUCATION

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

Sun Protection Strategy	In place	Planned soon	Not planned	Comments
Sun protection and the dangers of sunbed use is incorporated into the curriculum for all ages				
All teachers and staff are made aware of this policy and the importance of sun protection within the school environment				
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 (e.g. Assemblies, workshops, talks)				
Parents are informed of the importance of sun protection through information sent home in newsletters and a letter informing them of the sun protection policy (see the parent letter template in these guidelines)				

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
SHADE				
A shade audit has been conducted on the school grounds to determine the suitability of current and proposed shade				
Trees have been planted to provide long-term shade				
Shade structures provide long/short-term shade				
Seats and equipment are moved to shady areas				
Organised activities make use of the shade available				
TIMETABLING				
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 sunburn)				
In the summer term morning break is extended and lunch breaks shortened to minimise time in the midday sun				
CLOTHING				
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 assistants 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 are not practical e.g. during outdoor swimming, PE lessons and school excursions. Choose a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15+ which is also broad spectrum to protect from UVA and UVB rays and ensure that application of sunscreen is adequate and applied regularly. The following are only suggestions – they may or not be appropriate for your primary school.

Letters are sent home asking for parental permission for teachers to supervise application of sunscreen				
At least factor 15+ sunscreen is used in school and is applied adequately and regularly – this means two teaspoonfuls for the head, arms and neck or two teaspoonfuls if in a swimming costume				
Sunscreen is reapplied regularly, particularly at midday either by students or teachers, as it can be easily washed, rubbed or sweated off				
Each pupil has their own labelled bottle of sunscreen				
There is a school stock of sunscreen for pupils who forget/cannot afford their own				
The school provides sunscreen free of charge for all pupils				

SAMPLE Primary school SunSmart Sun Protection Policy

Littlewood Primary School SunSmart 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:

- ❖ We will encourage students 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 09).
- ❖ We are fundraising to buy a free-standing permanent shade canopy and will hopefully have enough money for this by Spring 09 ready for the summer term.

Timetabling:

- ❖ 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.

Clothing:

- ❖ 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.

Sunscreen:

- ❖ Sunscreen use will be encouraged during summer at lunch breaks, during PE lessons and on school trips. Staff will be provided with extra sunscreen in case children forget their own.
- ❖ We will send letters home asking for permission for children to apply sunscreen during the summer months.
- ❖ We cannot currently supply sunscreen to all pupils on a daily basis because of cost. The SunSmart council will review this annually.

This policy was developed with the help of staff, pupils and parents in February 2009.

We will monitor our progress and review the policy annually.

SAMPLE Primary school letter to parents

Littlewood Primary School
12 Grange Road
Wessex WW3

April 26th 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 sadly 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 factor15+ sunscreen in summer months.

More details of these and other new sun protection plans can be found in our SunSmart 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

Robin Smith
Head Teacher