

## Cancer Research UK's

# SunSmart Guidelines for Primary Schools

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### 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 can be found on the Cancer Research UK SunSmart website at: [www.sunsmart.org.uk](http://www.sunsmart.org.uk)

This document can also be downloaded from the SunSmart website at:

[www.sunsmart.org.uk/schools/schoolpolicyguidelines/](http://www.sunsmart.org.uk/schools/schoolpolicyguidelines/)

Please let Cancer Research UK know about your policy by contacting [sunsmart@cancer.org.uk](mailto: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.

## 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 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.

Sunburn in childhood can double your risk of skin cancer. You will not see the damage immediately because skin cancer can take years to develop. But children who are exposed to the sun now are storing up problems for the future.

## 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:

- Spend time in the shade between 11 and 3
- Make sure you never burn
- Aim to cover up with a t-shirt, hat and sunglasses
- Remember children burn more easily
- Then use 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 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 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](http://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?

Your local health promotion service may be a useful source of information and help whilst developing your policy.

Please let Cancer Research UK know about your policy by contacting [sunsmart@cancer.org.uk](mailto:sunsmart@cancer.org.uk). This will help us to monitor the success of our campaign. We would also like to update you on new campaign developments.

## 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
  - 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 awareness policy has been and identify areas for improvement. For example schools could:

- 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 affected
- monitor incidents 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. Monitoring and evaluating your policy will help you to make effective changes.

## 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.

*In place  
Planned soon  
Not planned*

Sun Protection Strategy					Comments
Sun protection is incorporated into curriculum for all ages					
Teachers are trained in the importance of sun protection					
Sun protection is actively promoted to pupils in other ways (eg. assemblies, workshops, talks)					
Parents are informed of the importance of sun protection					

## PROTECTION

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

*In place  
Planned soon  
Not planned*

Sun Protection Strategy					Comments
<b>SHADE</b>					
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					
<b>TIMETABLING</b>					
Outdoor activities and events are planned outside of 11-3 where possible					
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 assistants also wear suitable hats and clothing					
<b>SUNSCREEN</b>					
Sunscreen is the last line of defence. But it is useful for covering exposed areas of skin when shade and protective clothing are not practical eg. during outdoor swimming, PE lessons and school excursions. The following are only suggestions – they may or may not be appropriate for your primary school.					
Letters are sent home asking for parental permission for teachers to supervise application of sunscreen					
Only factor 15+ sunscreen is used in school					
Sunscreen is reapplied regularly, particularly at midday					
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					



## Littlewood Primary School SunSmart Sun Protection Policy

At Littlewood school we 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.
- 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.

PROTECTION – this is more of an ongoing process so please bear with us!

Shade:

- We are planting willow trees in the playground by the climbing frame (spring 07).
- Mr Geeves has kindly offered to make us a canopy to provide shade in the parents outdoor waiting area (by May 07).
- We are fundraising to buy a free-standing permanent shade canopy and will hopefully have enough money for this by Spring 08 ready for the summer term.

Timetabling:

- Our sports days will start at 3 o'clock from now on. This will also allow parents who work to join us for games later on.

Clothing:

- We have ordered new school sun hats which will be available from Easter 07.
- 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 during sports lessons.

Sunscreen:

- We cannot currently supply sunscreen to all pupils on a daily basis because of cost. The SunSmart council will review this annually.
- Sunscreen use will be encouraged on school trips and 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.

This policy was developed with the help of staff, pupils and parents in February 2005.

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 2007

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. Children with fair skin, lots of moles or freckles, or a family history of skin cancer are most at risk. 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 sunscreen on school trips.

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
- buying your child a new school sun hat
- 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