

SUN AWARENESS

Health, Safety & Wellbeing Guidance – Schools

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Sun Awareness

There is a well-established link between exposure to the sun and skin cancer. This is an issue that could affect both staff and young people although young people (particularly younger children) are more vulnerable as they may become overexposed without being fully aware of the risks.

- There is increasing evidence that excessive sun exposure and particularly sunburn when aged under 15 is a major risk factor for skin cancer in later life. Protection of the skin of children and adolescents is therefore particularly important.
- Individuals who develop skin cancer do not always have a history of deliberate sunbathing.

With this in mind schools and settings will need to adopt appropriate measures to control exposure to the sun for both staff and young people. Control measures which schools and settings should consider include:-

- Advising parents of the need for young people to wear appropriate clothing that gives protection from the sun during the summer months. This would include an appropriate hat (that offers protection to the neck as well as face), long-sleeved loose-fitting tops and long trousers. Staff should also be made aware of the need for appropriate clothing if outside during these times.
- Encouraging parents to apply waterproof sunscreen which gives complete protection (of the highest factor available) to all exposed areas of the skin prior to sending young people to school or settings, and, providing a supply for use during the day as necessary by the young person. (For younger children or those who may struggle to apply sunscreen this should ideally be of the spray-type which staff can apply and pupils can rub-in, thereby reducing the need for physical contact). This should be labelled with the young person's name and not shared with others.
- Encouraging staff to use appropriate sunscreen where necessary.
- Consider keeping a supply of high factor (ideally a minimum factor of 30) spray-on type sunscreen available so that this can be applied to pupils (as above) who have not been sent with appropriate protection where necessary. Parental consent should be sought for this in case pupils are allergic to sunscreen.
- Trying to create shaded areas in the external parts of the school that can be used by pupils and staff during break times.

- Trying to plan external activities (e.g. short duration trips, external lessons and sports days / sporting activities) for times when the sun is likely to be at its lowest strength (and the temperature at its lowest) e.g. at the start of the day rather than late morning or in the afternoon.
- Giving consideration to postponing or cancelling events such as those above in periods of excessive sun and high temperatures.
- For off-site trips which are residential or last all day young people should be encouraged to bring and apply their own sunscreen and be reminded to do this at appropriate intervals. Provision should be made for sunscreen to be applied to the young person's back where necessary because it is impossible for the pupil(s) to apply the cream on their own back. Ideally shirts should be worn negating the need for this but in certain circumstances (e.g. outdoor swimming pools) this may not be practical. (NB the back is the main area susceptible to sunburn and melanoma)
- Parents should be encouraged to inform the school / setting regarding this particular issue if:
 - a) The child is fair skinned and prone to burning (redhead / blond!) and
 - b) There is a family history of skin cancer especially melanomas.
- Consider allowing young people to remain indoors if no shade is available e.g. during breaks / lunchtime (assuming adequate supervision is available).
- During summer months ensuring staff rotas are such that the same members of staff are not on duty outside in exposed areas during the higher risk parts of the day.

Another issue relating to summer conditions relates to excessive heat and the problems this can cause if pupils become dehydrated. Pupils and staff should have regular access to drinks, especially drinking water. There is evidence that pupils who have regular access to drinks throughout the day can have increased levels of concentration.

Clearly not all the control measures listed above will be applicable to every school / setting. Individual establishments will therefore need to adopt / adapt the relevant control measures from those above and combine them with any control measures specific to their circumstances to produce an appropriate risk control strategy which forms part of their overall health and safety arrangements.

Additionally, the National Heatwave plan for England contains the following guidance.

[Looking after children and those in early years settings before and during hot weather: teachers and other educational professionals - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/looking-after-children-and-those-in-early-years-settings-before-and-during-hot-weather)

For further information on sun safety please follow the link below.

[Sunscreen and sun safety - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sun-safety/)