



## **Sun Safety**

### **NEU guidance for members, reps and local officers**

#### **The risks of skin cancer**

Skin cancer is now the most common form of cancer in this country, with more than 40,000 new cases registered every year, and it is almost always caused by the sun. Young children with fair skin are the most vulnerable to sun exposure, particularly when they spend the hottest part of the day in the playground. This briefing addresses what schools can do to help.

#### **Develop a sun safety policy**

This should clearly set out the school's position on the use of protective clothing and on sunscreen as well as information about measures that are being undertaken to protect pupils and staff from exposure to sun. This policy should be sent to all parents so that it is widely known and the importance of sun protection is reinforced to parents.

#### **Encourage the use of protective clothing**

Parents should be encouraged to provide children with suitable long-sleeved clothing and wide-brimmed hats. Schools' clothing policies should be amended where necessary to allow this, including changing PE uniforms from vests to T-shirts to ensure that shoulders are covered.

#### **Encourage the use of sunscreens**

The use of sunscreens is an effective way of preventing sunburn. The NHS recommends the use of a sunscreen with a sun protection factor of 15 or above and at least 4-star UVA (ultraviolet A) protection.

The sun safety policy should promote the self-administration of sunscreen by pupils. Most children, apart from the very youngest and those with special needs, will be able to do so under supervision. Parents should be asked to provide suitable sunscreen for their children, which should be labelled with the pupil's name. Schools may wish to consider keeping additional sunscreen on site for pupils who forget theirs.

The policy should recognise that teachers cannot be required to apply sunscreen to pupils. The NEU advises teachers not to apply sunscreen to pupils due to the potential for allegations of abuse and, in particular, the time it would take to apply sunscreen to a class of pupils prior to break time or lunch time.

The policy should, however, address the potential for allegations of abuse being made against teachers and other staff who have agreed to apply sunscreen. If schools decide to allow staff to apply sunscreen to pupils, parental consent should be obtained. Teachers and other staff who do wish to do so should only apply the sunscreen to the face, neck and arms of pupils.

#### **Development of shady areas**

In the medium- to long-term, schools may wish to consider ways of providing more shade in the playground, either by planting trees or providing shelters. In the shorter term, outdoor seats and equipment can be moved to shady areas.



### **Timetabling**

Consideration may be given to extending the morning break and shortening the lunch break during the summer term to minimise the time spent outside when the sun is hottest.

### **Sports days**

If possible, sports days should be held in early morning or late afternoon to avoid the midday sun. Shady areas should be chosen for activities where available, and consideration can be given to temporary shade structures such as canopies. Parents and pupils should be encouraged to wear suitable hats, T-shirts and sunglasses, and to regularly apply sunscreen and drink lots of water.

### **Include sun safety in lessons**

Sun protection and the dangers of sunbed use can be incorporated into the curriculum, and promoted to pupils during the school year, for instance, in assemblies prior to the end of the summer term.

### **Protecting school staff**

Teachers should not neglect to protect their own skin from the effects of the sun. PE teachers and those supervising outdoor excursions should take particular care.