

## Cancer Research UK's

# SunSmart Guidelines for Nurseries and Pre-schools

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### Introduction

This document is intended as a guide for anyone involved in developing a sun protection policy for nurseries and pre-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 nursery school policy
- an example letter home to parents.

More information about skin cancer and sun protection in nursery and pre-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 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 nurseries and pre-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:

- S**pend time in the shade between 11 and 3
- M**ake sure you never burn
- A**im to cover up with a t-shirt, hat and sunglasses
- R**emember children burn more easily
- T**hen use factor 15+ sunscreen.

## Why have a SunSmart sun protection policy?

Very young children have sensitive skin that can be easily damaged by the sun's dangerous UV rays. Children in your care may also spend a lot of their time outdoors during the summer months. At this young age they are unable to take responsibility for their own sun protection. So carers have a responsibility to ensure that children are protected from the harmful effects of the sun. 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 now and in the future.

## What is a SunSmart sun protection policy?

A sun protection policy works best when it is developed in consultation with all members of the nursery or pre-school community, and is specific to your nursery or pre-school. There are some elements common to all sun safety policies. These include:

- **PROTECTION:** providing an environment that enables children and staff to stay safe in the sun
- **EDUCATION:** learning about sun safety to increase knowledge and influence behaviour
- **COLLABORATION:** working with parents, the management structure and the wider community to reinforce awareness about sun safety in your organisation.

## 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

Parents and carers are 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 nursery or pre-school sun protection policy. Invite representatives from key groups including your management team, carers/teachers, parents, your health and safety coordinator (if you have one), 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 organisation 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 children currently spend outdoors in the middle of the day
  - what sort of shade is available (if any)
  - whether children and staff wear protective t-shirts and hats
  - whether sunscreen is encouraged and correctly used during the day
  - whether sun safety is included in learning topics.
- 4 Prepare a draft of your policy in consultation with users. Try to:
  - make sure every point is relevant to your nursery or pre-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 you could:

- keep records of the implementation process: dates, costs and people's reactions
- photograph changes in the nursery/pre-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 policy will change over time. It is important to keep updating your plans. Monitoring and evaluating your policy will help you to make effective changes.

## SunSmart Sun Protection Policy Checklist for Nurseries and Pre-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 organisation. So don't worry about implementing them all at once!

# SunSmart Sun Protection Policy Checklist for Nurseries and Pre-schools

## EDUCATION

It is important to raise awareness of why we need sun protection if you want to encourage children to adopt SunSmart behaviour.

Sun Protection Strategy				Comments
	In place	Planned soon	Not planned	
Sun protection is discussed interactively with all children				
Children engage in activities (picture painting, songs etc.) designed to promote sunsmart behaviour				
Carers understand the importance of sun protection				
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). Babies should be kept in the shade, especially around midday.

Sun Protection Strategy				Comments
	In place	Planned soon	Not planned	
<b>SHADE</b>				
Trees have been planted to provide long-term shade				
Shade structures/gazebos 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 play is planned outside of 11–3 where possible				
<b>CLOTHING</b>				
Children are encouraged to wear wide-brimmed (or legionnaire style) hats when outside				
Spare hats are available for children who forget their own				
Children are encouraged to wear tops that cover their shoulders (vests and strappy tops are discouraged)				
Children are allowed to wear UV protective sunglasses				
Carers also wear suitable hats and clothing				
<b>SUNSCREEN</b>				
Sunscreen is the last line of defence, but it is useful for protecting areas of skin that cannot be covered up. The following are only suggestions – they may or may not be appropriate for your nursery/pre-school.				
Letters are sent home asking for parental permission for staff to apply sunscreen to children				
Only factor 15+ sunscreen is allowed				
Parents of children in half day childcare take responsibility for applying sunscreen to their children themselves				
If children spend the full day with you, sunscreen is reapplied regularly, particularly at midday				
Children are supervised applying their own sunscreen with the help of mirrors				
Each child brings in their own labelled bottle of sunscreen from home				
There is a nursery/pre-school stock of sunscreen for pupils who forget/cannot afford their own				
The nursery/pre-school provides sunscreen free of charge				



## Triangle Nursery School SunSmart Sun Protection Policy

At Triangle we want staff and children to enjoy the sun safely. We will work with staff and parents to achieve this through:

**EDUCATION** – these measures are in place from now on:

- All children will have a SunSmart storytime at the start of the summer term.
- All children will paint SunSmart pictures to re-enforce the sun protection messages.
- We are adding a SunSmart song to those we normally sing around this time of year.
- Parents and guardians will be sent a letter explaining what we are doing about sun protection and how they can help at the beginning of the summer term.
- We are running special sun protection training workshops for all staff in April.

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

**Shade:**

- We are planting willow trees in the outdoor play area by the sand pit (spring 07).
- Mr Geeves has kindly offered to make us a canopy to provide shade in the parents outdoor waiting area (by July 08).
- We have bought a pop-up gazebo to provide instant shade (Easter 07).

**Timetabling:**

- Children will spend more time playing outside before 11am and after 3pm, and less time outside over lunchtime.

**Clothing:**

- We will actively encourage all children to wear a hat when playing outside from May 2007.
- We have bought some nursery hats to give to children who forget their own.
- All staff have also agreed to wear hats when outside to set a good example.

**Sunscreen:**

- We will send letters home asking for permission for staff to supervise children applying sunscreen before lunchtime during the summer months.
- Children will need to bring in their own clearly labelled bottle of factor 15+ sunscreen.
- We are sorry, but we won't have a nursery stock of sunscreen this year – watch this space though as the plan might change!

This policy was developed with the help of staff, parents and local health advisors in February 2007.

We will monitor our progress and review the policy annually.

## SAMPLE Nursery school letter to parents



Triangle Nursery School  
12 Blossom 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 the parents involvement group 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. So we have decided to spend more time discussing sun protection at nursery and increase the shade in our playground.

We are also going to be actively encouraging all children to **wear a hat** when they play outside. Please send your child to nursery wearing a comfortable wide brimmed hat or legionnaire style cap. We have bought some nursery hats to give to children who forget their own.

If your child has fair skin it may be a good idea to provide additional protection by using high factor **sunscreen**. Staff at triangle will be supervising children applying sunscreen and helping those that are not able to apply sunscreen by themselves. If you would like your child to be included please return the sunscreen permission form with a bottle of factor 15+ sunscreen clearly labelled with your child's name.

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
- remembering to send your child to nursery with a wide brimmed hat.

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

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ashley Smith". The script is cursive and fluid.

Ashley Smith  
Triangle Manager

