



# Sunsmart Policy

(Ratified by School Council: July 2016)

## **PURPOSE:**

As a registered member school of the Cancer Council Victoria's SunSmart Schools Program this policy is written to:

- Create healthy environments and encourage appropriate behaviours to allow some UV exposure for vitamin D and minimise overexposure to reduce skin and eye damage and skin cancer risk.
- Encourage behaviour change through education and role-modelling.
- Protect staff and students from harm caused by overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation.
- Ensure all students and staff are well protected from too much UV exposure by using a combination of sun protection measures whenever UV levels reach 3 and above.

## **BACKGROUND:**

A balance of ultraviolet radiation (UV) exposure is important for health. Too much of the sun's UV can cause sunburn, skin and eye damage and skin cancer. Exposure to the sun's UV during childhood and adolescence is associated with an increased risk of skin cancer in later life. Too little UV from the sun can lead to low vitamin D levels. Vitamin D is essential for healthy bones and muscles, and for general health.

UV radiation:

- cannot be seen or felt
- comes directly from the sun and can also be scattered in the air and reflected by surfaces such as buildings, concrete, snow, and sand
- can pass through light clouds
- is measured by a UV index that:
  - indicates the amount of UV radiation that reaches the earth's surface
  - categorises the level of risk from low (index of 1-2) to extreme (index of 11+)
- varies in intensity across the year
- is normally highest during school hours

## **GUIDELINES:**

Staff and students are encouraged to access the daily local sun protection times at [sunsmart.com.au](http://sunsmart.com.au) or on the free SunSmart app to assist with the implementation of this policy.

A combination of sun protection measures are used for all outdoor activities from **September to the end of April** and whenever UV levels reach 3 and above.

**Too much exposure** to UV radiation can cause:

- skin damage (this is not always immediately evident)
- sunburn
- skin cancer
- short-term eye complaints such as:
  - mild irritation
  - excessive blinking
  - swelling
- more serious eye damage over long periods such as:
  - cataracts
  - cancer of the conjunctiva
  - pterygium (benign growth of the conjunctiva)
  - ocular melanoma.

**Too little exposure** to UV radiation can lead to low vitamin D levels.

**Vitamin D:**

- regulates calcium levels in the blood
- is vital for healthy bones, muscles, teeth and general health.
- healthy levels need to be maintained throughout the year.

**From May to August**

The average UV levels in Victoria are below 3 and:

- vitamin D levels need to be maintained
- sun protection is not normally needed except:
  - near highly reflective surfaces such as snow
  - if outdoors for extended periods
  - when the UV levels reaches 3 and above.

During these months most people need two to three hours of midday winter sun exposure across the week to help with vitamin D levels. People with naturally very dark brown or black skin may need 3-6 times this exposure.

**From September to April**

The average UV levels in Victoria are above 3. Most people require just a few minutes of mid-morning or mid-afternoon sun exposure on most days of the week to help with vitamin D levels. People with naturally very dark brown or black skin may need three to six times this exposure.

During these months staff and students should:

- participate in SunSmart or UV programs, see: [SunSmart or UV programs](#)
- use a combinations of sun protection measures, see: [sun protection measures](#).

Note: The World Health Organisation reports that students with naturally very dark brown or black skin (skin that rarely or never burns) may not be required to wear sunscreen as the melanin in their skin can often tolerate higher levels of UV radiation without burning. This is a decision for families to make. Hats remain necessary to protect the student's eyes from UV damage.

## **IMPLEMENTATION:**

### **Healthy physical environment**

#### ***Seek shade***

- A shade audit is conducted regularly to determine the current availability and quality of shade.
- The school council makes sure there is a sufficient number of shelters and trees providing shade in the school grounds particularly in areas where students congregate e.g. lunch, canteen, outdoor lesson areas and popular play areas.
- The availability of shade is considered when planning all other outdoor activities and excursions.
- In consultation with the school council, shade provision is considered in plans for future buildings and grounds.
- Students are encouraged to use available areas of shade when outside.
- Students who do not have appropriate hats or outdoor clothing are asked to play in the shade or a suitable area protected from the sun.

### **Healthy social environment**

#### ***Slip on sun protective clothing***

- Sun protective clothing is included in our school uniform / dress code and sports uniform. School clothing is cool, loose fitting and made of densely woven fabric. It includes shirts with collars and elbow length sleeves, longer style dresses and shorts.

#### ***Slap on a hat***

- All students and staff are required to wear hats that protect their face, neck and ears, i.e. legionnaire, broad brimmed or bucket hats, whenever they are outside. Baseball or peak caps and visors are not considered a suitable alternative.
- Students and staff are required to wear a hat from the first day of September through to the last day of April, which can be extended at the Principal's discretion.

#### ***Slop on sunscreen***

- It is recommended that students provide their own SPF 30+ or higher broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen. This should be applied before coming to school and during school hours.
- Sunscreen should be applied at least 20 minutes (where possible) before going outdoors and reapplied every two hours if outdoors.

#### ***Slide on sunglasses [if practical]***

- Where practical students and staff are encouraged to wear close fitting, wrap-around sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard 1067 (Sunglasses: Category 2, 3 or 4) and cover as much of the eye area as possible.

### **Learning and skills**

Programs on skin cancer prevention and vitamin D are included in the curriculum for all year levels. SunSmart behaviour is regularly reinforced and promoted to the whole school community through newsletters, school homepage, parent meetings, staff meetings, school assemblies, student and teacher activities and upon student enrolment.

## **RELATED LEGISLATION:**

- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006: Sch.5 Reg. 1 (1.2)*

**POLICY EVALUATION:**

Evaluation will be conducted by the Policy Review (Education) Sub Committee of the School Council.  
This will include completion of the membership renewal with SunSmart at [sunsmart.com.au](http://sunsmart.com.au).

**DUE DATE FOR REVIEW:**

Due for review in July 2018.