

### Aim

The aim of this plan is to raise awareness of the dangers of excessive heat to health and to ensure that the school is prepared and able to deal with a heatwave when it comes so as to protect the most vulnerable.

### Rationale

Children cannot control their body temperature as efficiently as adults during hot weather because they do not sweat as much and so can be at risk of ill-health from heat. Heat-related illness can range from mild heat stress to potentially life-threatening heatstroke. The main risk from heat is dehydration (not having enough water in the body). **If sensible precautions are taken children are unlikely to be adversely affected by hot conditions**, however, staff should look out for signs of heat stress, heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

Children's susceptibility to high temperatures varies; those who are overweight or who are taking medication may be at increased risk of adverse effects. Children under four years of age are also at increased risk.

Some children with disabilities or complex health needs may be more susceptible to temperature extremes. The school nurse, community health practitioner, family health visitor or the child's specialist health professional may be able to advise on the particular needs of the individual child. Schools need to provide for children's individual needs. Support staff should be made aware of the risks and how to manage them.

### Heat stress

Children suffering from heat stress may seem out of character, or show signs of discomfort and irritability (including those listed below for heat exhaustion). These signs will worsen with physical activity and if left untreated can lead to heat exhaustion or heatstroke.

### Heat exhaustion

Symptoms of heat exhaustion vary but include one or more of the following:

- tiredness
- dizziness
- headache
- nausea
- vomiting
- hot, red and dry skin
- confusion

### Heatstroke

When the body is exposed to very high temperatures, the mechanism that controls body temperature may stop working. Heatstroke can develop if heat stress or heat exhaustion is left untreated, but it can also occur suddenly and without warning.

Symptoms of heatstroke may include:

- high body temperature - a temperature of or above 40°C (104°F) is a major sign of heatstroke
- red, hot skin and sweating that then suddenly stops
- fast heartbeat
- fast shallow breathing
- confusion/lack of co-ordination

- fits
- loss of consciousness

**Protecting children outdoors**

During periods of high temperature the following steps should be taken:

- children should not take part in vigorous physical activity on very hot days, such as when temperatures are in excess of 30°C
- encourage children playing outdoors to stay in the shade as much as possible
- children should wear loose, light-coloured clothing to help keep cool and sunhats with wide brims to avoid sunburn
- use sunscreen (at least factor 15 with UVA protection) to protect skin if children are playing or taking lessons outdoors for more than 20 minutes
- provide children with plenty of water (such as water from a cold tap) and encourage them to drink more than usual when conditions are hot
- children's outdoor activities will be limited to around 20 minutes. Lunchtime play will be split into 20 mins outside/20 mins inside/20 mins outside.

**Protecting children indoors**

During periods of high temperature the following steps should be taken:

- open windows as early as possible in the morning before children arrive, or preferably overnight to allow stored heat to escape from the building - it is important to check insurance conditions and the need for security if windows are to be left open overnight
- almost close windows when the outdoor air becomes warmer than the air indoors - this should help keep the heat out while allowing adequate ventilation
- use outdoor shutters if available, or close indoor blinds/curtains, but do not let them block window ventilation
- keep the use of electric lighting to a minimum
- switch off all electrical equipment, including computers, monitors and printers when not in use - equipment should not be left in 'standby mode' as this generates heat
- if possible, use those classrooms or other spaces which are less likely to overheat, and adjust the layout of teaching spaces to avoid direct sunlight on children
- oscillating mechanical fans can be used to increase air movement if temperatures are below 35°C; at temperatures above 35°C fans may not prevent heat-related illness and may worsen dehydration
- encourage children to eat normally and drink plenty of cool water

**Parents**

The school encourages parents to send in sunscreen, which must be applied by the child (under supervision of staff). The school cannot apply sunscreen without parent consent due to the risk of allergy or skin reaction. Sunscreen must be labelled with the child's name.

The school encourages all children to bring caps/sunhats when appropriate. Caps will be provided for the youngest children in Nursery and Reception classes only.

Sandals will be allowed providing they fasten securely around the foot. Flip flops and similar footwear without secure fastenings are not allowed as they are a risk to the health and safety of the child.

Sunglasses are not recommended as there is a risk of breaking whilst children are playing. Also unless they have specific UV filters they can damage eyes.

This policy follows advice from the Public Health England document  
**Looking after children and those in early years settings during heatwaves:  
guidance for teachers and professionals**  
**Updated July 2022**

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