

SUNSMART

POLICY

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to encourage behaviours at Merri Creek Primary School (MCPS) that reflect a healthy UV exposure balance, ensuring some sun exposure for vitamin D while minimising the risk of skin cancer.

This policy provides guidelines to:

- support staff and students to use a combination of sun protection measures when UV index levels are 3 or above (generally September – April) and allow sun exposure when UV levels are below 3 (generally May – August)
- ensure that there are outdoor environments that provide adequate shade for students and staff
- ensure students are encouraged and supported to develop independent sun protection skills to help them to be responsible for their own protection
- support our school's strategies to meet its duty of care and occupational health and safety obligations to minimise harmful UV exposure and associated harm for students and staff.

Scope:

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions. It is applicable to all students and staff.

Policy:

A balance of sun exposure is important for health. Excessive exposure to the sun can cause health problems including sunburn, dehydration, damage to skin and eyes, and an increased risk of skin cancer.

Too little UV exposure from the sun can lead to low Vitamin D levels. Vitamin D is essential for healthy muscles and bones, and overall health.

UV radiation:

- cannot be seen or felt
- can be reflected off surfaces such as buildings, asphalt, concrete, water, sand and snow
- can pass through light clouds
- varies in intensity across the year (highest in Victoria from September - April)
- peaks during school hours

A combination of sun protection measures should be put in place from September to the end of April, and whenever UV levels reach 3 and above.

MCPS **has** the following measures in place to help reduce the risk of excessive UV sun exposure for staff and students.

Shade

MCPS will provide for sufficient options for shelter and trees to provide shade on school grounds, particularly in places such as:

- where students congregate for lunch
- all outside play areas

When building works or grounds maintenance is conducted at MCPS that may impact on the level of shading available to staff and students, a review of the shaded areas available will be conducted and further shading installed as appropriate.

Sun protective uniform/clothing

Merri Creek Primary School recommends that from September to April, and whenever UV levels reach 3 and above, students wear sun-protective clothing such as:

- loose, cool, closely-woven fabric
- shirts with a collar and/or high necklines
- tops with elbow length or long sleeves
- longer style shorts and skirts
- rash vests or t-shirts for outdoor swimming activities.

At recess and lunch times from September to April, and whenever UV levels reach 3 and above, all students **must** wear a hat when playing outside.

Staff and students are encouraged to wear hat styles that protect the face, neck and ears when outdoors, for example broad-brimmed, legionnaire or bucket.

Students who may not be wearing appropriate protective clothing or a hat may be asked to play in the shade or in a suitable area protected from the sun.

Sunscreen

MCPS encourages all staff and students to apply SPF 30+ (or higher) broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen daily at a minimum from September to the end of April, and whenever UV levels reach 3 and above. Sunscreen should be applied at least 20 minutes before going outdoors, and reapplied every two hours if necessary.

At MCPS students are encouraged to apply sunscreen before the school day commences and are subsequently able to access sunscreen in their classrooms or at the front office. Staff and students who may suffer from reactions to certain types of sunscreen are encouraged to bring their own sunscreen to reduce any risk of reaction.

Staff and families should role model SunSmart behaviour and are encouraged to apply SPF 30+ (or higher) broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen when outside from September to the end of April or whenever UV levels reach 3 and above.

Curriculum

Students at our school are encouraged to make healthy choices, and are supported to understand the benefits and risks of sun exposure. MCPS will address sun, UV safety and Vitamin D education as part of Physical and Health Education program.

Staff are encouraged to access resources, tools, and professional learning to enhance their knowledge and capacity to promote sun smart behaviour and Vitamin D education across the school community.

Engaging students, staff and families

Families and staff are provided with information, ideas and practical strategies to support UV safety and Vitamin D education at school and at home. MCPS will provide families and staff with timely reminders of sun protection strategies via whole school assemblies and the school newsletter. Policy is available on the school website.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- School Policy Advisory Guide:
 - Sun and UV Protection Policy
 - [Duty of care](#)
- [SunSmart](#)
- [Achievement Program](#)'s SunSmart policy

Review Cycle:

This policy was last updated on **14th August 2019** and is scheduled for review on August **2023**.

This policy will be reviewed in:

August 2023