

Sun Safety at Polperro School. A Case Study.

Background to the school and circumstances

Polperro School began Healthy Schools Plus in 2010.

Polperro School is a small village school with 89 pupils in 4 classes. It has extensive grounds which include a large sports field, school garden, swimming pool and playground. Children live near the sea and spend a large amount of time outdoors.

What was the need? Why we did what we did.

Each summer pupils use the school's outdoor pool and each summer staff had noticed a high incidence of sunburn amongst the children. Anecdotally it appeared that children were not using suncream nor were they aware of the risk of exposure to sun and sunburn or how to protect themselves.

We chose therefore to look at sun safety in the following priority areas:

- Local - to reduce melanoma rates in Cornwall where the incidence is high.
- School - to reduce incidents of sunburn and sun-related problems such as sunstroke and dehydration.
- CICC (Children in Challenging Circumstances) - to increase knowledge and awareness of sun safety.

Our target was to reduce the number of pupils reporting that they have been sunburned and to increase the number of pupils reporting that they have taken more than one preventative measure against getting sunburned.

What we did

SUNSAFE ASSEMBLY

A Sunsafe assembly for the whole school was held in April 2010 (Caroline NHS). Follow-up discussions were then held in class and sun safe games played to reinforce the message.



Sun safety games being played during follow up work from the sunsafe assembly

Our sunsafe team then created a sun safety policy for the school.

SUN HATS AND SUN CREAM

In May 2010, after consultation with pupils via the School Council, the School bought a supply of sun hats. Pupils and parents/carers were informed that these are available at a small cost. Sun hats have now been part of school uniform from September 2010. Pupils now wear hats and cream at break times and a policy of 'no hat no play' is enforced and for outdoor PE lessons. Pupils are advised to bring hats and suncream on all school trips.



Class 2 beach safari trip June 2010

Teachers also wear hats and suncream to set an example to children.

SPORTS DAY

In July 2010 the school sports day was moved from the afternoon to morning to avoid the midday sun. Many activities for KS1 were held indoors. KS2 activities held early morning, some in the shade. All children wore sun hats and sun cream and took their water bottle to the sports field. The School summer fair was held in the afternoon and Parents/carers attending summer fair were made aware that sports day was being held in the morning because of sun safety.



Pupils in their sun hats on sports day

OUTSIDE SHADE

The school is currently investigating putting a permanent sunsafe cover over the patio to make outside classroom space, and permanent sunsafe area in playground. This autumn the school will be planting natural screening such as trees, in the field to provide shade. The school has arranged for existing hedges to be left to grow taller to afford more shade in the playground.

In the infant playground, parasols have been purchased to provide shade for the children when they play outside.

SWIMMING POOL

Buying an awning for the pool to protect pupils waiting to swim was investigated. The current fence was not strong enough to support this so instead two large parasols have been purchased.



Parasols providing shade by the pool

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

In 2010 a sunsafe reminder was placed in the newsletters from May to July. Sunsafe leaflets were also sent home and will be sent home annually from now on. In 2011 sunsafe reminders will be placed in newsletters from May to October. Newsletters are also sent out encouraging safe enjoyment of good weather during holidays as appropriate with the weather.

Where we started from

SHEU survey and our own school sunburn survey were carried out for baseline data.

SHEU survey data. 64 children surveyed (30 yrs 1-3; 34 yrs 4-6)

School's own sunburn survey (Jan 2010), 83 children surveyed

How many children were exhibiting the desired behaviour?

SHEU survey. While pupils in Y4,5,6 reported wearing sunscreen, fewer than 50% reported wearing a hat, long sleeves, or going in the shade.

School sunburn survey. 33 (39%) pupils reported they had never been sunburned.

What went well

The children took on board the messages about sun safety very enthusiastically. When a new child arrived at school recently and told classmates he didn't need suncream because he never burned. He was immediately told by another pupil "you have to wear it whatever because it protects you from skin cancer and that keeps you sunsafe." The new child has subsequently been seen slathering himself in his own sun cream before break.

An unexpected benefit of the Healthy Schools work came from rescheduling the sports day to the morning. We combined it in year one (2010) with a whole school picnic followed by the summer fair which we held in the afternoon. This created a family day which parents thoroughly enjoyed and which parents wished to see repeated. So, this year we held a sunsafe traditional sports day in the morning followed by a whole school picnic then a shared family sports afternoon where children and their families joined in sporting activities (held in the shade where possible) together. Through this shared day the school was able to reiterate its sun safety message to the whole school and parents/careers. We hope it will be an annual event from now on.

Having to reconsider our outside environment meant that we have looked at it through fresh eyes. The sunsafe parasols have brightened up the pool area and parents and staff are now going to paint the changing rooms to match. This we hope will not only make the environment look more modern and fun, but will draw attention to the parasols and the sun safe message. Seats for a willow structure which pupils of the school designed in 2009 are being made so that pupils can sit in it out of the sun on very sunny days.

Who we worked with

We worked with the whole school as the school is relatively small and the message needed to be consistent across the whole school. Also, incidents of sunburn had been seen in all age groups and all age groups spend a large amount of time outside both at school and at home.

Our Children in Challenging Circumstances (CICCs) were those who had been noticed by staff as having been sunburned on more than one occasion.

Impact

One year after the beginning of our work we surveyed the pupils to find out how they were keeping themselves sunsafe.

19% of pupils said they had been sunburned in the last year, a reduction since last year. Only a low percentage of these children were our CICCs. The number of children reporting sunburn was a little higher than expected possibly because children were surveyed after a particularly scorching weekend where the sun had

taken the children by surprise. Those who had been burned were aware of what steps they should have taken to prevent this occurring again. 78% of children reported wearing a hat, suncream or going in the shade. Disappointingly, only 20% remembered that wearing long sleeved clothes would protect them.*

Where next?

The school has investigated construction of and planning permission for putting up a wooden outside classroom. This will be used by children for outside lessons in the summer and for a shaded area for children at lunchtime. The outside classroom will be erected this summer (2011).

This autumn the school will be planting natural screening such as trees, in the field to provide shade.

We will continue to push the sun safety message beginning in the spring term each year according to our sun safe policy. *To reinforce the message that children should 'wrap' against the sun, next spring the school hopes to carry out an activity such as designing and printing long sleeved t-shirts conveying a sun safe message.

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