

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to encourage behaviours at Western Autistic School to minimise the risk of skin and eye damage and 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 mid-August – end of April)
- 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**

Overexposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation can cause health problems including sunburn, damage to skin and eyes, and an increased risk of skin cancer. UV damage accumulated during childhood and adolescence is strongly associated with an increased risk of skin cancer later in life.

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 mid-August – end of April)
- peaks during school hours.

Sun safety is a shared responsibility and staff, parents and students are encouraged to implement a combination of sun protection measures whenever UV levels reach 3 and above. Information about the daily local sun protection times is available via the free SunSmart app, or at [sunsmart.com.au](http://sunsmart.com.au) or [bom.gov.au](http://bom.gov.au).

Western Autistic School has the following measures in place for all outdoor activities during the daily sun protection times to help reduce the risk of excessive UV sun exposure for staff and students.

### **Shade**

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

- The availability of shade is considered when planning excursions and all outdoor activities.
- Children are encouraged to use available areas of shade when outside for play and outdoor lessons
- School assembly areas

Students who do not have appropriate hats or outdoor clothing are encouraged to play in the shade or a suitable area protected from the sun, especially during peak sun protection times.

When building works or grounds maintenance is conducted at Western Autistic School 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**

As the wearing of the school's uniform is optional at Western Autistic School, the School recommends that from mid-August to end of April, and whenever UV levels reach 3 and above, students come to school wearing 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.

Western Autistic School's optional school uniform and dress code includes sun-protective clothing, including:

- 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

All students and staff at Western Autistic School **must** wear hat styles that protect the face, neck, and ears when outdoors, for example broad-brimmed, legionnaire or bucket, from mid-August to end of April, and whenever UV levels reach 3 and above,

### **Sunscreen**

Western Autistic School encourages all staff and students to apply SPF30 (or higher) broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen daily whenever UV levels reach 3 and above. Sunscreen should be applied at least 20 minutes before going outdoors and reapplied every two hours according to [manufacturer's instructions](#).

During the enrolment process to Western Autistic School, written consent is sought from parents/carers to permit staff to apply the school's sunscreen to students as required. Staff and students who may suffer from sensitivities and allergies to certain types of sunscreens are encouraged to provide a safe sunscreen, with written parental consent provided permitting staff to apply to students as required.

Staff and families should role model SunSmart behaviour and are encouraged to apply SPF 30 (or higher) broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen when outside.

### **Sunglasses**

Where practical Western Autistic School encourages students and staff engaged in outdoor activities 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.

### **Curriculum**

Students at our school are encouraged to make healthy choices and are supported to understand the effects of sun exposure. They are encouraged to be involved in initiatives to promote and model sun protection measures to the whole school. Western Autistic School will address sun protection and UV safety education as part of morning schedule time.

### **Staff role-modelling and OHS**

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

UV radiation exposure is considered as part of our school's risk management and assessment for all outdoor events and activities, i.e. UV radiation protection strategies are included in school camp activities, excursions, sport days and interschool sports events.

### **Families and visitors**

Families and visitors participating in and attending outdoor school activities are encouraged to:

- wear a sun-protective hat, covers clothing and, if practical, sunglasses;
- apply SPF30 (or higher) broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen; and
- seek shade whenever possible when outdoors.

### **Community engagement**

Sun protection behaviour is regularly reinforced and promoted to the whole school community through newsletters, school website, SSG's, school assemblies, student and teacher activities and at student enrolment and new staff orientation.

Families, students and staff are provided with information, ideas and practical strategies to support UV safety at school and at home. Western Autistic School may provide information through communication strategies, such as newsletters, wellbeing boards, and the school website.

## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website (Included in staff induction processes)
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- the Department's Policy and Advisory Library:
  - [Sun and UV Protection Policy](#)
  - [Heat Health](#)
  - [Outdoor Activities and Working Outdoors](#)
  - [Risk Management - School](#)
  - [Shade Sails](#)
  - [Student Dress Code](#)
- [SunSmart](#) and Cancer Council of Victoria
  - [Primary schools](#) free education resources, sample policies and information about the free [SunSmart Schools Program](#).
  - [Secondary Schools](#) free education resources and sample policies
  - [Sunscreen reactions](#).
- The [Healthy School's Achievement Program's](#) Sun Protection health priority area.

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	February 2023
Approved by	School Leadership
Next scheduled review date	February 2026