Sunsafe Policy

INTRODUCTION

Sunburn, sun damage, heat stroke, dehydration, and skin cancer can be disabling, disfiguring, and in some cases lethal. Australia has the highest skin cancer rate in the world. Research indicates that childhood sun exposure is an important contributing factor to the development of skin cancer. As students are at school when UV radiation levels are highest, schools play a major role in minimising UV exposure.

The St Joseph’s Sunsafe policy aims to ensure that all staff and students engage in behaviours that recognise the harmful effects of the sun and aim to minimise these. This will include education, information, and procedural components that aim to maximise sunsafe behaviours.

While Stanthorpe is in Queensland’s cool climate zone, the sunsafe policy recognises that the harmful effects of the sun can occur in all seasons and in all temperature conditions. As such the sunsafe policy spans the entire school year and encompasses all school based and off campus activities.

RATIONALE

- Sun related health problems are a major cause of disease and death;
- Early development in school age children is chronologically an important risk time for later development of sun related skin diseases including cancers.
- School hours constitute the maximal potential daily risk time of UV radiation.
- Preventive behaviours can minimise the risk of development of such diseases.

MISSION STATEMENT

“St. Joseph’s School offers a holistic education within a Catholic Christian environment whilst developing and valuing the uniqueness of the individual as we encourage each student to become a life long learner.”

The mission statement of St. Joseph’s School stresses the idea of “a holistic education”, which suggests there is a desire for learning in a safe, healthy environment, both in the classroom and in outdoor activities. Implicit in becoming a “life long learner” is the ability to learn in a safe environment free from the potential hazard of sun damage. Ensuring that the St Joseph’s learning environment is a sunsafe environment is therefore critical to the successful fulfilment of our mission.

GOSPEL VALUES

Respect, personal dignity, individual worth, freedom, integrity, trust, justice, understanding, forgiveness, honesty, care, compassion.
DEFINITIONS

Sunburn is an inflammation of the skin that develops in response to exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation most often from the sun but also from tanning beds and booths that emit UV radiation. Sunburn is manifested by reddened, painful skin that may develop blisters.

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation are invisible rays that are part of the energy that comes from the sun which can burn the skin, and cause skin cancer. UV radiation is made up of three types of rays – UVA, UVB and UVC. UVA and UVB are both accepted as causing sunburn and skin cancer including melanoma.

Heat Stroke is a form of hyperthermia or abnormal body temperature elevation which may be associated with activity or exertion in a hot sun exposed environment which is a medical emergency and when untreated can be fatal. Symptoms include signs of shock such as a rapid heart rate, flushed red face, fever, and neurological symptoms such as confusion, agitation, hallucinations, and seizures.

Dehydration is the excess loss of water from the body. This may arise from losses through the skin such as abnormal sweating in heat stroke and may include losses into the skin in the case of inflamed skin in sunburn.

Skin Cancer is defined as a cancer involving the skin. The skin is the largest organ in the body and the three primary skin cancers are all thought to have sun exposure as a major risk factor. The main primary skin cancers are Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC), Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC), and Melanoma. Melanoma is considered the most lethal of skin cancers.

Sunsafe refers to a range of lifestyle behaviours that provide a healthy and safe exposure to the sun and its UV radiation. Caution regarding the detrimental effects of the sun is stressed but the importance to health of physical activity and also appropriate amounts of UV radiation which is needed for vitamin D metabolism and thus healthy teeth and bones is not to be forgotten.

POLICY STATEMENT

St Joseph’s School, as part of the wider Christian community, embraces the belief that each child has the right to be safe at all times. This includes a safe environment in terms of immediate and obvious risk and safe in terms of the less tangible delayed risks.

Immediate risks of sun damage relate to direct effect of sunburn and the potential further damage in later years. Delayed and thus less tangible effects of immediate solar skin damage include the risk of development of skin cancers in later life that may be disabling, disfiguring, and in some cases lethal.

Everyone involved with the school will recognize the importance of a sunsafe environment and seek to facilitate sunsafe practices. These sunsafe practices will be provided for students in an age appropriate way. The role of education towards this outcome will include education of teachers and students. Sunsafe information will be communicated to parents where ever possible. It is expected that teachers, parents, and students will work collaboratively towards the outcome of a sunsafe environment.
Teaching staff will develop strategies to deliver these policy initiatives in an age appropriate manner and that parents will support teachers to this outcome. This will include teachers adopting sunsafe behaviours as an example to students and the wider community.

CONSEQUENCES

- St Joseph’s school will provide sunsafe education to teachers and students.
- St Joseph’s school will provide procedures which deliver sunsafe behaviours to all students and teachers in an age appropriate manner across the school spectrum of education.
- St Joseph's school will implement this policy through appropriate procedures at all St Joseph’s related activities.
- Educational opportunities for the wider community of St Joseph’s for Sunsafe education will be put to families of St Joseph’s school students when available
- St Joseph’s school, through the sunsafe policy and its implementation, will provide example to the wider community of appropriate sunsafe behaviour
- Parents are encouraged to support teaching staff and students in the implementation of an age appropriate delivery of sunsafe procedures

Michael McCarthy                      Peter Sullivan
Principal                              Board Chair

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