



DURANTS SCHOOL – POLICY DOCUMENT

Hot Weather

January 2020

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Introduction

Headteachers, Governors and the LEA have a responsibility for ensuring that staff and pupils are able to work and learn in a safe environment,

Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires that employees are not placed at risk and section 3 requires employers to prevent people not in their employment from being placed at risk from activities that are a part of the employers undertaking.

Background

It is becoming more frequent for the UK to experience heatwaves and extremely hot weather as early as June. This has had a huge impact on the Schools in the Borough during the end of the Summer term for a variety of reasons.

This issue will not diminish over the coming years and it needs to be addressed by Schools and planned for to avoid alarm and confusion when we do experience a heatwave.

There is currently no statutory upper limit specified in UK Health and Safety law for a maximum permissible temperature in the workplace, however there is a legal requirement contained within the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 which applies to employees:

“During working hours, the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be reasonable”, a sufficient number of thermometers shall also be provided to enable the temperature inside a building to be measured.

Further to this, every enclosed workplace must be ventilated by a sufficient quantity of air so that stale air is replaced at a reasonable rate.

Although not specifically covered by the regulations a general duty of care is owed to pupils and so similar standards should apply to those for employees.

Protection from exposure to the sun is also an issue Schools need to consider for both pupils and staff. As an employer, they have an obligation to protect staff from exposure, and this should be extended to pupils in their care.

Guidance and information

Met Office

As part of the ‘heatwave - Plan for England’ issued by the NHS a system called ‘Heat-Health watch’ has been established; which operates from 1st June to 15th September, and is based on Met Office forecasts, there are four trigger levels which will action a response from the Department of Health and other bodies. The ‘Heat-Health watch’ can be monitored on the Met Office website www.metoffice.gov.uk

The Met Office will forecast severe heatwaves based on regional threshold day and night time temperatures, which for London are 32 degrees Centigrade in the day and 18 degrees Centigrade at night.

The four trigger levels for response are:

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Level 1 Awareness – the minimum state of vigilance, both before and during this period, preparedness must be enhanced and maintained by the measures set out in the heatwave plan.

Level 2 Alert – this is triggered as soon as the Met Office forecasts threshold temperatures for at least three days ahead in any one region, or that there is an 80% chance of temperatures being high enough on at least two consecutive days to have significant effects on health. At this level a broadcast will be made on television and radio weather reports.

Level 3 Heatwave – this is triggered as soon as the Met Office confirms that threshold temperatures have been reached in any one region or more.

Level 4 Emergency – this is reached when a heatwave is so severe and/or prolonged that its effects extend outside health and social care, such as power or water shortages, and/or where the integrity of health and social care systems is threatened.

Extracted from 'heatwave – Plan for England'

During the period of 'Heat-Health watch' Schools should prepare to ensure the wellbeing of employees and pupils; and should ensure that suitable plans are in place.

Hazards of sun exposure and extreme temperatures

There are several hazards to both adults and children, although children are particularly vulnerable to the damage caused by over exposure to the sun because younger children have thinner, more delicate and sensitive skin. Possible hazards that Schools should be aware of are:

- 1) **Sunburn** – sunburn is a very painful and uncomfortable condition and although the visible burns heal the effects can appear as skin cancer later in life. Damaged can be caused to the skin before it is sunburnt with the first signs of redness and the skin feeling hot appearing hours after the burns are sustained. Some people are more at risk of cancer in later life; especially those with freckled or fair skin who tend to burn more easily.
- 2) **Heat Stroke** – occurs when a person cannot sweat enough to cool the body. It generally develops when a person is exercising or working in hot weather. Eventually the body cannot regulate its own temperature and the body temperature continues to rise, causing the body's organs to stop functioning. Signs and symptoms of Heat Stroke are:
 - i. an intense thirst,
 - ii. dizziness,
 - iii. weak uncoordinated movement,
 - iv. excessive sweating or no sweating,
 - v. skin will become red, hot and dry even under the armpits,
 - vi. body temperature will remain normal,
 - vii. a normal or slightly raised pulse,
 - viii. leg cramps,
 - ix. swollen legs,
 - x. irritability,
 - xi. headache,
 - xii. nausea or vomiting,
 - xiii. altered mental state including hallucinations, confusion, disorientation or coma,
 - xiv. rapid and shallow breathing,
 - xv. convulsions and loss of consciousness.

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- 3) **Heat Exhaustion** – usually occurs when a person sweats a lot and does not drink enough liquids to replace those lost fluids. This will lead to:
 - i. feeling light-headed,
 - ii. nauseous with a headache,
 - iii. pale moist skin,
 - iv. heat cramps,
 - v. blurred vision,
 - vi. a thirst, dizziness,
 - vii. weak and uncoordinated movements
 - viii. Irritability.
- 4) **Fainting** – occurs when blood pressure falls as a result of the blood vessels expanding due to heat.
- 5) **Heat Rash** – a rash of red or pink dots found on body areas covered by clothes. The sweat ducts become blocked and swell, which might cause discomfort and itching. Clothes or scratching can cause the rash to become irritated and lead to a skin infection.
- 6) **Heat Cramps** – occur in muscles after exercise because sweating causes the body to lose water and salt and minerals. The loss of salt and water affects the exercised muscles with leg muscles and the abdomen being most affected. Cramps may occur sometime after the exercise and can be accompanied by fatigue, nausea and vomiting.
- 7) **Heat Edema (swelling in the legs and hands)** – many people get swollen hands and feet or ankles when they sit or stand for a long time in a hot environment.
- 8) **Heat Tetany (hyperventilation and heat stress)** – this is usually related to short periods of stress in intense heat environments, such as intense physical activity in very high temperatures. Under these conditions, a person will hyperventilate, which may cause respiratory problems, numbness or tingling or muscle spasms.

Treatment for sun exposure

If it is suspected that someone is suffering from sun exposure (excluding heat stroke), take them to a cool place; give them plenty to drink and a salty snack if possible. They may need to go home to rest or seek medical advice.

If someone is displaying the symptoms of heat stroke an ambulance should be called, if they are conscious try to get them to take fluids, do not force them if they are confused or have passed out. While waiting for the ambulance move the person to somewhere cool and sponge cool water over them or place ice packs around their neck or under their arms.

Durants School Hot Weather Policy and Contingency Plan:

Preparing the building for hot weather, the Premises Team will ensure:

- 1) Windows can be shaded by either blinds or reflective film, that these are working and effectively reduce the sunlight coming into the room. Particular attention should be made to those rooms which are in the full glare of the sun between 11am and 3pm,
- 2) All windows can be opened safely to allow fresh air to circulate,
- 3) Air conditioning systems to be regularly serviced to ensure they are working effectively and should be tested regularly even during the colder months. It is important staff and pupils are aware of how air conditioning operates and that by opening windows and doors they will be reducing its benefits.

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- 4) Ventilation ducts and intakes must not be blocked or boxed in with furniture, screens or used for storage,
- 5) If fans are used, there should be enough plugs to accommodate them and extension leads should not be used. Freestanding circulating fans must not be placed on top of filing cabinets, or in any location where they are or could become unstable or present a hazard through falling or being pulled from their mountings. A risk assessment must be carried out and decided whether electric fans will be beneficial and will not pose any risks e.g. trailing wires.
- 6) All portable appliances are checked and tested in accordance with the Council's published standards,
- 7) There is a supply of fresh drink water available to staff, pupils and visitors,
- 8) During break-times there should be sufficient shaded areas provided for both pupils and supervising staff to take advantage of,
- 9) Checks will be made to ensure that fridges or freezers are operating correctly and thermometers should be used to regularly check temperatures.

Arrangements for how and who monitor the 'Heat-Health watch':

The Senior Management Team will be responsible for monitoring the weather and follow guidance issued by the Borough.

Plans for stopping certain activities which have a high risk of dehydration/ heat exhaustion

A risk assessment must be carried out for all high risk activities. If Senior Management feel any activity is detrimental to staff or pupils health and/or cause dehydration or heat exhaustion they have the right to cancel the activity.

Arrangements for avoiding outdoor activities during the hottest part of the day (11am to 3pm)

All staff are responsible for:

- 1) During outdoor activities, encourage the use of hats, and sun block of a suitable SPF.
- 2) Limit strenuous outdoor activity,
- 3) Ensure that both staff and pupils have access to fresh drinking water, and encourage pupils to drink every 15 to 20 minutes when exposed for prolonged periods.
- 4) Ensure there are suitable areas of shade particularly during the middle of the day. If shade does not exist it can be created with temporary sun shades. Umbrella's will not be suitable for Durants School due to the challenging nature of our pupils.
- 5) Check the temperature of metal and plastic playground equipment before children play on it,

When organising day trips during hot weather consideration should be made for:

- 1) The potential for prolonged exposure to the sun and the associated hazards with that exposure while at School or on an educational visit must be considered as part of the risk assessment process and measures put in place to minimise the risk.

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- 2) informing parents of suitable sun protection items pupils should bring with them e.g. hat, and that loose fitting, cool clothes should be worn,
- 3) Provision should be made for ensuring pupils, staff and visitors have access to water to drink throughout the trip including whilst travelling on school mini buses etc.
- 4) If the trip is outside, suitable areas of shade should be identified for both staff and pupils. This should include a suitable cool area to eat.
- 5) Ensure that staff on the trip are aware of the signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat stroke and First Aiders are present who know the correct treatment.

Dress Code

The main dress code must be adhered to, however in extreme hot weather, relaxation of the School dress code will be allowed. More loose fitting, lightweight although tightly woven, cover arms and legs and brightly coloured garments may be worn (very dark colours get hot in the sun and light colours let more of the sun's rays through) which are more comfortable in hot weather. All garments must still be of appropriate length and closed footwear must still be worn for staff protection due to the challenging nature of our pupils.

Staff

There may be particular members of staff or pupils who are unusually susceptible to the effects of heat, e.g. those with medical conditions, pregnant women and menopausal women. Additional measures may need to be considered in these cases, including monitoring by teachers or line manager, reducing the length of the time outside or individualised changes depending on the individual.

If a member of staff or pupil continues to feel unwell after the introduction measures to reduce the issue then consideration should be made for sending the individual home, and advising them to seek medical advice if their symptoms persist.

Signs and symptoms

All staff must be clear on the signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat stroke and know where to go for first aid, and that First Aiders know how to treat suspected cases.

A list of first aiders is on display in the staff room and they have all been on a first aid course which covers treatment for heat stroke and exhaustion.

The signs and symptoms of heat stroke and exhaustion are detailed within this policy and will be distributed to all staff members and a copy given per class annually. It is each staff members personal responsibility to read the policy and familiarise themselves with the signs and symptoms.

Air condition unit failures

If air conditioning fails (in buildings where windows cannot be opened) it is possible that the mechanical ventilation may become inadequate. All failures of this kind must be reported to the Premises Manager immediately for advice,

School Closure

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Plans for closing the School if hot conditions occur for a long period of time, (this should be a last resort because there is a risk that some children will be in greater danger out of School than in it); consideration needs to be made for providing proper care and supervision to pupils who cannot go home,

LEA Policy on sun creams

1. Members of staff are not authorised to apply sun cream because:
 - i. Every child would have to bring in their own named sun cream and staff would have to make sure they thoroughly washed each product off before applying the next to avoid the risk of cross contamination which could start an allergic reaction in sensitive children.
 - ii. If the sun cream was not applied thoroughly enough and the pupil sustained sunburn damage the member of staff could be held liable for the ineffective application of protection.
 - iii. The physical contact required when applying sun cream to pupils.
 - iv. The logistics of storing every child's sun cream and time taken to thoroughly apply cream to each pupil, especially for 15 minutes of playtime.
2. Parents should be advised to ensure pupils have at least SPF 15 sun cream applied before coming to School in warm weather. This together with appropriate clothing, hat, sunglasses, provision of shade and drinking water is sufficient to discharge a duty of care for playtime/lunchtime.
3. Additional consideration may be needed on exceptionally hot days or for occasions of prolonged exposure such as sports events or trips/ visits.

However, Durants recognise that due to the level of understanding of some of our pupils it may be necessary to assist them with application. Should this be the case the class teacher must obtain written consent from the parent/carer.

If we did not assist some pupils with the application of sun cream this could cause them to become sunburnt, which comprises their health and wellbeing as they are physically and mentally unable to manage this task themselves and it would unfair and discriminatory if we excluded them from activities.

“Health and safety legislation does not prevent school staff from applying or helping pupils apply sun cream. The Department for Education has already made clear that schools are expected to take a sensible approach to this issue.” (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/myth/myth-busting/2013/case176-teachers-suncream.htm>)

Drivers and Minibuses

It is important that Schools consider the effects and how to minimise these, of hot weather and extreme weather conditions on those staff required to transport pupils either by minibus or car and the pupils being transported. Measures, which should be considered by all mini bus drivers and accompanying staff, include:

1. Ensuring the vehicles are ready for the hot weather i.e. windows are operational and any cooling fans or air conditioning are working.
2. Ensure staff understand how to operate windows, fans and air conditioning correctly.
3. Place reflective film on windows, especially those that cannot be opened to reflect the sun's rays.

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4. Ensuring that drivers and escorts are provided with a supply of cool water i.e. bottles of cold water in a small coolbag, to avoid dehydration.
5. Ensure that pupils have access to water on longer journeys.
6. Relax any unnecessary dress code (i.e. not items classed as required P.P.E), to allow staff to wear cooler clothing.
7. Encourage staff to take regular breaks and seek shade or cool areas whenever possible.
8. Encourage drivers to park in areas of shade whenever practical and reasonable i.e. not if it means children need to cross a road unnecessarily.
9. Ensure Minibuses are stored in cool areas whenever possible, especially overnight,
10. Ensure staff use suitable sun protection e.g. sun cream with a SPF of 15 or above and wrap around glasses which are 100% UV resistant and to UV 400 standards, conforming with a 'CE Mark' and British Standard (BS EN 1836:1997).