

Case study focus: Sun safety

Core theme: PSHE Education

Hardenhuish School, Chippenham

School context

Hardenhuish School is a larger than average mixed academy for students aged 11-18, in the market town of Chippenham.

Why choose this project?

The number of people who die from cancerous and non-cancerous melanoma (skin cancer) is higher in Wiltshire than in some places in the South West and England. There is a particular need to target information on preventing skin cancer to children, young people and those who work and spend time outdoors.

What did the school want to achieve?

- To increase the number of students who could recall accurate information about sun safety issues
- To increase positive sun safety behaviours among students

What did the school do to achieve these aims?

Sun safety lessons were planned and integrated as part of the school's programme of PSHE Education, delivered by teaching staff beginning in Year 7. Teaching Assistants were present in all sun safety lessons to help SEN children learn about key issues. An assembly on sun protection was provided in Term 5. Input was also provided to students by a cancer charity.

The school developed a sun protection policy, which was shared with parents at the beginning of the summer term. A letter from the Headteacher explained how parents could support the work of the school in this area. Staff were encouraged to lead by example implementing the recommended sun safety behaviours, when working outside. There were tutor time reminders, to promote sun safety behaviours and MDSA & SLT monitoring of pupil behaviour. New umbrella shades were fitted to outside picnic tables and shades were fitted to south facing windows. The school grounds have many mature trees that provide extensive shade.

Questionnaires were designed and given to students throughout the school. These were designed to monitor sun safety knowledge, attitudes and behaviour over several years. Answers to questions about attitudes and behaviour were collected anonymously. SEN pupils were assisted in answering questions.

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Measuring success

Data from student questionnaires showed that understanding about sun safety increased significantly over several years and knowledge gained in Year 7 was retained. For example, in Year 7 52% of students are aware of the sun related risks for beach activities and snowboarding. By the start of KS4 this had risen to 70%. By Year 11 95% of students could recall key sun safety messages they had learnt at school.

Monitoring of behaviour also saw positive increases, but these were more modest. For example in Year 7, 62% of students said they always wore sun cream, which had risen to 68% by Year 9. Responses indicated that older students took more responsibility for implementing sun safety, relying less on parents. However even by Year 11, 15% of students do not always use sun cream when out in the sun.

Some attitudes proved more challenging to address. In Year 7, 31% of students agreed that it was important to have a good sun tan, which increased to 50% by Year 11.

Lessons learned

The school's intervention increased both knowledge and improved sun safety behaviour, which will contribute to a reduction in future sun safety medical conditions. As in some other areas of PSHE Education, significant increases in knowledge do not always result in such significant increases in behaviour change. It will be important to continue to monitor the impact on behaviour and perhaps add additional interventions to address attitudes to tanning among young people. Future delivery of sun safety, from Year 7, will focus on areas where student responses indicated particularly low levels of knowledge.