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Extreme Heat Policy

Effective date: March 2024

Rationale

Extreme heat or heatwave is a period of unusual and uncomfortable hot weather that can negatively affect health. Children and young people are more susceptible to heat stress. For this reason, schools must be able to recognise and respond to heat related illness and have strategies to manage the risks associated with extreme hot weather and heat wave.

Schools do not close at a certain temperature threshold during days of extreme heat. If the principal holds concerns regarding the health and safety of staff and students, they will contact the Department of Education for further advice and actions.

Some heat-related illnesses and common symptoms include:

- deterioration in existing medical conditions
- heat stress – including dehydration, heat rash and heat cramps (muscle pains or spasms).
- dizziness and fainting
- heat exhaustion — warning signs may include paleness and sweating, rapid heart rate, muscle cramps headache, nausea and vomiting, dizziness or fainting.
- heatstroke — the person may stagger, appear confused, have a fit, collapse and become unconscious. This is a medical emergency and requires urgent attention.

For more information please refer to the Healthy WA Website: Heatwaves – be prepared for extreme heat www.healthywa.wa.gov.au

Policy

At Dalmain Primary School, the Principal will monitor school weather and environmental conditions on a regular basis. During a period of extreme heat, the school leadership team will coordinate the appropriate steps to ensure our students and staff remain safe. Strategies we implement include the following:

Prevention and Preparedness

- Staff will promote the importance of sun-smart behaviours through classroom learning activities linked to the Health Curriculum.
- Staff will promote sun-smart guidelines from the Western Australian Cancer Council. This includes the 'slip', 'slop', 'slap' 'seek' and 'slide' steps to staying sun safe.
- Dalmain Primary School is a 'No Hat, No Play' school, which is articulated in our School Uniform Policy and Parent Handbook. Students without a 'Hat' will be required to seek shade when outside of the classroom during break times or during outdoor activities.

Communication

- During periods of upcoming extreme heat, parents and guardians will be reminded about the schools 'Extreme Heat Policy' and encouraged to provide their children with extra water, sunscreen, and icepacks in lunch boxes.
- The administration team will notify parents of any changes to important school events impacted by the extreme heat.

- Students will be reminded about the appropriate steps to take in order to remain 'sun-smart' through assemblies, the school PA system, classroom notices and other communication methods.

Outdoor School Events

- The administration team will consider postponing or cancelling planned outdoor school and/or interschool activities, including those requiring vigorous (high intensity) activity.

Classroom Structure

- During periods of extreme heat, the administration team will review timetabled activities and duty rosters and modify activities that could add to the risk of heat related illnesses.
- We will consider cancelling or rescheduling events where adequate shade is not able to be provided.
- Teachers will allow students to take lunch bags and water bottles in the classroom.
- Teachers will utilise school air-conditioning systems.

Physical Spaces

Staff will be encouraged to:

- Close any internal and external blinds.
- Use portable shade structures where possible.
- Air conditioning will be turned on prior to breaks
- Utilise large industrial fans and ensure indoor spaces have open doors and windows or air conditioning during activities.
- Use fans or other devices (wet flannels) in an appropriate way to remain cool, including students.
- Ensure students have nearby access to their water bottles or water fountains and provide adequate water breaks.

Recess and Lunch Times

- The administration team will review and modify duty rosters to limit staff exposure to heat.
- Recess and lunch play areas that receive direct sunlight will be restricted. This will look like opening up the Undercover Area and Library spaces for students, and other areas as needed.
- Should students be required to stay in airconditioned classrooms during break times, supervising staff will provide alternative low intensity activities and access to adequate water breaks.

Physical Education

- Modify physical education lessons and not undertake them outside. This includes reducing the intensity of activities and ensuring students bring water bottles with them or have access to adequate water breaks.
- The administration team will consider cancelling or rescheduling outdoor events (e.g., carnivals).
- The Physical Education Curriculum will include learning around the importance of hydration and how our bodies react to extreme heat.

Education

The school will:

- Teach students about sun-smart behaviours, including the importance of hydration and recognising symptoms of heat-related illnesses.
- Educate and encourage students and school staff to stay hydrated at all times.
- Provide medical assistance to students displaying symptoms relating to the impact of extreme heat.
- Ensure first aid kits are stocked with appropriate supplies.
- Provide access to sunscreen for block areas where required.
- Consider specific strategies for students with known medical conditions that may be vulnerable to the extreme heat.
- In consultation with staff who work outside (e.g., gardeners/physical education teachers), reallocate their duties.