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Bay of Plenty Schools Get SunSmart Accredited

With summer fast approaching many schools in the Bay of Plenty are preparing their students to be SunSmart by gaining accreditation through the Cancer Society's SunSmart Schools programme.

Mamaku, Otumoetai, Omokoroa Point, Te Puke Intermediate and Gate Pa schools have all recently become officially recognised as SunSmart schools.

Melanie Desmarais, Cancer Society BOP SunSmart Health Promoter, says teaching SunSmart behaviours and keeping children safe in the sun are the key reasons schools want to be recognised by the Cancer Society's SunSmart Schools Accreditation Programme.

“New Zealand has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world and it is widely recognised that over exposure to the sun and harmful UV rays play a significant role in this.

“The SunSmart Schools Accreditation Programme has been developed to encourage SunSmart behaviour among schools, to reduce children's exposure to ultraviolet radiation and their risk of skin cancer.”

To achieve accreditation, schools need to implement a SunSmart policy during terms one and four that encourages SunSmart behaviours such as wearing broad brimmed, bucket or legionnaire hats, clothing and sunscreen and seeking shade during peak UV hours of 10am to 4pm.

It also includes creating a SunSmart environment that promotes the provision and use of shade as well as rescheduling outdoor activities outside peak UV times.

Curriculum content on how to be SunSmart is also part of the accreditation programme which is reviewed every three years.

Melanie says the accreditation process recognises the efforts a school is making to implement a comprehensive sun protection policy.

“For many families sun protection may be an important component when selecting a school that ensures their child's general safety.”

The programme was developed in Australia over a decade ago and has been shown to be the most effective. It is recommended by the World Health Organisation as the “Gold Standard” schools' sun protection programme.

“All primary and intermediate schools throughout the country can apply to become accredited.”

The accreditation process is designed to be undertaken on-line through the SunSmart schools website with assistance from a schools local Cancer Society.

The website provides schools with SunSmart information, curriculum materials and draft policy information.

More ...

“Its wonderful to see the schools working hard in the winter months to ensure their schools will be SunSmart in time for the summer terms. The accreditation process makes it so much easier for them to know their students will be safe from the sun.”

For more information, please visit: www.sunsmartschools.org.nz

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