



Hampshire
County Council

Improvement and
Advisory Service

HIAS MOODLE OPEN RESOURCE

The Hottest Day at School

Accompanying Guide

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Final version

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Overview

This document contains...

An accompanying guide for The Hottest Day at School book. This book is to support children in identifying and managing when they are overheating at school.

Points to consider when using this resource

This Hottest Day at School text was produced as part of a research study looking at overheating risks at school undertaken by the Energy and Climate Division, University of Southampton in partnership with Hampshire County Council Property Services.

There is also an electronic version of the Hottest Day in School book available on the Climate Unity Moodle.

Background to the publication

This book was produced as part of a research study looking at overheating risks in schools being undertaken by the Energy and Climate Division, University of Southampton in partnership with Hampshire County Council Property Services. It was written by Michael Chater and Azadeh Montazami. A link to the study can be found here www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S036013232401179X#sec0001

The aim of the study was to support children to make personal or environmental behaviour changes to help them feel cooler and therefore more comfortable during a heatwave. The story teaches children about the following strategies to manage their thermal comfort and avoid heat stress and exhaustion.

This study was in response to the DfE findings published in June 2025:

1. An increased risk of heat stress and other health issues during prolonged periods of hot weather.
2. A reduction in cognitive performance throughout the summer period equating to approximately 7 days of education lost per child per summer in affected classrooms

Both of these risks will become more pronounced in a warming climate.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/impact-of-uk-climate-change-risk-on-the-delivery-of-education/summary-of-findings-in-relation-to-3-climate-risks-overheating-flooding-and-water-scarcity

Often children are more likely to feel discomfort from the heat before an adult. This is because children's thermal comfort thresholds are usually 2-3 degrees lower than an adult. Some children may also lack confidence or understanding to undertake adaptive behaviour to help reduce thermal discomfort.

In very hot temperatures heat stress can progress to heat exhaustion or heatstroke which can be life threatening. The NHS provides guidance on heat exhaustion and heatstroke here www.nhs.uk/conditions/heat-exhaustion-heatstroke/.

The Hottest Day at School was created to help children learn simple, practical ways to regulate their body temperature when they feel too hot, making them more comfortable during warmer weather. In a recent research study, the book was used as an intervention with more than 600 pupils across six Hampshire schools during a heatwave. The findings showed that, after hearing the story and discussing it with a teacher, children were more likely to independently use the strategies to reduce their thermal discomfort.

This accompanying guide offers suggested questions to support children's comprehension of the story and its key messages. It also includes a list of optional activities that schools may wish to explore in the future, all of which link to the themes presented in the text.

Discussion prompts

Below are some suggested questions that teachers may wish to ask when reading the story to support children's understanding of the key messages. An electronic version of the book is also available for teachers who would like to show the images and text on the Interactive Whiteboard to support engagement and focus during whole class reading.

The story contains 17 pages. The questions are optional and can be adapted or reduced depending on the age of the class and the attention levels and comprehension skills of the children. Teachers may wish to pause at certain points to explore ideas in more detail or move on more quickly if the children are already confident with the concepts.

Travelling to School

Page 1

- What is a heatwave?
- Have you ever forgotten your water bottle?
- What would you do if you have left your water bottle at home?

The History Lesson

Page 2

- How does your body feel when you're in the sunshine?
- Do you ever feel the sun on you when you're sitting inside?
- If you were feeling hot and uncomfortable inside, what might help you cool down?

The Fan

Page 3-4

- How do you think it would feel to be in the desert in Ancient Egypt?
- Have you or a member of your family ever used a fan before? What did it look like?
- Why might a fan make your body feel cooler?
- What does Jack make to help his body feel cooler?

The Jumper

Page 5-7

- Would you want to run around if your body was feeling too hot?
- Have you ever taken your coat or jumper off when your body gets too warm at playtime after running around?
- How does Leyla help her body feel cooler in the story?
- What did Leyla do before she took her jumper off? (asked the teacher)

Moving to the Shade

Page 8-10

- Have you ever had the sun in your eyes when in school? How did you solve the problem?
- What does it mean when you are 'in the shade?'
- How did Kali solve the problem? How did she change seats respectfully?
- Have you ever sheltered from the sun under the tree?
- Do you have a shady spot in your playground or on your school field?
- Why was Finn finding it hard to concentrate and what made him feel sleepy?

Opening the Windows

Page 11-13

- Why did opening the windows help everyone feel cooler?
- What was Assif able to do when he felt cooler?

Finding a Drink

Page 14-16

- Why did Finn and Abby have headaches?
- What did Miss Kopacks ask Abby to do to help her feel better?

Heat Stressed

Page 14-17

- Why did Finn feel so poorly?
- How did the water and ice pops help Finn feel better? (they helped his body cool down)

- Can you remember the different ways the children helped themselves feel more comfortable when they were too hot?
- How did the temperature change during the lesson?

Post-reading activities

The following activities can be used after reading the story to consolidate the key messages and provide meaningful links to curriculum areas such as geography, science, PSHE/Citizenship, English and maths:

- **Create posters** to remind others around the school how to stay cool in hot weather.
- **Explore animal habitats around the world** and discuss how many animals need access to water and shelter in very hot weather to stay healthy. Children could also learn about nocturnal animals in desert biomes that come out at night when the weather is cooler. This links to science and geography.
- **Conduct fieldwork on the school site** to identify the best places to plant trees or create an outdoor learning space.
- **Use thermometers** to investigate the difference between the temperature in a sunny area and a shaded area.
- **Write a story inspired by The Hottest Day at School.** Children could change the characters or setting while keeping the core message.
- **Write and share a simple story for a younger audience** about how to stay cooler in warm weather and read it to children in Reception.
- **Create a PowerPoint presentation** to share with other classes in an assembly about how to feel cooler and more comfortable in warmer weather.
- **Use cool and warm colours in art** to recreate settings from the story or from the children's own writing.
- **Discuss how the key messages in the story connect with the school's values** or aspirations, linking to PSHE and Citizenship.
- **Design ways to make the classroom or playground more comfortable** for those who are feeling very warm. Ideas might include a water bottle station inside or outside, shaded outdoor areas, places to store jumpers or coats, or a safe spot to keep sun hats.
- **Become human thermometers** and create a map showing warmer and cooler areas of the classroom or school grounds. Children could use symbols or different colours to represent temperature differences. Older children could use thermometers to investigate microclimates.
- **Discuss what children could do if they run out of water at playtime** and need to refill their water bottles.

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