

Adverse Weather Policy



WYCHWOOD
SCHOOL • OXFORD

Date Reviewed	02.2026
Reviewed By	DR/CP
Date of Next Review	02.2027
Version	4.1

Statement of Intent

Wychwood School aims to remain open during adverse weather conditions wherever it is safe and reasonably practicable to do so. The safety of pupils, boarding community, staff, parents and visitors is paramount and decisions will always be taken in accordance with statutory duties under:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended)
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Equality Act 2010

This policy sets out the procedures for operating the school during adverse weather, the criteria for closure or partial closure and the communication and safeguarding arrangements that ensure continuity of education and care.

Definition

Adverse Weather refers to severe or unfavourable atmospheric conditions, often unexpected, that has the potential to cause:

- Property damage
- Negative effects on health
- Disruption to daily activities
- Disruption to Transport

Example of Adverse weather include:

- Snow and ice
- Heavy rain, flooding or surface water
- Storms, high winds, falling debris
- Extreme heat or cold
- Reduced visibility (fog, freezing fog)
- Air quality concerns (e.g., smoke, pollution events)

Roles and Responsibilities

The Head

- Makes the final decision to open, close, partially close or adjust school hours

- Ensures decisions are based on risk assessments, site safety reports, staffing levels and travel conditions
- Communicates decisions promptly to parents, pupils, staff, transport providers and external users
- Decides whether pupils should remain indoors during breaks and informs staff
- Ensures classroom temperatures remain within statutory minimums and are monitored during heatwaves
- Ensures staff model and promote safe behaviour in extreme weather (including sun safety)
- Ensures staff receive training on this policy and associated procedures
- Ensures continuity of learning arrangements are activated when required

Director of Operations

- Responsible for the completion and maintenance of the *Adverse Weather Estates Risk Assessment and Gritting Checklist (see Appendix I)*
- Ensures the site is stocked with snow-clearing equipment, grit and signage
- Oversees gritting
- Ensures safe access routes are maintained and unsafe areas are cordoned off
- Ensures roofs, trees, drains and gutters are monitored during storms or heavy rain
- Ensures all equipment is maintained and reports issues to the Head
- Maintains logs of gritting, inspections and weather-related incidents

Staff

- Follow the requirements of this policy and associated risk assessments
- Report concerns immediately to the Head or Director of Operations
- Ensure the safety of pupils, colleagues and themselves
- Wear appropriate footwear and clothing during adverse weather
- Supervise pupils safely during indoor breaks or restricted outdoor access
- Liaise at the end of the day to ensure safe dismissal, including escorting younger pupils
- Model good practice in sun safety and heatwave precautions

Parents and Carers

- Ensure pupils are appropriately dressed for weather conditions
- Check communication channels for updates
- Make safe decisions about travel to school.
- Inform the school if travel is unsafe or delayed

Decision-Making Framework for Closure or Partial Closure

The Head will consider:

- Site safety: access routes, paths, steps, car parks, playgrounds, roofs, trees
- Staffing levels: ability to meet supervision and safeguarding ratios
- Transport safety: public transport, school transport, road conditions
- Heating, ventilation and water systems: safe temperatures and functioning utilities
- Forecasts and warnings: Met Office alerts, Environment Agency flood warnings
- Impact on vulnerable pupils: including those with mobility, medical or SEND needs.

Possible outcomes:

- School remains fully open
- School opens with restricted access or modified timetable

- Late opening to allow safe travel
- Early closure due to deteriorating conditions
- Full closure with remote learning activated

All decisions are logged and recorded

Communication Procedures

The Head will ensure timely communication through:

- School website
- Email and text alerts
- Social media
- Local radio
- Notices at school entrances

Communication will include:

- Opening or closing status
- Adjusted start or finish times
- Access routes and restrictions
- Transport updates
- Remote learning arrangements

Site Safety and Flooding Gritting Procedures

The Director of Operations will ensure:

- A risk assessment will be undertaken to ensure that whether flooding or gritting issues are concerned that pupils, staff are safe and all angles have been considered and risk assessed and the Head will be given due warning of necessary changes required by 7 a.m. where possible
- Priority routes are gritted
- Entrances, steps, ramps, and high-risk areas are treated first
- Unsafe areas are closed and clearly signed
- Snow is cleared from key access points
- Storm debris is removed or cordoned off
- Flooding risks are monitored and mitigated
- Records of gritting and inspections are maintained

Safeguarding and Pupil Welfare

During adverse weather:

- Indoor supervision ratios must be maintained
- Pupils must not be released early without confirmed parental arrangements
- Pupils walking home alone must be risk-assessed (visibility, ice, wind)
- Pupils with mobility or medical needs must have tailored arrangements
- Pupils must not play on icy surfaces or near snow piles
- In heatwaves pupils must have access to shade, water and ventilated spaces
- PE and outdoor activities may be restricted or cancelled

If a pupil cannot be collected, they will remain supervised until arrangements are made.

Staff Travel and Wellbeing

- Staff should not take unnecessary risks when travelling
- Remote working may be authorised where appropriate
- Staff must inform the school if travel is unsafe or delayed
- During heatwaves, staff must follow hydration and ventilation guidance

Attendance/Continuity of Learning during Adverse Weather

Expectations for Pupils

- When the school is officially closed, all pupil absence is recorded as authorised
- When the school is open, absence will be authorised only where parents have informed the school that travel is unsafe or impossible
- Attendance for remote learning will be monitored
- If the Head determines that a pupil could reasonably have travelled safely, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised
- Vulnerable pupils will be contacted individually where required
- Parents must not assume closure; they must check official school communications before keeping a child at home

Expectations for Staff

- Staff are expected to make reasonable efforts to attend work while avoiding unnecessary personal risk
- Staff should contact the Head as early as possible if travel is unsafe or delayed
- Where staffing levels are reduced, pupils may be taught in combined groups under the supervision of available qualified staff, in line with safeguarding and health and safety requirements
- Remote learning will be provided if appropriate via the school's digital platforms
- Teachers will set work appropriate to the age and stage of individual pupils

Exam Disruption

- All exam arrangements during adverse weather will follow the school's Exam Contingency Plan and awarding body guidance
- If the school closes or a pupil cannot attend an exam due to weather conditions, the school will liaise with the awarding body to agree the appropriate alternative
- Parents and pupils will be informed promptly of any changes, which may include:
 - alternative exam venues
 - awarding body-generated results based on existing assessments
 - opportunities to sit the exam at a later date

Heatwave and Extreme Temperature Procedures

The school will in line with HSE guidance, DfE expectations and the school's safeguarding duties:

Summer and Heatwave Precautions

During periods of high temperature, the school will:

- Encourage pupils and staff to wear light, protective clothing and apply sunscreen (SPF 15+ with UVA protection) to exposed skin
- Promote hydration by ensuring water is readily available and encouraging regular intake
- Reschedule outdoor activities and lessons to cooler parts of the day or move them indoors
- Provide shaded areas for breaks and outdoor learning
- Monitor indoor temperatures and ventilate classrooms appropriately
- Adjust uniform expectations where necessary to maintain comfort and safety
- Ensure pupils with asthma or other respiratory conditions carry inhalers and are monitored
- Train staff to recognise signs of heat exhaustion and heatstroke and respond in line with the school's Emergency Plan.

Emergency Response:

- Pupils showing signs of heat exhaustion will be moved to a cool space, given water and cooled using fans, cold packs or damp cloths
- If symptoms persist beyond 30 minutes, or, if the pupil loses consciousness or has a seizure; emergency services will be called immediately and cooling measures continued until help arrives

Winter and Cold Weather Precautions

During periods of low temperature, the school will:

- Maintain heating systems and prioritise warm, usable spaces
- Close rooms or buildings that fall below safe temperature thresholds
- Draught-proof windows and doors to reduce heat loss
- Ventilate indoor spaces to reduce infection risk while balancing warmth
- Encourage appropriate clothing and physical activity to maintain warmth
- Reinforce hygiene messaging and promote flu vaccination for eligible pupils and staff
- Ensure pupils have access to hot meals and snacks
- Communicate any logistical changes (e.g. transport disruption) to parents and carers
- Signpost families to external support for heating and energy efficiency where appropriate

Staff Training and Awareness

All relevant staff will be trained to:

- Recognise signs of weather-related ill health
- Follow emergency procedures confidently
- Support pupils with medical or sensory needs during adverse temperatures
- Implement safeguarding measures during indoor breaks or restricted outdoor access

Major Incident and Business Continuity Plan

In the event of an emergency arising from adverse weather, the school will activate its *Major Incident and Business Continuity Plan*, which sets out clear procedures for safeguarding pupils, maintaining communication and coordinating the school's response.

Contents of the Plan

The Plan includes:

- Up-to-date parent and carer contact information
- Staff contact details, including out-of-hours numbers for key personnel
- A list of staff with designated emergency roles and responsibilities
- Procedures for evacuation, shelter, and safe movement of pupils
- Communication protocols for parents, staff, emergency services and external agencies

Training and Responsibilities

Designated staff will be trained to:

- Liaise with emergency services and follow their instructions
- Provide first aid and support pupils with medical needs
- Move pupils safely to designated areas
- Offer reassurance and maintain calm during emergencies
- Communicate with parents and carers
- Manage any media enquiries in line with the school's communications policy

All staff will be familiar with the Plan and their role within it. Copies will be available with printed versions held securely off-site by key staff for out-of-hours access

Parent and Carer Responsibilities

Parents and carers will be informed of:

- Their responsibility to collect pupils promptly when requested
- How the school will communicate updates during an emergency
- Any temporary changes to collection points or procedures

Equality and SEND Considerations

The school will ensure:

- Adjustments for pupils with mobility difficulties (e.g., alternative routes)
- Additional support for pupils with sensory needs during storms
- Consideration for pupils reliant on school meals
- Inclusive communication for families with accessibility needs

Contractors, Visitors and Lettings

- Contractors will be informed of site restrictions
- External users will be notified of closures or access changes
- Lettings may be cancelled if site safety cannot be assured

Record-keeping

The following must be logged:

- Decisions to open, close or partially close
- Gritting and site safety checks
- Weather-related incidents or near misses
- Communications issued
- Adjustments for vulnerable pupils

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- There is a significant weather-related incident
- Legislation or guidance changes
- The site layout or access routes change

Appendix I - Adverse Weather Estates Risk Assessment and Gritting Checklist

To be completed throughout the day as required

Pre-0800: Before school start

1100: Morning break

1400: End of Lunch

1545: Before end of day

Area	Condition	Time	Safe	Action	Completed
Reception Steps					
Banbury Road exit to pavement					
Banbury Side Entrance Steps					
Banbury Kitchen Steps					
Banbury Staff Room Entrance Steps					
Tennis Court					
Tennis Court Pathway					
Main Pathway					
Hall Fire Exit Pathway					
2-4 front steps					
Hall path and ramp					
Art Steps					
Stable Entrance					
Table Tennis area					
Dining Hall Steps					
Yellow Steps					
Swings					

Notes/Actions:

Areas to be reviewed at policy review or sooner if there are any estate development/changes that would affect the areas to be checked