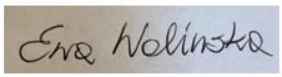
Severe Weather Policy & Procedure

Approved by: **B.Suddhi**		**Date:**	September 2026
Last reviewed on:	September 2026		
Next review due by:	September 2027		

Signed by:



Headteacher Date: September 2026



Chair of governors Date: September 2026

Statement of intent

Pear Tree Infant and Nursery School recognises that severe weather can create risks to pupils, children, staff, parents, visitors and the school premises.

The school will make every reasonable effort to remain open and operate normally during periods of adverse weather where it is safe and practicable to do so. The safety and wellbeing of pupils, children, staff and visitors will remain the school's first priority.

Severe weather may include, but is not limited to:

- snow and ice;
- extreme cold;
- storms and high winds;
- flooding or localised flooding;
- extreme heat;
- heavy rainfall;
- lightning;
- other weather conditions that may affect the safe operation or accessibility of the school.

The school will use proportionate risk assessment and information from appropriate sources, including the Met Office weather warning service, to monitor conditions and determine whether additional measures are required.

This policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Health and Safety Policy;
- Emergency Plan;
- Fire Safety Policy and procedures;
- First Aid Policy;
- Attendance Policy;
- Business Continuity arrangements;
- Educational Visits Policy;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Remote Education arrangements, where applicable.

1. Legal and guidance framework

This policy has regard to the following legislation and guidance:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Education Act 1996
- Occupiers' Liability Act 1957
- Department for Education – *Emergency planning and response for education, childcare and children's social care settings*
- Department for Education – *Health and safety: responsibilities and duties for schools*
- UK Health Security Agency – guidance on protecting children and those working in schools and early years settings during hot weather
- Met Office severe weather warnings and associated advice.

The school's arrangements will also take account of relevant guidance issued by Derby City Council.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 Governing Board

The Governing Board will:

- ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for managing significant health and safety risks, including severe weather;
- monitor the effectiveness of the school's arrangements;
- ensure that the school has appropriate emergency and business continuity arrangements;
- review this policy at least annually or following a significant incident or change in circumstances.

2.2 Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this policy and will:

- monitor significant weather warnings and local conditions where appropriate;
- ensure that appropriate risk assessments are undertaken;
- determine whether additional control measures are required;
- decide whether the school should remain open, open later, close early or close temporarily;
- consult with the Governing Board Chair and/or Derby City Council where appropriate;
- ensure that staff, pupils, parents and visitors receive appropriate information;
- ensure that emergency arrangements are activated where necessary;
- ensure that significant incidents are recorded and reviewed.

The Headteacher may delegate specific operational tasks to appropriate members of staff.

2.3 Site Manager / Premises Staff

The Site Manager or authorised premises staff will:

- monitor the condition of the site during periods of severe weather;
- check entrances, paths, steps, playgrounds and other relevant areas;
- arrange gritting or other reasonable measures where required;

- ensure that appropriate supplies of grit/salt and other relevant materials are available;
- report defects or hazards promptly;
- arrange for unsafe areas to be restricted or closed where necessary;
- monitor the condition of the building, including potential leaks, flooding, storm damage or other weather-related damage;
- liaise with contractors or the Local Authority where specialist assistance is required.

2.4 All staff

All staff are expected to:

- take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others;
- follow instructions and risk-control measures introduced during severe weather;
- report hazards, including ice, standing water, leaks, damaged surfaces or unsafe access routes;
- supervise pupils appropriately and take additional care where weather conditions increase risk;
- avoid using areas that have been closed or identified as unsafe;
- inform the Headteacher or appropriate member of the leadership/premises team of any significant concern.

Staff should not put themselves at unreasonable risk when travelling to or working at school.

2.5 Parents and carers

Parents and carers are responsible for:

- making a reasonable assessment of whether their child can travel safely to school during severe weather;
- following school communications and instructions;
- informing the school if their child is unable to attend because of severe weather or significant travel disruption;
- ensuring that children are appropriately dressed for the prevailing conditions;
- following any temporary arrangements introduced by the school.

3. Monitoring severe weather

The school will monitor severe weather where appropriate using reliable sources, including:

- Met Office weather warnings;
- local weather conditions;
- local travel and transport information;
- information from Derby City Council;
- information from emergency services or other relevant agencies.

The school will consider both the forecast and the actual conditions on and around the school site.

A severe weather warning will not automatically result in school closure. Decisions will be based on the specific circumstances affecting the school, including accessibility, site safety, staffing and the ability to operate safely.

4. Site safety during severe weather

The school will take reasonable steps to keep the site safe and accessible during adverse weather.

Depending on the circumstances, this may include:

- gritting or treating priority pedestrian routes;
- clearing snow where reasonably practicable;
- restricting access to particularly hazardous areas;
- closing playgrounds or other outdoor areas;
- putting temporary warning signs in place;
- dealing with standing water or leaks;
- checking drains and other vulnerable areas;
- securing outdoor equipment;
- checking gates, fencing and other external structures following high winds;
- ensuring that emergency access routes remain available wherever reasonably practicable.

Priority will be given to routes required for safe access to and from the main school entrance and essential areas of the building.

The school cannot guarantee that every part of the site will remain clear or completely free from snow, ice, water or other hazards. Staff, pupils and visitors should exercise appropriate caution.

5. Access to the school

During severe weather, normal access arrangements may need to be altered.

The Headteacher or Site Manager may:

- close particular entrances or gates;
- designate alternative access routes;
- restrict access to playgrounds or external areas;
- temporarily prevent vehicle access where this is necessary for safety;
- introduce additional supervision arrangements.

Any temporary closure of an access point will be communicated to staff and visitors as appropriate.

Emergency service access will be maintained wherever reasonably practicable.

6. Snow and ice

During periods of snow or freezing temperatures, the school will prioritise the treatment of key pedestrian routes.

Gritting and snow clearance will be undertaken where reasonably practicable and proportionate to the conditions.

Particular attention will be given to:

- main pedestrian entrances;
- routes used by pupils, children and staff;
- steps and ramps;
- areas with known drainage issues;
- emergency access routes.
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Where an area cannot be made sufficiently safe, it will be restricted or closed.

Outdoor play may be suspended where snow or ice creates an unacceptable risk. In such circumstances, indoor activities will be provided where practicable.

7. Heavy rain and flooding

Heavy rainfall may result in standing water, localised flooding or damage to the school premises.

Staff should report flooding, leaks or significant water ingress immediately.

The school will:

- restrict access to affected areas where necessary;
- assess the risk of slips, trips, electrical hazards and structural damage;
- take reasonable steps to protect pupils, staff and visitors;
- contact appropriate contractors, the Local Authority or emergency services where required;
- activate emergency or business continuity arrangements if the incident is significant.
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Where flooding presents an immediate danger, staff and pupils will be moved away from the affected area and emergency procedures followed.

8. High winds and storms

During periods of high winds or storms, the school will assess the condition of:

- trees and branches;
- fencing and gates;
- outdoor equipment;
- temporary structures;
- roofing and external building elements;
- play equipment and other items that could become displaced.
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Outdoor activities may be restricted or cancelled where conditions present an increased risk.

Following significant winds or storms, the Site Manager or authorised staff will inspect relevant areas before they are returned to normal use.

9. Extreme heat

Extreme heat can present significant risks, particularly to young children.

The school will follow current public health and DfE/UKHSA guidance when managing periods of hot weather.

Measures may include:

- increasing access to drinking water;
- encouraging regular drinking;
- keeping children out of direct sunlight where appropriate;
- using shaded areas;
- adapting outdoor activities;
- moving activities to cooler parts of the building where practicable;
- adjusting the timing or intensity of physical activity;
- increasing ventilation where appropriate;
- considering temporary changes to uniform where appropriate;
- monitoring children and staff for signs of heat-related illness.

Particular consideration will be given to younger children, including nursery and Reception children, and anyone identified as being particularly vulnerable to heat.

Outdoor activities will be adapted or cancelled where the conditions make them unsafe.

11. Outdoor play

The Headteacher or designated member of staff may suspend or modify outdoor play where weather conditions create an unacceptable risk.

Factors considered may include:

- snow and ice;
- high winds;
- lightning;
- flooding;
- extreme heat;
- very heavy rain;
- the condition of outdoor surfaces and equipment.

Where outdoor play cannot safely take place, suitable indoor activities will be provided where practicable.

12. Staffing and travel

The school recognises that severe weather may affect staff travel.

Staff are expected to make reasonable efforts to attend work where it is safe to do so, taking account of their own safety and official travel advice.

Staff should notify the school as soon as possible if severe weather or travel disruption is likely to prevent them from attending work or cause significant delay.

Where staffing levels are significantly affected, the Headteacher will assess whether the school can continue to operate safely.

The school may consider:

- temporary changes to staffing deployment;
- combining or adapting activities;
- changes to normal provision;

- delayed opening;
- early closure;
- temporary closure.

Employment and pay arrangements arising from travel disruption or school closure will be managed in accordance with the employee's contractual terms, relevant employment policies and applicable legislation.

13. Decision to close the school

The school will make every reasonable effort to remain open during severe weather where it is safe and practicable to do so.

However, temporary closure may be necessary where, for example:

- the school premises cannot be accessed safely;
- there is a significant risk of injury;
- essential utilities or services are unavailable;
- significant damage has occurred to the building;
- emergency services or the Local Authority advise that closure is necessary;
- safe staffing levels cannot be achieved;
- pupils cannot be safely supervised;
- travel conditions create exceptional difficulties for the school community;
- another significant risk means that normal operation is not reasonably practicable.

The decision to close, delay opening or close early will be made by the Headteacher.

Where appropriate, the Headteacher will consult the Chair of the Governing Board and Derby City Council before making the decision.

The Headteacher will make the decision based on the school's risk assessment, the information available at the time and the overriding need to protect pupils, children, staff and visitors.

14. Delayed opening or early closure

Where conditions are expected to improve or deteriorate over the course of the day, the school may consider:

- opening later;
- closing earlier;
- restricting access to particular areas;
- operating with modified provision.

Parents and carers will be given as much notice as reasonably practicable.

The school recognises that severe weather can change rapidly and that decisions may sometimes need to be made at short notice.

15. School closure procedure

If the decision is made to close the school, the Headteacher or nominated member of staff will:

1. Confirm the closure decision and effective date/time.
2. Notify relevant staff.
3. Notify Derby City Council and other relevant agencies where required.
4. Communicate the closure to parents and carers using the school's normal communication channels.
5. Update the school website where appropriate.
6. Use the school's social media channels where appropriate.
7. Consider notifying local media, including BBC Radio Derby, as an additional source of information.
8. Provide information about the expected arrangements for reopening.
9. Consider whether remote education should be provided where the closure is expected to be temporary and this is reasonably practicable.
10. Record the decision and the reasons for closure.

The school will endeavour to provide parents and carers with as much information as possible, including whether the closure applies to the whole school or only particular provision.

16. Communication with parents and carers

The school's primary communication methods will be its established parent communication systems, website and other official school communication channels.

Parents and carers should ensure that their contact details held by the school are kept up to date.
The school may also use:

- social media;
- local radio;
- Derby City Council communication channels;
- other appropriate emergency communication methods.

Parents should not rely solely on social media or local radio for information. The school's official communication channels should be treated as the primary source of information.

17. Children arriving at school when the school is closed

If the school has been closed but a child or family arrives at the premises, the school will make reasonable arrangements to communicate the closure and provide appropriate advice.

Where practicable, a member of staff will be available to respond to essential enquiries, subject to the safety of staff.

Parents and carers will be reminded that children should not be left at the school when the school is closed unless alternative arrangements have been specifically communicated by the school.

18. Safeguarding and vulnerable children

Severe weather and school closure may have a particular impact on vulnerable children and families.

The school will consider safeguarding implications when making decisions about closure, delayed opening or changes to provision.

Where appropriate, the school will:

- identify children who may require additional consideration;
- liaise with parents and carers;
- maintain contact with vulnerable families where necessary;
- work with Derby City Council and other agencies where appropriate;
- follow the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and emergency procedures.

Any safeguarding concern arising during a severe weather event will be dealt with through the school's normal safeguarding procedures.

19. Emergency situations

Severe weather may form part of a wider emergency, including:

- flooding;
- structural damage;
- loss of power;
- loss of heating or water;
- telecommunications failure;
- significant transport disruption;
- fallen trees or other obstructions;
- damage to the school site;
- serious injury;
- a wider community emergency.

The school's Emergency Plan and Business Continuity arrangements will be activated where appropriate.

Emergency services will be contacted where there is an immediate threat to life, serious injury, significant danger or another emergency requiring their assistance.

20. Remote education

Where a temporary closure is necessary, the school will consider whether remote education is appropriate and reasonably practicable.

The school will take account of:

- the expected duration of the closure;
- the age of pupils;
- the nature of the emergency;
- staff availability;
- access to technology;
- safeguarding considerations.

Remote education arrangements will be communicated to parents and carers where they are to be used.

21. Reopening the school

Before reopening following a severe weather closure, the Headteacher and/or Site Manager will ensure that appropriate checks have been undertaken.

These may include checking:

- access routes;
- entrances and exits;
- heating and water;
- electricity;
- toilets;
- classrooms and communal areas;
- playgrounds and outdoor spaces;
- trees and fencing following high winds;
- flooding or water damage;
- roof or building damage;
- emergency access;
- any areas previously identified as unsafe.

The school will reopen only when it is satisfied that it can do so safely and with appropriate staffing and facilities.

Where specialist advice or repair is required, reopening may be delayed until the relevant issue has been addressed or suitable temporary controls are in place.

22. Accidents, incidents and near misses

Any accident, injury or significant near miss arising from severe weather will be reported and recorded in accordance with the school's Health and Safety procedures.

The school will review significant incidents to identify whether:

- additional control measures are required;
- repairs or maintenance are needed;
- risk assessments should be amended;
- staff procedures require clarification;
- this policy or the Emergency Plan should be updated.

23. Staff and pupil awareness

Staff will be made aware of the arrangements contained within this policy.

Where relevant, staff will receive information or training relating to:

- severe weather procedures;
- site safety;
- emergency arrangements;
- evacuation and emergency communication;
- recognising heat-related illness;
- reporting hazards;
- safeguarding during emergency situations.

Pupils will receive age-appropriate information and instructions where severe weather affects normal school arrangements.

24. New school building and site arrangements

As Pear Tree Infant and Nursery School moves into the new school building and the nursery provision operates within the same premises, severe weather arrangements will be reviewed to reflect the new site.

Before and following occupation of the new building, the school will review:

- pedestrian access routes;
- vehicle access;
- emergency access;
- gritting arrangements;
- drainage and flood risk;
- outdoor play areas;
- playground surfaces;
- access for nursery and Reception children;
- arrangements for extreme heat;
- emergency communication arrangements;
- responsibilities for site inspections and maintenance.

Any lessons identified during the move or the first period of severe weather at the new premises will be incorporated into the school's risk assessments and procedures.

25. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually and following:

- a significant severe weather incident;
- a school closure;
- a significant change to the school premises;
- a significant change in legislation or DfE guidance;
- lessons identified through testing or an actual emergency.

The Governing Board will monitor the effectiveness of the policy as part of its wider responsibility for health, safety and emergency planning.

Policy review date: September 2027