Weather Policy

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment

Committee responsible:	FGB
Date approved:	Summer 2023
Review period:	3 yearly
Next review date:	Summer 2026

Rationale

St Peter's School recognises that certain conditions may require the School to take precautions to ensure the safety of both its students and staff. Such conditions include:

- Inclement weather such as ice, snow, high winds, storms, and other natural disasters
- Flood and heavy rainfall
- Excessive heat/cold
- Fallen or danger of fallen trees

Aim

- To ensure the safety of pupils, staff, parents, and visitors during times of inclement weather by implementing a planned management strategy that will cater for all circumstances.
- To ensure that all employees and governors are clear about their roles and responsibilities in the event of severe weather.

School Closure

- School closure will occur in extreme conditions that pose an immediate health and/or safety hazard to the pupils and staff. The criteria for closing will be the current condition of the school and the immediate environment.
- The Headteacher will take into consideration advice given by the Surrey Education Authority and when necessary, the Surrey Police Service.
- The decision to close the School will be made by the Headteacher in conjunction with the Chair of Governors.

The following principles should underpin all procedures:

- The interests and safety of the children is paramount.
- A service to parents and pupils should be maintained for as long as is reasonably practical.
- Partial closure of the school should be considered before complete closure.
- Staff should only be allowed to go home early if there is a genuine need on the basis of their personal safety, but decisions must be made on an individual basis.

Communication about School closure

The School closure decision may be:

- Communicated by the school "emergency closure contact list".
- Posted on the school website. Parents and staff may access the information by visiting the School website: https://stpetersinfant.org/

- Attached to the front gate of the school, informing parents on arrival.
- Communicated to parents by email.
- Recorded on the school answering machine for those telephoning the School.
- Communicated to Heart (Sussex and Surrey) by a nominated member of staff.

Before School

- A nominated member of staff/parent/governor who lives near to the school and who can give accurate information about conditions will be contracted by the headteacher to ascertain whether it is safe for children/parents/staff to reach school.
- HT will alert key members of staff and activate emergency closure line if conditions make travelling/staying at school unsafe.
- There will be daily updates and review.
- HT to inform Local Area office of decisions made re closure and opening.
- Car park will be assessed and if too icy to access then a 'drop off' procedure will be adopted whereby children are met at the gate by a member of staff and taken into school.
- The playground will be assessed for ice and snow and, if necessary, salt and grit will be put down to ensure a safe path from the gates into the School. A member of staff will be on duty in the playground to ensure that the children walk safely into school.
- Sandbags will be placed by the front entrance should there be a danger of flooding (this to be actioned as soon as severe weather is forecast).

Break/Lunchtimes

- The Headteacher or Senior Teacher will check the weather conditions prior to morning break and advise the teachers if break is to be inside.
- Should the children play outside then it may be necessary to restrict them from certain areas e.g. field.
- Play equipment such as the trim trail, slide etc. will be inspected and will not be used if icy/wet.

The weather will be monitored throughout the day, and should it worsen (e.g. severe snow) then it may be necessary to close the School early for the safety of pupils, staff and parents. If parents are concerned about conditions, we are happy for them to collect their children early. They do not need to telephone the school. The headteacher will consult with other agencies, staff, chair of governors as appropriate.

Clothing in Inclement Weather

- All children must wear a coat and be encouraged to wear a hat and gloves.
- Staff on playground duty must ensure that all children are wearing buttoned/zipped up coats when they come out to play.

- Children without clothing suitable for inclement weather must remain indoors or borrow suitable clothing from the clothing pool.
- Boots may be worn to school, if the weather conditions warrant it, but pupils must change into school shoes once inside the buildings.

Extreme Temperatures

Extreme Cold

The School will be closed or partly closed should there be insufficient heating to maintain a temperature above 18 degrees centigrade. Staff should not be expected to work in buildings with a temperature below 16 degrees centigrade.

Extreme Heat

- The School should make all reasonable steps to ensure that a "comfortable" temperature is maintained (the optimum indoor temperature is between 18 and 24 degrees centigrade).
- The School must be sufficiently ventilated by fresh or purified air. Water will be available at all times and pupils encouraged to drink regularly.
- Staff will be made aware of the signs of dehydration and look out for these signs.
    - headache, dizziness and confusion
    - loss of appetite and nausea
    - sweating, with pale clammy skin
    - cramps in limbs or abdomen
    - rapid, weakening pulse and breath
- Parents to ensure that children come to school with adequate sun protection (i.e. sun cream/sun hats).
- Children will be encouraged to play in the shade at break times.
- The headteacher will consider cancelling/ postponing planned outside school events (e.g. sports day) if temperatures are considered to be too high for the safe running of the event.

Severe Wind

If the wind is very strong it may be necessary to keep the children indoors in case of the danger of falling trees. In particular it will be necessary to monitor the trees opposite the school.

Issues for schools to consider during hot weather:

1. **WEATHER FORECASTS**
   Attention should be given to hot weather warnings and notice taken of the maximum times advised for exposure to the sun. Staff should be aware of this particularly for activities taking place between 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. when the sun is at its strongest. Surfaces such as concrete, sand and water reflect up to 85% of the sun's rays making protection necessary even in the shade or swimming pools.
   Below is the link to the Met Office Heat-Health watch:

https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/heat-health/?tab=heatHealth&season=normal

2. **PROTECTION**
   A) Clothing - Pupils should be encouraged to wear suitable clothing for outdoor lessons/ activities, including clothing which protects shoulders, arms & neck, and appropriate headwear.

   B) Sunblock - Pupils should be encouraged to protect themselves by using sunblock when they are likely to be exposed to the sun (applies to all children whether they tan easily or not). For younger pupils, parents should be encouraged to apply sunblock prior to school that protects for 5 hours. In the summer this applies even when you can't see the sun. Children can become sunburnt when it's cloudy as 80% of UV rays pass through the clouds. If schools choose to provide sunblock for pupils or help younger pupils apply it, in order to prevent cross infection, the following method for application is recommended: the sunblock should be poured onto the young person's hand from above in the style of a "soap dispenser". Schools should be aware that some pupils may be allergic to some creams. Schools should attempt to obtain parental permission before applying suncream, and should consider devising a form to send to parents in advance of hot weather.

3. **PROVISION OF SHADE**
   Adequate shade should be available to pupils so they can have access to a cooler area and are not exposed to UV radiation for excessive periods. Opportunities should be taken to make maximum use of shade during outdoor lessons/ activities, e.g. the introduction to the lessons taking place indoors; making use of shade from trees and buildings for discussions during the lessons. When it is extremely hot and no shade is available, schools should consider the appropriateness of the activity.

4. **LIQUIDS**
   It may be necessary for teachers to ensure that access to liquids is available at the end of lessons/activities when the weather is hot. Water as opposed to fizzy drinks is recommended. Where pupils provide their own drinks, they should be monitored so that drinks are taken regularly rather than at one go.

5. **SCHOOL CLOSURE**

A closure should obviously be a last resort only. Apart from other problems associated with closures, there is a likelihood that some children will be at greater danger out of our care than in it. If a headteacher needs to consider this, proper care and supervision must be available for any student who cannot be safely returned home.

6. SPORTS DAYS

Sports days may need to be postponed unless very good facilities exist to keep students cool. It is essential that students can stay in a cool, quiet area if affected. Physical exertion over a prolonged period in high temperatures is potentially very dangerous. Please see below the first aid recommended for heat exhaustion and heat stroke on the BBC website and also the guidance on "Dangers of Exposure to the Sun" which is section 5 of SCC Pupil's Health and the Administration of Medicines. N.B: This repeats much of the earlier advice but also has a section on Heat exhaustion and Heatstroke.

7. STAFF

It is essential that staff are also considered as part of the risk assessment and should not be called upon to undertake unreasonable additional duties during heatwaves. Attention must be given to staff who remain in one place of work which might be hotter than other parts of the school. Please note that although there is no upper limit set for temperatures in the workplace, schools should try to make working conditions as reasonable as possible.

8. USE OF FANS AND AC UNITS

Where fans are used to provide air circulation, please ensure that they are sited so that they cannot be a danger to students, particularly the very young. If AC units are used, they must be exhausted according to any instructions from the manufacturer.

Guidelines on the Dangers of Exposure to the Sun

Sun safety is increasingly becoming an issue for settings. The incidence of skin cancer has doubled in the past 15 years and is now the second most common cancer with 2500 deaths annually. The sun produces UV radiation, which can damage the surface of the skin, the structures inside the skin and the function of skin causing mutations in the DNA skin cells. 80% of most people’s exposure to the sun takes place in childhood. Over exposure to the sun’s rays causes sunburn. Getting sunburnt as a child leads to a greater risk of skin cancer in later life. It is important that schools take precautions to encourage children / young people to practice sun safe behaviour and to play in the shade when the sun is hottest between 12:00 – 3:00pm. When exposure cannot be avoided a responsible person will need to consider whether outside activities or play are appropriate.

The risk of non-melanoma skin cancer is directly related to cumulative exposure to the sun. Short intense exposure to the sun increases the risk of malignant melanoma. Periods of intermittent exposure to the sun at a young age are more harmful than over exposure in adults.

Clearly, planning and preparation can lessen or prevent harmful and serious effects. In particular, responsible person should consider the following:

- Develop a Sun Safety Policy - This should clearly set out the setting's position on the use of protective clothing and on sunscreen. This policy should be sent to all parents so that it is widely known. See separate policy.
- Weather forecasts – Attention should be given to hot weather warnings and notice taken of the maximum times advised for exposure to the sun.
- Sun Screen/Protective Clothing – Where there is a likelihood of prolonged hot spells; parents must be encouraged to provide sunscreen and a hat for their child.
- Extra Sensitivity - In the case of children and young people with extra sensitivity to the sun extra care should be taken and medical advice sought.
- Provision of shade - Adequate shade must be available at times during the day so that the young people can have a cooler area and are not exposed to UV radiation for excessive periods.
- Liquids – An adequate supply of or access to liquids should be made available. On visits, where the young people provide their own drinks, they must be monitored so that drinks are taken regularly rather than at one go. (This is particularly important for young children).
- Clothing – The children / young people should be encouraged to wear suitable protective clothing – i.e. long sleeves and appropriate headwear.
- Programme – The day's activities may need to be amended so that excessive demands are not made during the hottest part of the day.

Sun creams – Sun creams and screens of a sufficiently high factor should be used. The Health Education Authority recommends the use of sunscreen with a sun protection factor of 15 or above. The sun safety policy should promote the self-administration of sunscreen by children / young people. Most children / young people, apart from the very youngest and those with special needs, will be able to do so under supervision.

NB: There has been much concern expressed about supervisors applying sun creams to children / young people. While it is acknowledged that this is a sensitive issue there are occasions, particularly if a child is very young or has special needs, where this will need to be done. In such cases, supervisors should not do this whilst alone with a child / young person and a protocol should be established. It is not an option to leave a child / young person unprotected and exposed to the sun.

Heat exhaustion and Heatstroke

In extremely hot conditions, the body's heat-loss mechanisms may fail. When the atmospheric temperature equals body temperature it becomes impossible for the body to lose heat. High humidity also causes problems, as sweat will not evaporate well. In

these circumstances, particularly during strenuous exercise when extra heat is generated by muscular activity, heat exhaustion or the more dangerous condition, heatstroke, may develop.

The symptoms of heat exhaustion are as follows:

- headache, dizziness and confusion
- loss of appetite and nausea
- sweating, with pale clammy skin
- cramps in the limbs or abdomen
- rapid, weakening pulse and breathing.

Once these symptoms are recognised the main aims are to move the casualty to cool surroundings and to replace lost fluid and salt:

- help the casualty to lie down and raise legs;
- if conscious, help casualty to sip weak salt solution (one teaspoon per litre of water).

If casualty becomes unconscious, place in recovery position and summon an ambulance.

The symptoms of heatstroke are as follows:

- headache, dizziness and discomfort
- restlessness and confusion
- hot, flushed, dry skin
- a rapid deterioration in the level of response
- a full, bounding pulse
- high temperature.

Once the symptoms have been recognised, take the following steps:

- move casualty quickly to cool place and call an ambulance; wrap casualty in a cold, wet sheet and keep it wet. Continue until the high temperature falls and replace the wet sheet with a dry one. Observe casualty carefully.

Risk Management for extreme heat:

Forward planning is essential to ensure that adequate provision is in place to maintain a reasonable temperature during heatwave conditions. This will also assist in the event of prolonged hot weather.

In addition to the resources shared, the school will refer to its emergency plans and risk assessments.

By undertaking and/or reviewing an assessment, schools can identify high-risk individuals/activities/locations and take the appropriate steps to reduce risks and reduce the potential impacts of extreme hot weather.

Extreme hot weather events tend to last for a few weeks of the year and as such, any controls introduced should be proportionate to the risk.

All members of staff should be familiar with the plan and their role in implementing it.

Controlling Indoor Hazards

The following are some suggested measures that may be taken:

RISK FACTOR	POSSIBLE CONTROLS
Indoor high temperatures	Stop sun/heat entering the room by: • Keep lights off where possible • Use blinds (Venetian or slatted blinds allow light in, while keeping sun rays out) • Reflective film on windows • Moving workstation away from direct sunlight • Overhangs or awnings outside windows • Insulation - the material acts as a barrier reducing heat flow • Insulating hot pipes or equipment • Curtailing heat-generating activities e.g., use of computers, Bunsen Burners, ovens etc • Increase outside shading by using shutters • Using reflective paint • Provide portable air-conditioning • Provide fixed air-conditioning
Lack of air movement	Improve air movement by: • Ensuring windows can be opened • Ensuring windows are open • Providing fans - wall or ceiling mounted are better
Hot classrooms	Improve physical conditions by:

	• Relocating classes to cooler areas • Working outside in shaded areas • Rotating use of hot rooms
Strenuous task or activity	Amend the task being undertaken by: • Avoiding strenuous activities or amending the task • Restricting the length of time people are exposed to hot conditions • Arranging for extra breaks to let people cool down • Where practicable, consider arranging for school to start earlier and finish earlier (this may be not be practicable for those requiring transport)
Employee or pupil has a medical condition or vulnerable	Protect the individual by: • Providing regular drinking water in classrooms • Relaxing dress codes • Providing surveillance for those with medical conditions • Regularly checking on children's well-being
Lack of awareness on how to respond to high temperatures	Improve staff and pupil awareness by: • Informing staff of signs and symptoms of heat stress and treatment, hot weather plan procedures etc • Informing pupils of what they should do (e.g. plenty of fluids, dress codes etc)

Controlling Outdoor Hazards

The following are some suggested measures that may be taken:

RISK FACTOR	POSSIBLE CONTROLS

Lack of shade	Reduce sun exposure by: • Creating shady areas using trees, awnings, overhangs, parasols etc
Strenuous tasks or activities	Reduce risk by: • Restrict activities outside between 11am-3pm • Reduce strenuous activities or carry out at cooler times • Arranging extra breaks to allow people to cool down • Increase morning break and reduce lunch break
Dehydration/ sunburn/sunstroke	Reduce risks by: • Providing access to drinking water • Ensuring pupils and staff wear wide brimmed sun hats • Relaxing dress code (allow loose, light coloured clothing that covers neck and shoulders etc)
Lack of awareness of sun safety	Improve awareness by: • Incorporate sun protection into curriculum • Promote sun protection to pupils in assemblies, workshops, talks • Train teachers in the importance of sun protection • Inform parents of the importance of sun protection