

Riverstone Academy

Adverse Weather Policy

Date of Review: September 2026

Date of Next Review: September 2027

Signed: K Bowe

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Statement of intent

It is the aim of Riverstone Academy to ensure the school remains open during adverse weather conditions, when practically possible, providing that this can be done in a safe manner.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Make the appropriate procedures clear, in relation to operating the school during adverse weather conditions.
- Make clear the grounds for a school closure due to adverse weather conditions.
- Advise and inform staff and parents of the systems and procedures in place in the event of a school closure due to adverse weather conditions.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- UKHSA 'Adverse Weather and Health Plan 2026 to 2027'
- DfE 'Emergency planning and response for education, childcare and children's social care settings'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- First Aid Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Attendance and Absence Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Directors are responsible for:

- Maintaining strategic oversight of the school's arrangements for health, safety and pupil welfare during adverse weather.
- Ensuring that decisions to remain open, partially close or close the school are based on suitable and sufficient risk assessment and take account of the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Receiving assurance that emergency planning, premises safety, staffing and communication arrangements are effective and that significant issues are addressed promptly.
- Ensuring that the school meets the applicable requirements of the Independent School Standards, including those relating to welfare, health and safety and premises.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Deciding whether the school will close due to adverse weather.
- Informing parents and staff of any closure.
- Deciding whether pupils should be kept indoors during break times and reporting this decision to staff at the earliest opportunity.
- Ensuring the school is fully stocked with snow clearing equipment.
- Reviewing this policy on an annual basis.
- Ensuring classroom temperatures are maintained at an appropriate level.
- Ensuring that staff model good practice in terms of sun safety.
- Ensuring that staff understand the precautions for pupils in terms of sun safety.
- Ensuring staff receive appropriate training and guidance on the stipulations in this policy.
- Ensuring that adverse-weather decisions take account of pupils' individual needs, including medical needs, mobility, communication, sensory needs, emotional regulation, transport arrangements and any Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs).
- Ensuring that local authority or commissioned transport providers are contacted where adverse weather may affect pupils' journeys to or from school.

Staff members are responsible for:

- Adhering to the requirements of this policy.
- Reporting any concerns relevant to this policy to the headteacher.
- The safety of pupils, colleagues and themselves.
- Wearing appropriate footwear and clothing during periods of adverse weather.
- Liaising with one another before the end of the day to discuss an exit plan for pupils, this includes escorting younger pupils to the entrance to be collected by their parents.
- Modelling good practice in terms of sun safety.
- Encouraging pupils to stay appropriately hydrated.

Parents are responsible for:

- Only using the designated and cleared areas whilst on the school premises.
- Collecting their children when the school needs to close.
- Keeping all their contact information up to date.

- Ensuring they and their children wear the appropriate footwear and clothing for adverse weather.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Following the instructions and guidance of staff during adverse weather.

3. School closure

The headteacher will sign the school up to receive Weather-Health Alerts from the UKHSA and Met Office. The school will make a local assessment and initiate all appropriate procedures in response to an alert. Alerts will be reviewed to ensure the school fully understands the potential impacts and how likely they are to occur.

The decision to close the school will be made by the headteacher following an assessment of the risks and, where practicable, consultation with a Director on behalf of the proprietor. In the absence of the headteacher, the deputy headteacher or other designated senior leader will assume this responsibility.

The school will be closed if one or more of the following conditions apply:

- Conditions on site are considered to be unsafe and are likely to present danger to users of the site
- Staff numbers are insufficient for the school to operate safely
- The school cannot safely meet the individual supervision, medical, behavioural or safeguarding needs of pupils who would otherwise attend.
- Local conditions, transport disruption, loss of essential utilities or damage to the premises make attendance or continued operation unsafe or impracticable.

In the event of school closure:

- The headteacher will inform staff and parents via text message or telephone.
- The headteacher will ensure that an update is posted on the school website and any other agreed communication channels.
- The headteacher will display closure information at the school entrance where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

In the event of the school having to close during the day, parents and, where relevant, transport providers will be contacted using the emergency contact details held by the school. Pupils will remain safely supervised until they are collected or an agreed safe transport arrangement is in place. Medication, healthcare and safeguarding arrangements will continue until the pupil leaves the school safely.

Where the school is temporarily closed due to adverse weather, the headteacher will aim to ensure the school can provide remote education in line with the Remote Education Policy.

Staff who are likely to face particular difficulties in getting home may have to leave work early, taking into account their personal safety. This decision will be taken in collaboration with the headteacher. Minimum cover arrangements in school will be provided by employees who do not have a particularly long or difficult journey home to ensure staffing ratios are maintained for the safety of pupils.

A closure of the school during the day and an early release of staff will only be considered in extreme circumstances.

4. Remaining open in adverse weather conditions

When deciding whether the school will remain open, risks will be assessed in accordance with the Risk Assessment Policy. The assessment will consider site conditions, staffing, transport, utilities and the individual needs of pupils, including SEND, mobility, sensory needs, medical conditions, communication needs, emotional regulation and any known absconding or elopement risks.

If the school remains open when there has been snowfall or the site is icy, access to the site for pedestrians will be restricted to the pedestrian gates only and all pathways, wherever practical, will have been cleared and gritted before pupils arrive on the premises.

All persons entering the school buildings will be asked to ensure they wipe their feet thoroughly, in order to reduce slip hazards.

5. Procedures for gritting

The first phase of gritting will prioritise those areas which are most used by pupils and staff. This includes the main entrance of the school, as well as the following areas:

- Car Park
- Path surrounding the car park

Points of higher risk of injury in the event of snow and ice will be identified such as entrances, exits and play areas, and prioritised for clearance or gritting.

The SBM will ensure that the identified areas have been gritted and are safe for use. Any areas that have not been cleared or gritted will be clearly marked or cordoned off to prevent staff, pupils and visitors from entering.

The supply of grit is monitored to ensure that there is enough to clear ice and snow if these occur – if supplies are low, the headteacher is notified. They will also ensure that there are adequate supplies of equipment, e.g. shovels and gloves, to support gritting and clearance of key routes through the premises. Any damaged or defective equipment will be reported to the office to be replaced.

A record will be made of the areas that have been gritted, along with the frequency of gritting.

6. Health and safety

The school will recognise its duty of care to anyone accessing the site and surrounding grounds. The school will be liable if it is found to have been negligent in its responsibilities and not taken all reasonable measures, given the circumstances, to ensure the health and safety of pupils, staff, visitors and parents entering the school site.

The headteacher will be responsible for ensuring safety on the school site, in accordance with the school's Health and Safety Policy.

Staff, visitors and parents are expected to exercise appropriate care and follow the school's safety instructions whilst on the school grounds. Staff members must take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of pupils and others who may be affected by their actions or omissions.

If anyone believes that the site is unsafe after the appropriate risk assessment has been completed, they will be advised to not enter the school grounds and inform either the headteacher or site manager so the site can be reassessed.

A risk assessment of the site and operating arrangements will be completed or reviewed by the headteacher or another competent person as early as reasonably practicable. Staff will be informed promptly of the outcome and of any restrictions or control measures that apply.

Closing the school will be a reasonable decision if pupils or staff are at risk of serious injury due to the weather conditions.

To minimise the risk of ill health during adverse temperatures, the school will:

- Encourage staff and pupils to keep as much of their skin as possible covered up during the summer months and wearing appropriate clothing during the winter months.
- Encourage the use of suitable sun protection, including sunscreen of at least SPF 30 with appropriate UVA protection, on exposed skin during hot or sunny weather, in accordance with parental arrangements for pupils.
- Encourage staff and pupils to take their breaks in the shade, if possible, rather than staying out in the sun.
- Reschedule work/outdoor lessons according to the outdoor temperature.
- Situate water points and rest areas in the shade during hot temperatures.
- Encourage staff and pupils to always carry an inhaler if needed.
- Encourage staff and pupils to stay hydrated.

To help protect staff, pupils and visitors during adverse cold weather, the school will:

- Ensure heating systems are maintained and in good working order, prioritising rooms being used where appropriate.
- Draught-proof windows, doors and other points of energy loss.
- Close rooms or buildings that are too cold to be used.
- Ventilate indoor spaces, especially where people gather, to help reduce the risk of infections spreading.
- Promote the flu vaccine for eligible staff and pupils and encourage parents to keep their children up to date with routine immunisations.
- Reinforce messaging around the importance of hand and respiratory hygiene.
- Encourage physical activity where appropriate to help keep pupils warm.
- Provide information to parents and pupils on important logistical changes, e.g. disrupted bus routes, during severe weather.
- Ensure pupils have a sufficient supply of hot meals and snacks.

- Signpost parents to key sources of support, e.g. heating and other energy efficiency measures, during cold weather periods.

Relevant staff members will be trained and made aware of how to recognise the signs that a pupil may be suffering from ill health due to adverse weather conditions. All staff will understand the school's Emergency Plan.

Where adverse weather could affect evacuation or access arrangements, the school will review relevant PEEPs and ensure that safe routes and suitable assistance remain available. Particular consideration will be given to pupils with mobility, sensory, communication or behavioural needs.

Where a pupil is suffering from heat exhaustion, the following steps will be taken immediately:

- Moving the pupil to as cool a room as possible and encouraging them to drink cold water
- Cooling the pupil as rapidly as possible, using whatever methods possible, e.g. sponging or spraying the pupil with cool water, placing cold packs around the neck and armpits, wrapping the pupil in a cool, wet sheet, and assisting cooling using a fan.
- Where the pupil does not respond to treatment within 30 minutes, an ambulance will be called.
- If the pupil loses consciousness or has a fit, they will be placed in the recovery position and an ambulance called immediately; treatment to cool the pupil will continue until the ambulance arrives.

Where a pupil is suspected to be suffering from heatstroke, 999 will be called immediately and the pupil will be cooled down in line with the procedures for managing heat exhaustion outlined above whilst awaiting medical assistance.

Where a pupil loses consciousness or experiences a fit or seizure, they will be placed in the recovery position, 999 will be called immediately and staff will follow the operator's instructions.

7. Attendance

Attendance will be recorded using the statutory attendance codes that apply to the circumstances. Where the whole school is unexpectedly closed due to adverse weather, pupils will be recorded using code Y4. Where transport normally provided by the school or local authority is unavailable, code Y1 may apply; where widespread disruption to travel prevents attendance, code Y2 may apply.

Where the school remains open, the appropriate attendance code will be determined on the individual circumstances and in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and current DfE attendance guidance. An adverse-weather absence will not automatically be treated as authorised or unauthorised solely because of the weather.

The school will take particular account of whether a pupil relies on local authority or commissioned SEND transport and whether travel was reasonably possible and safe.

Parents should check the school's official communications and notify the school promptly where adverse weather prevents attendance.

During periods of adverse weather conditions, staff members will be expected to make all reasonable efforts to attend work and are encouraged to liaise with the headteacher to discuss difficulties attending work due to adverse weather.

Whilst staff members are expected to make reasonable efforts to attend work, they must not place themselves at unreasonable personal risk. Staff who anticipate difficulty attending should contact the headteacher as early as possible so that safe staffing and operational arrangements can be considered.

8. Assessment disruption

Where adverse weather disrupts planned assessments, tests or other curriculum activities, the headteacher will make proportionate alternative arrangements that protect pupils' safety and minimise disruption to learning.

Where an external or statutory assessment is affected, the school will follow any applicable DfE, Standards and Testing Agency or awarding-body requirements.

Parents and pupils will be informed promptly of any changes to assessment arrangements. These may include:

- Rescheduling an assessment or activity where appropriate.
- Using an alternative suitable location or method where this can be done safely and in accordance with relevant requirements.
- Following any specific contingency arrangements issued by the relevant assessment body.

9. Clothing

During hot or sunny weather, and where indicated by the school's risk assessment or Weather-Health Alerts, staff and pupils will be encouraged to protect exposed skin and, where appropriate, wear a suitable sun-safe hat.

Pupils without sun-safe hats will only be permitted to play in an area protected from the sun, unless a sun-safe hat has been provided. Pupils not wearing sun-safe clothing will be required to play in an area protected from the sun, if spare clothing cannot be provided.

During the winter months, pupils are advised to attend school with suitable clothing and footwear. Appropriate clothing should be worn for the conditions, e.g. waterproof clothing in rain and warm clothing and gloves in snow or very cold weather.

10. Emergency plan

In the case of an emergency relating to adverse weather, the school will follow their planned emergency procedure, in accordance with the Emergency Plan.

The Emergency Plan will contain:

- Information on where to find parents' contact details.
- Staff contact details for out-of-hours emergencies.
- Details of which staff members have agreed to perform certain tasks during an emergency.

All nominated staff will be trained to:

- Contact and liaise with emergency services.
- Provide first aid.

- Move pupils to a safe place.
- Calm and comfort children.
- Contact parents.
- Deal with any media interest.

Parents will be informed of the school's emergency communication and collection arrangements, including their responsibility to keep contact details up to date and to follow instructions concerning safe collection or transport.

The Emergency Plan will take account of pupils with SEND and individual vulnerabilities, including communication requirements, medical needs, mobility, sensory needs, emotional regulation and PEEPs. Where pupils rely on local authority or commissioned transport, contingency arrangements will include communication with relevant transport providers and placing authorities where appropriate.

11. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the headteacher and Directors.