

# Hitchin Girls' School



## Adverse Weather Policy

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## Statement of intent

It is the aim of Hitchin Girls' School 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 \(School Premises\) Regulations 1999](#)
- [UKHSA 'Looking after children and those in early years settings during heatwaves: for teachers and professionals'](#)
- [UKHSA 'Looking after children and those in early years settings before and during cold weather: teachers and other educational professionals'](#)
- [UKHSA 'Adverse Weather and Health Plan'](#)
- [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
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- School Uniform Policy
- Remote Education Policy
- Emergency Plan
- Exam Contingency Plan

# 2. Roles and responsibilities

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Deciding whether the school will close due to adverse weather.
- Informing parents and staff of any closure.
- Deciding whether students 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 students in terms of sun safety.
- Ensuring staff receive appropriate training and guidance on the stipulations in this policy.

The Premises Manager is responsible for:

- Completing a risk assessment that covers adverse weather and gritting.
- Ensuring gritting is carried out in line with the procedures outlined in this policy.
- Ensuring all equipment is maintained and stored properly, notifying the headteacher of any damages.

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 students, 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 students, this includes escorting students to the entrance to be collected by their parents.
- Modelling good practice in terms of sun safety.
- Encouraging students to stay appropriately hydrated.

Parents are responsible for:

- Collecting students, where required, when the school needs to close.
- Keeping all their contact information up-to-date.
- Ensuring students wear the appropriate footwear and clothing for adverse weather.

Students are responsible for:

- Following the School Uniform Policy.
- Only using the designated and cleared areas whilst on the school premises.

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

### 3. School closure

The School Business Manager has signed the school up to receive [Weather-Health Alerts](#) from the UKHSA and Met Office, which will provide weather outlooks over the next 30 days, providing guidance and advice on any steps needed to prepare for extreme weather events.

The Headteacher is signed up to receive alerts from HCC Warn and Inform and will be updated in the event of severe weather or if a public emergency is declared by the Local Authority.

Hitchin Girls' 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, who has taken advice from the School Business Manager and the Premises Manager in respect of the Health & Safety of the school site. The Chair of Trustees will also be consulted when making a decision about school closure. In the absence of the Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher will assume the responsibility of the Headteacher in relation to the Adverse Weather Policy.

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

In the event of school closure:

- The Headteacher and members of the Senior Leadership Group will inform staff.
- Upon the Headteachers instruction, the Office Team will inform parents via text message and email.
- The School Business Manager will arrange for Digital & Media Resources Assistant to post an update on the school website and social media channels.
- The School Business Manager will email [SchoolsCNS@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:SchoolsCNS@hertfordshire.gov.uk) to make the Local Authority aware.
- The Premises Manager will arrange for the Site Team to display 'closure' signs on the school's entrance gates.

In the event of the school having to close during the day, parents will be contacted via text message or telephone, using the numbers provided on the emergency contacts list.

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 students.

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 line with the appropriate risk assessment.

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 students arrive on the premises.

The Premises Manager will place health and safety caution signs to warn users of the increased hazards on site, if there are any, and a notice will be erected to inform vehicles and pedestrians entering the school grounds that they do so at their own risk.

At the Headteacher's discretion, during periods of adverse weather conditions, the playground may be out-of-bounds to students and parents.

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 students and staff. This includes the main entrance of the school, as well as the following areas: paths from car parks to buildings and pedestrian routes between buildings.

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

The Premises Manager 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, students and visitors from entering.

The supply of grit is monitored to ensure that there is a sufficient amount to clear ice and snow if these occur – if supplies are low, the Headteacher is notified. The Premises Manager 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 School Business Manager 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 students, 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 have the personal responsibility to express caution and take responsibility for their own health and safety whilst on the school grounds. Staff members must take responsibility for the health and safety of any students under their supervision.

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 Premises Manager so the site can be reassessed.

A risk assessment of the site will be conducted by the Premises Manager in order to assess any potential hazards due to the weather conditions and the Headteacher will be informed of the outcome at 7.15am.

Closing the school will be a reasonable decision if students 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 students to keep as much of their skin as possible covered up during the summer months and wearing appropriate clothing during the winter months.
- Encourage staff and students to use sunscreen of at least sun protection factor (SPF) 15 with UVA protection on any part of the body that they cannot cover up during the Summer months.
- Encourage staff and students 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 students to carry an inhaler at all times if needed.
- Encourage staff and students to stay hydrated.

To help protect staff, students 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 students, 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 students warm.
- Provide information to parents and students on important logistical changes, e.g. disrupted bus routes, during severe weather.
- Ensure students 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 student may be suffering from ill health due to adverse weather conditions. All staff will understand the school's Emergency Plan.

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

- Moving the student to as cool a room as possible and encouraging them to drink cold water
- Cooling the student as rapidly as possible, using whatever methods possible, e.g. sponging or spraying the student 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 student does not respond to treatment within 30 minutes, an ambulance will be called.
- If the student 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 student is suspected to be suffering from heatstroke, 999 will be called immediately and the student will be cooled down in line with the procedures for managing heat exhaustion outlined above whilst awaiting medical assistance.

Where a student 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

Where the school is officially closed, all absence will be registered as authorised.

When a student cannot attend the school due to adverse weather conditions, the student will be marked in the register as having an authorised absence and will, therefore, not affect the school's attendance statistics.

If the Headteacher believes the student could have safely made it to school but did not attend, the student will be marked in the register as having an unauthorised absence.

Parents acting on the assumption that the school is closed, without gaining confirmation, or failing to inform the school of the circumstances that prevent the student coming into school, risk the student's absence being registered as an unauthorised absence.

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.

The school will understand that, whilst staff members are expected to make all reasonable efforts to attend work, it is essential to minimise personal risk. It will therefore be at the discretion of staff members as to whether they are able to attend work in adverse weather conditions.

In order to comply with health and safety regulations, different age groups may be brought together to be taught under the supervision of the available teachers and support staff. No maximum class size limits are set out.

## 8. Exam disruption

Staff will follow procedures in the school's Exam Contingency Plan in the event of disruption due to adverse weather.

If the school has to close, or if a student misses an exam due to adverse weather conditions, the school will make alternative arrangements with the relevant awarding body.

The school takes full responsibility for informing parents and students of any agreed changes concerning exams in adverse weather conditions. This includes:

- Using alternative venues.
- Exam results being generated by the awarding body, based on other assessments in the same subject.
- The opportunity for the student to sit any missed exam later in the year.

## 9. Clothing

During the summer months, when temperatures reach above 25 degrees Celsius (°C), everyone working at or attending the school will be encouraged to protect their face, neck and ears using a sun-safe hat with a wide brim. Baseball caps or visors are not considered sun-safe hats.

During the Winter months, students are advised to attend school with suitable clothing and footwear. Appropriate clothing should be worn that is suited to the weather conditions, e.g. wearing waterproof clothing in the rain and wearing gloves in the snow.

## 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 students to a safe place.
- Calm and comfort students.
- Contact parents.
- Deal with any media interest.

Each member of Senior Leadership Group will have a copy of the emergency plan and paper copies of the plan will be kept at the nominated staff members' homes in case of out-of-hours emergencies.

## 11. Monitoring and review

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored by the Headteacher, and any necessary amendments will be made during review.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the School Business Manager.

The next review date for this policy is May 2027.