



Dorchester Middle School

Adverse Weather Policy

Date:	March 2026
Next review date:	March 2027
Signed by:	Mr J Webb – Headteacher
Reviewed by:	Miss G Clements – Assistant HT

1. Purpose

This policy explains how *Dorchester Middle School* manages adverse weather conditions to ensure the safety of pupils, staff, and visitors, and to maintain learning continuity in accordance with Department for Education (DfE) guidance and local authority expectations.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All pupils and staff on school premises or taking part in offsite activities
- School transport arrangements
- Extra-curricular activities and trips
- Remote learning provisions via **Microsoft Teams**
- Communication with families via **Arbor**

3. Relevant UK Guidance

- Department for Education – Health and Safety: Advice for Schools
- DfE – Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Met Office Weather Warnings
- HSE Workplace Temperature Guidance
- Local Authority Emergency and Winter Readiness guidance
- Academy Trust/School Business Continuity Plan

4. Types of Adverse Weather

- Snow and ice
- Heavy rain and storms
- High winds
- Flooding (surface water, drainage issues)
- Extreme cold
- Extreme heat
- Fog and reduced visibility
- Lightning
- Air quality concerns

5. Decision-Making Procedures

The **Headteacher** (or designated deputy) will decide whether the school:

- Opens normally
- Opens with modifications (limited access, delayed start)
- Partially closes (specific year groups)
- Fully closes
- Moves to remote learning

Factors considered:

- Met Office warnings (Yellow/Amber/Red)
- Site condition and accessibility
- Staff availability (minimum safe ratios)
- Safety of pupil travel (walking routes, bus feasibility)
- Heating, light, and water systems
- Advice from Local Authority or Trust

Target decision time: by 06:30.

6. Communication Plan (Using Arbor)

All communication with families will be sent via:

- **Arbor App notifications**
- **Arbor email and SMS**
- School website announcement
- School social media (optional)
- Local radio stations

Dorset Council will also post information in their website regarding any disruption to Education (School Closure) and/or School Transport delays and disruption:

- [Dorset Council - School Closure information](#)
- [Dorset Council - School Transport delays and disruptions information](#)

First message sent by 06:45 whenever possible.

Message content will include:

- Nature of the weather issue
- Whether school is open, partially open, or closed
- Revised start or collection times
- Transport updates
- Expected time of next update

Staff will receive updates via:

- Arbor email
- Microsoft Teams (staff channel)
- SMS if required

7. On-Site Safety Procedures

Snow & Ice

- Priority gritting routes prepared by Site Manager (paths, car park access, staff entrance, bus bay).
- Unsafe sections cordoned off.
- Pupils may enter buildings earlier than usual.
- Outdoor break may be moved indoors.

High Winds

- Closure of areas with overhanging trees or loose debris risk.
- Outdoor PE cancelled or relocated indoors.
- Playground equipment use suspended.

Flooding

- Blocked or unsafe entrances closed.
- Classroom or area relocation if needed.
- Supervision increased in wet-floor areas.

Extreme Cold

- Indoor temperatures must meet HSE minimum guidelines where possible.
- Coats permitted indoors if heating is reduced.
- Adjustments made for medically vulnerable pupils.

Extreme Heat

- Additional water and hydration breaks.
- Uniform relaxed (no blazer/tie; hats recommended outdoors).
- PE moved indoors or modified.
- Shaded zones prioritised.

Lightning

- Immediate suspension of all outdoor activities.
- 30-minute rule after the last thunder before resuming activities.

8. Arrival, Dismissal & Transport

- Close coordination with Local Authority transport providers, please check the following link: [Dorset Council - School Transport Delays and Disruptions](#) for further information if your child uses Dorset Council Transport
- If buses cannot operate, the school may partially or fully close.
- Delayed start times may be used to allow safe travel.
- Parents/carers advised not to stop or park in untreated areas.
- Staggered dismissal implemented if weather worsens during the day.

9. Attendance (DfE Compliance)

- When the school is open, pupils should attend if it is safe to do so.
- The school will use the appropriate **DfE attendance codes** for authorised weather-related absences.
- Vulnerable pupils will receive welfare checks if absent during disruption.

10. Remote Learning (Using Microsoft Teams)

In the event of full or partial closure:

Platform:

- **Microsoft Teams** (class channels and assignments)

Provision Includes:

- Daily assignments in core subjects
- Short live check-ins (subject to staffing)
- Recorded explanations where possible
- Clear instructions via Teams and Arbor

Safeguarding (Remote):

- Staff use school accounts only
- No unsupervised 1:1 video calls with pupils
- Cameras optional for pupils
- Online behaviour expectations remain in force

11. Trips, Fixtures & Events

- All trips individually risk-assessed against weather conditions.
- Outdoor activities may be cancelled or moved indoors.
- Parents informed via Arbor of any cancellations or delays.

12. Staff Expectations

- Staff should travel only if it is safe.
- Headteacher may authorise remote work where appropriate.
- Staff must report travel issues as early as possible.
- Minimum staffing levels must be met to operate safely.

13. Utility & Building Failure

If the school suffers:

- Loss of heating
- Loss of power
- Loss of water
- Structural damage

The Headteacher, in consultation with the Trust/LA, may partially or fully close the school. Parents will be informed through Arbor.

14. Reopening After Severe Weather

Prior to reopening, the Site Manager will conduct a full inspection:

- Check gritted routes
- Assess buildings for leaks, flooding, or damage
- Ensure heating and power are functioning
- Verify safe access to classrooms, playgrounds, and car parks

Only when the site is safe will the school reopen.

15. Staff & Parent Training

- Annual winter communication to parents via Arbor
- Annual staff briefing on procedures and routes
- Emergency test message via Arbor once per year (optional)
- Updated gritting plan and maps reviewed every October

16. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by:

- Headteacher
- Governors or Academy Trust
- Site Manager (for operational updates)

