

WEST KIRBY EDUCATIONAL TRUST

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West Kirby Educational Trust

Adverse Weather Policy

2026-2027

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Statement of intent

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

West Kirby Educational Trust intends to, wherever possible, make the decision to close the school before the teaching day commences, rather than defer the decision and delay the opening of the school.

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. School policies and procedures

1.1. This policy will be implemented in accordance with the following school policies and procedures:

- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- Equality Act 2010
- SEND Code of Practice
- DfE Emergency Planning and Response Guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004

2. Decision to close

2.1. The decision to close the school will be made by the HEADTEACHER.

2.2. The Estates, Operations & Health and Safety Lead and the chair of governors will be consulted when making a decision about school closure.

2.3. In the absence of the HEADTEACHER, the Estates, Operations & Health and Safety Lead will assume the responsibility of the HEADTEACHER in relation to the Adverse Weather Policy.

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

- Travel to and from the site is considered to be unsafe, or;
- Conditions on site are considered to be unsafe and are likely to present danger to users of the site, or;
- Staff numbers are insufficient for the school to be operated safely.

2.5. In the event of school closure:

- The decision to close will be communicated by the HEADTEACHER to the Senior Leadership Team, Marketing Manager, and The Estates, Operations and Health & Safety Lead
- The Marketing Manager will (with urgency and without delay) inform staff and parents via text message and email.

- The Marketing Manager will (with urgency and without delay) post an update on the school website.
 - Premises Manager will (with urgency and without delay) display 'closure' signs on the school's entrance gates.
 - The Estates, Operations & Health and Safety Lead will call the local radio station (if deemed helpful). It is noted that parents will have previously been made aware that announcements concerning the school may be broadcasted via the local radio station.
- 2.6. In the event of the school having to close during the day, parents will be contacted via text message or telephone, using the number(s) recorded on each pupil's record card. Parents / pupils' transport providers will be asked to collect their / the child from the school. This will be coordinated by the Premises manager with support from the Deputy Head and Assistant Head Teachers (as required).
- 2.7. Should a total closure of the school be announced before the school opens and staff are instructed to remain at home, they will be expected to be 'available' and 'fully contactable' for work during their contracted hours of employment.
- 2.8. A closure of the school during the day and an early release of staff will only be considered in extreme circumstances. Staff may be prioritised for early release in accordance with the circumstances of each event.
- 2.9. Where reasonably practicable, the school may implement remote learning arrangements or provide alternative educational resources during periods of closure. The school will consider the needs of pupils with SEND when implementing remote learning arrangements and will seek to provide accessible and appropriate support wherever possible.

3. Remaining open in adverse weather conditions

- 3.1. When deciding whether the school will remain open, a risk assessment will be conducted by Estates, Operations and Health & Safety Lead and submitted to the HEADTEACHER. This will be regularly reviewed and updated during the period of adverse weather.
- 3.2. The HEADTEACHER and Estates, Operations & Health and Safety Lead will pay due regard to local and national weather updates in relation to adverse weather conditions and their development if the school remains open.
- 3.3. If the school remains open and when there has been snowfall or the site is icy, access to the site for pedestrians will be restricted to the pedestrian gates only.
- 3.4. Premises Manager will place health and safety caution signs to warn users of the increased hazards on site.
- 3.5. In the event of snow or ice, all pathways, wherever practically possible, will have been cleared and gritted.
- 3.6. A notice will be erected to inform that vehicles and pedestrians entering the school grounds do so at their own risk.
- 3.7. At the HEADTEACHER / Estates, Operations & Health and Safety Lead's discretion, during periods of adverse weather conditions (for example high winds, snow or ice), the

playground and use of outdoor spaces may be out-of-bounds to pupils, staff and parents. Further restrictions may be considered and introduced that are appropriate to manage risks according to any adverse weather conditions.

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

3A. SEND and Vulnerable Pupil Considerations

3A.1 The School recognises that adverse weather conditions may disproportionately affect pupils with SEND, medical needs or mobility difficulties.

3A.2 When assessing whether the School can operate safely, consideration will be given to:

- accessibility of pathways and entrances
- transport availability
- staffing ratios
- supervision requirements
- medical vulnerabilities
- emotional wellbeing
- sensory regulation needs

3A.3 Where appropriate, individual risk assessments, healthcare plans and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) will be considered as part of operational decision-making during adverse weather conditions.

3A.4 The School will seek to communicate any significant operational changes to parents and carers as early as reasonably practicable.

4. Health and safety

- 4.1. The school has a duty of care to anyone accessing the site and surrounding grounds.
- 4.2. The school may be liable if it is found that the school has been negligent in its responsibilities and has not taken all reasonable measures, given the circumstances, to ensure the health and safety of pupils, staff, visitors and parents entering the school site.
- 4.3. The Estates, Operations & Health and Safety Lead is responsible for ensuring safety on the school site, in accordance with the school's Health and Safety Policy.
- 4.4. 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.
- 4.5. Individuals must take responsibility for the health and safety of any children under their supervision.
- 4.6. If anyone believes that the site is unsafe after the Snow and Ice Risk Assessment has been completed, it is advised that they do not enter the school grounds and inform either the HEADTEACHER or Estates, Operations & Health and Safety Lead so the safety can be reassessed.
- 4.7. In the event of adverse weather conditions, Premises Manager will assess the school site and inform the Estates, Operations and Health & Safety Lead by 7.30am of the state of site.

- 4.8. A risk assessment of the site will be conducted in order to assess any potential hazards due to the weather conditions, as per 3.1.
- 4.9. Closing the school is a reasonable decision if pupils or staff are at risk of serious injury due to the weather conditions.
- 4.10. When roads are impassable, the health and safety issue is overridden by the practical issue of access.

5. Limited staff numbers

- 5.1. During periods of adverse weather conditions, staff members are expected to make all reasonable efforts to attend work if it is safe to do so, whether this means they will be late or not.
- 5.2. Staff members are expected to assess the availability of all public transport and consider the feasibility of walking to work, if they live relatively close and are fit and able to do so, in order to attend work.
- 5.3. The school understands that, whilst staff members are expected to make all reasonable efforts to attend work, it is essential to minimise personal risk.
- 5.4. In line with 5.3, it is therefore at the discretion of staff members as to whether they are able to attend work in adverse weather conditions.
- 5.5. Staff members are required to consider local weather conditions, distance, availability of public transport, and fitness to walk when making their decision.
- 5.6. Staff members are required to liaise with the HEADTEACHER or Estates, Operations & Health and Safety Lead to discuss options of attending work.
- 5.7. The HEADTEACHER / Estates, Operations & Health and Safety Lead may (at their sole discretion) opt to limit staff numbers in the building and contact staff instructing them not to attend site (depending on the circumstances). In these circumstances any staff instructed to remain at home will still be expected to be 'available' and 'fully contactable' for work during their contracted hours of employment.
- 5.8. 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.
 - A limit of 30 pupils per class will apply if the majority of children will reach the age of five, six or seven in that school year.
- 5.9. The school will continue to strive to provide high-quality education in the given circumstances.

6. Attendance statistics

- 6.1. Where the school is officially closed, all absence is registered as authorised.

- 6.2. When a pupil cannot attend the school due to adverse weather conditions, the pupil will be marked in the register as having an authorised absence and will, therefore, not affect the school's attendance statistics.
- 6.3. If the HEADTEACHER believes the pupil could have safely made it to school but did not attend, the pupil will be marked in the register as having an unauthorised absence.
- 6.4. Parents acting on the assumption that the school would be closed, without gaining confirmation, or failing to inform the school of the circumstances that prevent the child coming into school, risk their child's absence being registered as an unauthorised absence.

7. Exam disruption

- 7.1. If the school has to close, or if a child misses an exam due to adverse weather conditions, the school will make alternative arrangements with the relevant awarding body.
- 7.2. The school takes full responsibility for informing parents and pupils 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 pupil to sit any missed exam later in the year.

8. Emergency plan

- 8.1. In the case of an emergency relating to adverse weather, the school will follow their planned emergency procedure, in accordance with the First Aid Policy.
- 8.2. West Kirby Educational Trust emergency plan will contain:
 - Information on where to find parent contact details.
 - Staff contact details for out-of-hours emergencies.
 - Details of which staff members have agreed to perform certain tasks during an emergency.
- 8.3. 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.
- 8.4. Each member of staff will have a copy of the emergency plan.
 - 8.5. Paper copies of the plan will be kept at nominated staff members' homes in case of out-of-hours emergencies.
 - 8.6. All parents will be sent a letter informing them of their responsibilities, e.g. their duty to collect children.
 - 8.7. During extended closures or significant disruption, the School will consider safeguarding and welfare arrangements for vulnerable pupils, including those subject to safeguarding plans, social care involvement or medical support arrangements.

9. Monitoring and review

- 9.1. The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored by the HEADTEACHER and Estates, Operations & Health and Safety Lead, and any necessary amendments will be made during review.