



DANES HILL SCHOOL

Adverse Weather & Emergency Closure Policy

This policy applies to the Prep-School and Pre-Prep School

Owner	Deputy Head Organisation & Co- Curriculum and Operations Director		
Reviewed by	Head, Deputy Head Organisation & Co- Curriculum and Operations Director	Date of review	January 2026
Authorised by	SMT	Authorisation date	07/01/2026
Next review		Date of next Review:	January 2027

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1. Aims

- 1.1 Danes Hill School aims to remain open during adverse weather whenever it is safe and practical to do so. This policy sets out procedures for operating during adverse weather; grounds for delayed opening, restricted opening, or closure; communication systems for parents, pupils, and staff; and staff expectations during adverse weather events.
- 1.2 Adverse weather includes: *snow, ice, freezing rain, extreme cold, heatwaves, high winds and conditions that pose travel or site-safety risks.*

2. Legal framework and other policies

- 1.1 This policy operates in accordance with the following guidance and legislations:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999
- DfE: Emergency planning and response for education, childcare, and children's social care settings
- UKHSA: Adverse Weather and Health Plan; guidance for heatwaves and cold weather

- 1.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- First Aid Policy and Medical Handbook
- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Behaviour and Rewards Policy
- Critical Incident Policy and Procedures
- Feedback Policy

3. Roles & responsibilities

3.1 Head

Final decision-maker for opening, restricted opening, delayed start, or closure; may defer to Deputy or Operations Director. Consults Chair of Governors for significant closures.

3.2 Operations Director / Site Manager/Head of Grounds

- Leads early site inspection and adverse-weather risk assessment (from 06:00–06:30).
- Subscribes to UKHSA/Met Office Weather-Health Alerts and monitors Met Office warnings.

- Implements phased gritting and deploys signage/barriers; keeps gritting records. Ensures snow-clearing equipment and grit stocks are adequate.
- Confirms utilities, heating and lighting status; prioritises safe access routes.
- Ensures safeguarding continuity and appropriate classroom temperatures.
- Maintains and stores equipment; reports defects; ensures adequate grit/equipment.

3.3 Head of Compliance

- Audits risk assessments and monitors relevant actions
- Ensures policies are in date and reflecting the current procedures
- Directs staff training/awareness on weather-related health and safety.
- Keeps up to date with any changes in legislation or statutory guidance and advises the SLT and Governors

3.4 Admin & Communications Team

- Issues parent and staff notifications (SMS/MIS, email, website banner, social media); updates reception voicemail.
- Logs all communications and maintains contact data accuracy.

3.5 Staff

- Make every reasonable effort to attend without compromising personal safety; notify relevant leader by 06:45, if unable to travel.
- Wear appropriate footwear/clothing in adverse weather; model good practice for pupils.
- Maintain communication with line managers; undertake remote tasks where role permits.

3.6 Parents/Carers

- Use designated, cleared areas on site; keep contact details up-to-date.
- Collect pupils promptly if early closure is announced; ensure children have suitable clothing/footwear.

3.7 Pupils

- Follow School Uniform Policy and staff instructions during adverse weather.

4. Decision-making and thresholds

1.1 Decisions are based on site/travel safety, bus service status, utilities/heating, minimum safe staffing, and Met Office/UKHSA alerts. There is no fixed snow-depth threshold.

Condition/Indicator	Risk Level (L/M/H)	Action
Icy priority paths; gritting underway	Moderate	Open with restrictions; enforce gritted routes; consider flexible start
Partial bus cancellations	Moderate-High	Open if staffing is safe; advise parents about transport; consider delayed start
Heating failure/frozen pipes	High	Close affected areas or full closure; communicate immediately
Amber/Red weather warning; local travel disruption	High	Full closure or early closure
Onsite conditions deteriorate during the day	High	Early closure; stagger pick-up; staff remain until last pupil departs

5. Timing of decisions

- Morning status (open/restricted/delayed/closed) issued by 07:00.
- Advanced warning may be issued the evening before when forecast indicates likely closure/restrictions.
- Early-closure decisions (mid-session) communicated immediately, and as soon as possible, if conditions worsen.

6. Communication protocol

- Primary channels: SMS (MIS), email, school website banner, social media; reception voicemail updated.
- Parents/carers: 07:00 morning update; immediate notices for early closure.
- Staff: Teams and email; critical roles acknowledge receipt.
- Transport providers: notified after decision; confirm service status.

7. Operational procedures

7.1 Morning of event

- Premises inspection (from 06:00–06:30): paths, car parks, entrances, utilities, lighting.
- Grit priority routes; place signage/barriers; mark non-gritted areas.
- Confirm bus status and key staff availability.
- 07:00 Head/Operations Director decision meeting; trigger communications.

7.1 During the day

- Monitor conditions hourly; adjust playground access and timetable.
- Use only gritted, supervised routes; restrict unsafe areas.
- Maintain warm indoor spaces; manage wet floors to avoid slips.

7.2 Early closure process (mid-session)

- Issue SMS/email and website update; specify entrances for collection.
- Teachers keep pupils in classrooms; release only to authorised adults.
- Senior staff remain until last pupil leaves; log times and incidents.

8. Site safety measures and phased gritting

Follow the Snow and Adverse Weather Risk Assessment

- Phase 1 gritting: main pedestrian spine, reception/main entrances, staff entrances, car-park pedestrian lanes, Pre-Prep access.
- Phase 2 gritting: secondary routes and areas not covered in Phase 1.
- Close untreated steps/ramps; deploy “Use gritted path” signage; cordon unsafe areas.
- Record areas and times gritted; monitor grit/equipment stocks.

9. Health & safety (cold and hot weather)

9.1 Cold weather:

- maintain heating; close rooms too cold; ventilate indoor spaces appropriately; promote hygiene; provide hot meals/snacks where possible.
- Encourage suitable winter clothing and footwear; restrict outdoor activities if temperatures are very low.
- Lessons where pupils are seated/at rest will not take place if the indoor temperature drops

below 16 degrees Celsius. The Sports Hall and Climbing Wall – indoors

9.2 Heat:

- promote sun safety (hats, sunscreen SPF 15+), shade and hydration; adapt lessons/activities; use ventilation and fans/portable AC where needed.
- Inform parents of logistical changes (e.g., transport disruptions) during severe weather.

10. Attendance and exams

- Where the school is officially closed, pupil absence will be authorised.
- If the school is open but travel is unsafe locally, parents should inform the school; absence may be authorised in line with the Attendance Policy.
- To maintain ratios, classes may be temporarily merged where safe and appropriate.
- Exams: follow the Exam Contingency Plan; liaise with awarding bodies for alternative arrangements and communicate changes to parents/pupils.

11. Emergency & business continuity

- Danes Hill School maintains realistic procedures to ensure safety and continuity during emergencies including adverse weather, utility failure, or unexpected site issues. These include: allocation of roles, contacts, first aid, safe pupil movement, media handling, and parent communications.
- The Critical Incident Policy contains guidance on communications, log-keeping, welfare, business continuity and other procedures to be followed in a critical emergency situation.

12. Monitoring and review

- Effectiveness monitored by the Head and Operations Director; reviewed annually or after significant adverse-weather events.
- Updates communicated to stakeholders; related policies cross-referenced.

13. Continuity of Education During Closure

Note: In the event of a full or partial closure, the school will continue pastoral and academic support in a manageable, age-appropriate way. The priority is pupil safety and wellbeing, followed by timely, accessible work and light-touch feedback to sustain engagement.

13.1 Aims

- Provide a seamless approach within 24–48 hours that all teachers can adopt.
- Ensure effective education for all pupils, irrespective of where pupils or staff are located.
- Minimise teacher workload with clear expectations.
- Offer clear guidance to teachers, pupils and parents.

13.2 Principles

- Consistency of approach across subjects and year groups.
- Accessibility and equity of provision.
- Proportionate expectations balancing learning with wellbeing.

13.3 Day-one response

- Closure communications via email, website and established channels; regular updates thereafter.
- Each subject teacher prepares one piece of work for each year group; tasks are typically optional on Day 1 to encourage voluntary engagement.
- Resources saved in each year group's Teams site under the 'School Closure' folder; access instructions sent by the Deputy Head Academic.
- Provision may escalate after Day 1 if closure continues, as directed by SLT.

13.4 Type of work by phase

- **Pre-Prep:** fun activities suitable for their age and ability.
- **Years 2-4:** Fun, engaging tasks requiring no electronic devices (e.g., art projects, simple science activities, physical challenges).
- **Years 5-8:** Tasks may involve use of devices (e.g., research, creative writing, interactive online tools). Teachers ensure digital tools are easily accessible.

13.5 Pastoral support

- Class teachers/form tutors may check in with pupils to support wellbeing and answer queries.

13.6 Feedback and engagement

- Pupils may submit work online; teachers acknowledge and provide constructive feedback where required to sustain motivation.

13.7 Teacher collaboration and workload

- Teachers are encouraged to collaborate and share resources to minimise workload.
- SLT will communicate clear expectations appropriate to the duration and scale of closure.

13.8 Monitoring and review

- Approach reviewed regularly with feedback from pupils, parents and staff; adjustments made as needed.

14. Summary Checklist: Adverse Weather & Emergency Closure

1. Safety First Decision:

- Assess site safety, travel conditions, utilities, staffing levels and Met Office/UKHSA alerts.
- Decide: ***Open/ Restricted/ Delayed Start/ Close***

2. Early Inspection & Timing:

- Site inspection from **06:00–06:30**.
- Final morning decision and communications issued by **07:00**.
- If possible, pre-empt with a warning email the night before – circulating this policy.
- Ongoing hourly review if conditions change.

3. Clear Communication:

- Notify parents and staff via: *SMS, email, website banner and social media*.
- Update reception voicemail and transport providers.
- Issue immediate updates if early closure is required.

4. Operational Control:

- Implement **phased gritting**, signage and restricted routes.
- Close unsafe areas; supervise movement on gritted paths only.
- Maintain warm, safe indoor spaces and appropriate supervision ratios.
- Review and close the school if conditions worsen during the day (mid-session) – communicate early collection plans asap.

5. Staff, Pupils & Attendance:

- Staff make reasonable efforts to attend safely; notify by **06:45** if unable.
- Absence authorised if school is closed or travel is unsafe.
- Exams managed in line with the Exam Contingency Plan.

6. Continuity & Review:

- Activate remote/alternative learning within 24–48 hours, if closed.
- Prioritise wellbeing and proportionate expectations.
- Log decisions/actions and review policy after significant events.

Appendix A – Decision flow (simplified)

- 06:00 Premises inspection
- 07:00 Review bus/staffing and decide status (Open / Restricted / Delay / Close)
- 07:00 Communications issued (parents, staff, buses, website/social)
- From 07:30 Controlled arrival or site closed
- Ongoing hourly review; early-closure protocol if conditions deteriorate

Appendix B – Communication checklist

- SMS to parents/carers (status and instructions)
- Email with details/FAQs
- Website banner update
- Social media update (link to website)
- Bus company notification (status and routes)
- Staff Teams message and email (roles confirmed)
- Reception voicemail updated

Appendix C – Morning inspection checklist (Premises)

- Grit applied to priority paths and entrances
- Car parks assessed; pedestrian lanes marked
- Steps/ramps assessed; closures/signage in place
- Heating, plumbing and site lighting functioning; no leaks or frozen pipes
- Barriers/cones deployed for unsafe areas