

WHS006 – INCLEMENT WEATHER CONDITIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

POLICY CONTEXT

Willunga Waldorf School is a co-educational and gender-inclusive school. The school's mission is to provide Steiner education from early childhood to year 12, based on the work of Rudolf Steiner. This education is driven by a deep understanding and respect for the developing and unfolding human being.

The School seeks to be a safe, just, compassionate, responsive and inclusive place for all.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to confirm Willunga Waldorf School's commitment to the safety and well-being of its students, staff, and visitors during inclement weather conditions.

This document outlines the School's standard operating procedures for handling common adverse weather conditions, including:

- Hot weather
- Wet weather
- Strong winds
- Thunderstorms and lightning

This policy and the associated procedures apply to all students, staff and visitors at the School, including during school hours, extracurricular activities, and special events that take place at 1 Jay Drive, Willunga.

Staff organising excursions, camps and other off-site events that include outdoor activities will consider and respond to extreme weather conditions in their risk assessment and management processes.

DEFINITIONS / GLOSSARY

Inclement weather – severe weather conditions that make it unsafe or unreasonable for an employee to work or for outdoor student activities to take place. Examples of inclement weather include:

- Extreme temperatures
- Heavy rain, hail and snow
- Strong winds
- Severe dust storms
- Lightning or thunderstorms

Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) – Australia's national weather, climate and water agency and the primary source of information related to weather conditions and their potential impact on school activities.

Damaging winds – sustained winds of gale force (63 km/h) or more, or wind gusts of 90 km/h or more.

Dust storms – strong, turbulent winds greater than 30 km/h that carry fine particles of dust from the surrounding area.

POLICY STATEMENT

Willunga Waldorf School prioritises the safety of all students, staff, and visitors during inclement weather conditions. In such cases, outdoor activities will be adjusted, suspended or if necessary cancelled. Staff and students will be moved to safe indoor locations as needed.

The School will monitor weather conditions closely and communicate any schedule changes or disruptions promptly to parents and guardians.

PROCEDURES

1. EXTREME HEAT

The Leadership Team will consult the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website every morning during terms 4 and 1 to stay informed of the temperature forecast.

The temperature and humidity levels sought from the BOM will be for the Noarlunga area.

The decision to cancel a planned excursion will be made by the relevant Faculty Leader in consultation with the Head of School by 12noon the previous day. They will advise Front Office staff to send out an email to relevant families confirming the decision by close of business that day.

Activities and events may be modified or cancelled due to other factors (e.g. excessive humidity, strong winds etc.) even if the temperature is below 33°C.

Temperatures between 33°C and 35°C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All food and drink to be kept inside classrooms, where practicable. • Staff encourage students to stay hydrated and remain in shaded or air-conditioned areas when possible. • Staff to monitor students and self for signs and symptoms of heat-related illness. • Misters and sprinklers turned on during lunch on PS Oval (Cf Appendix A – Mister and Sprinkler Use) • Outdoor activities may be adjusted or modified. • Yard duty staff to monitor surface temperature of outdoor surfaces and play equipment before allowing students access.
Temperatures 36°C and above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No outside play. • Classrooms opened with teachers present and air conditioning on. • Children may play in shaded Junior Primary area within sight of classroom door at class teacher's discretion. • No visits to Bush Kindy. • No work in the wetlands. • No local outdoor excursions (e.g. Rose Garden visit). • All food and drink to be kept inside classrooms, where practicable. • Staff encourage students to stay hydrated. • Staff to monitor students and self for signs and symptoms of heat-related illness. • Outdoor activities moved indoors, postponed or cancelled.

Trees and Heat

During prolonged hot weather, heat stress can cause branches and limbs to break. Eucalyptus trees are especially dangerous during hot weather as they will shed healthy branches or limbs to preserve water in the rest of the tree.

Extra care should be taken around trees by each member of staff during prolonged hot weather as it may not be safe for anyone to sit, stand or play under trees.

2. RAIN AND HAIL

School will remain open, but outdoor activities may be suspended, modified, postponed or cancelled.

- Staff, students and visitors are to seek shelter immediately during hailstorms where hail stones are larger than 2cm in size.
- Outdoor play, sports training and similar activities will proceed during light rain where students have appropriate wet weather attire (raincoat and gumboots) and/or the facilities to dry off and change after the activity has finished.
- If rain intensifies during recess or lunch, the teacher on duty in the Upper Primary School area will assess the situation. If they deem the rainfall too heavy, they will ring the bell, signalling for all students and teachers to return to their classrooms.
- If necessary and practicable, the yard duty teachers must relieve each class teacher so they can have a five-minute break.

Outdoor activities may resume when the weather improves and provided areas are clear of other risk factors (e.g. no tree or other debris, ground not flooded, etc).

3. STRONG/DAMAGING WINDS AND DUST STORMS

Outdoor activities and events will be postponed or cancelled if wind speeds reach damaging levels. Strong winds can also cause dust storms, which can negatively impact visibility and a person's health (especially those with pre-existing respiratory illness such as asthma).

Staff and students will be directed to stay inside.

Outdoor activities may resume when the weather improves and provided areas are clear of other risk factors (e.g. no tree or other debris, ground not flooded, etc).

4. THUNDERSTORMS AND LIGHTNING

Outdoor activities will be suspended immediately when thunderstorms or lightning are detected. Students will be moved to safe indoor locations until conditions improve. All staff and visitors are advised to seek secure shelter as a matter of urgency.

Please refer to Appendix B for a summary of recommendations on how to behave during lightning.

Outdoor activities may be resumed once at least 30 minutes have passed since the last sighting of lightning or sound of thunder, provided areas are clear of other risk factors (e.g. no tree or other debris, ground not flooded, etc).

NB: The "30/30 Rule" previously adopted by the School DOES NO LONGER APPLY. The updated advice in the Australian Standard in Lightning Protection is to stop all outdoor activities once thunder is heard, or in the event of weather tracking devices (e.g. on camps), if the storm is 15km away regardless of the timing of the thunder and lighting.¹

¹ Guidance Note for Outdoor Activities to prepare for Bushfire and Severe Weather Conditions, Outdoor Council of Australia, versions 2.4 May 2024, section 4.3

Thunderstorm Asthma

Thunderstorms can be very serious for people who suffer from asthma.

Staff should pay extra attention to students known to have asthma and respond in accordance with their asthma action plan.

RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND DOCUMENTS

Related School Policies, Procedures and Guidelines	EM001 – Critical Incident Management Policy and Procedures HS001 – Child Safe Environment Policy HS015 – Administration of First Aid Policy and Procedures HS018 – Skin Protection Policy WHS001 – Work Health and Safety Policy OE004 – Camps and Excursion Policy
Related Legislation and Regulatory Requirements	Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA) Education and Early Childhood Services (Registrations and Standards) Act 2011 Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 National Quality Standards
References	<i>Guidance Note for Outdoor Activities to prepare for Bushfire and Severe Weather Conditions</i> , Outdoor Council of Australia, versions 2.4 May 2024 Australian Bureau of Meteorology: www.bom.gov.au

VARIATION AND REVIEW

The School reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time. Unless altered earlier, this policy will be reviewed every three (3) years.

Responsible Person	Head of School
Policy Approver	Head of School
Version	1.0
Publication Date	May 2025
Review Date	
Next Review Date	May 2028
Revision Record	

APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES FOR MISTER AND SPRINKLER USE

Sprinklers on the PS Oval

- Will be turned on by buildings & grounds staff during lunch time when temperatures reach between 33°C and 36°C.
- Will run continuously between 1pm and 1.20pm to allow for time to dry off and/or change clothes before lessons resume.
- Students need to wait by the side of the oval near Class 5 and when invited can go onto the oval.
- One teacher will supervisor children on the PS oval the whole time.
- Students are advised:
 - Not to touch or move the sprinklers, and
 - Keep moving around the area so as not to block the sprinklers.

Misters

Mister hoses have been installed in the Junior Primary School play area.

These will be turned on Primary School staff.

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAFE BEHAVIOUR DURING LIGHTNING

	DOs	DON'Ts
Seek immediate Shelter	<p>In a substantial building</p> <p>In a fully enclosed, stopped vehicle</p>	<p>Do not touch metal</p> <p>Do not seek shelter under trees</p>
Location	<p>Crouch into the smallest ball you can</p> <p>Seek out a dry ditch, gully or depression in the ground and crouch</p> <p>Exit any waterways immediately</p> <p>If in a group, spread the group apart.</p>	<p>Do not elevate yourself</p> <p>Not under elevated structures</p> <p>Do not enter any water bodies</p> <p>Do not huddle together</p>
Conductors	<p>Non-absorbing material in footwear, plastic sheeting, sleeping mats can provide protection from earth voltages.</p>	<p>Do not carry / touch / wear metal objects</p>
Resuming of Activity	<p>Wait 30 minutes until after any thunder is heard or lightning seen before resuming outdoor activities.</p>	

(Source: *Guidance Note for Outdoor Activities to prepare for Bushfire and Severe Weather Conditions*, Outdoor Council of Australia, versions 2.4 May 2024, section 4.3)