



Severe Weather Policy – Forest School

Policy Code: FS-HS-015

Policy Name: Severe Weather Policy (Forest School)

Version: 1.0

Review Date: Annually

Statement of Intent

Forest & Play operates primarily outdoors and embraces a wide range of weather conditions as part of the Forest School experience. However, we recognise that severe or extreme weather can pose risks to the health, safety and wellbeing of children, staff and visitors.

This policy outlines how weather conditions are assessed, how decisions are made, and how sessions are safely adapted, relocated or cancelled.

1. Our Approach

We follow the principle:

“There is no such thing as unsuitable weather, only unsuitable clothing – unless conditions present a risk to safety.”

We aim to:

- Weather conditions are checked prior to sessions starting
- Continue sessions in most weather conditions where it is safe to do so
- Use dynamic risk assessment to inform decisions
- Prioritise safety over continuation of activities

2. Types of Severe Weather

Severe weather may include:

- High winds
- Thunderstorms and lightning
- Extreme heat
- Heavy rain or flooding
- Snow and ice
- Extreme cold temperatures

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3. Dynamic Risk Assessment

Weather conditions are assessed:

- Before each session
- Continuously throughout the sessions

Factors considered include:

- Wind speed, gusts and direction
- Ground conditions (e.g. slippery, unstable)
- Tree condition and risk of falling branches
- Temperature and exposure risks
- Children's wellbeing and comfort

4. High Winds

High winds present a significant risk in woodland environments due to the potential for falling branches and reduced stability of trees.

We will:

- Check local weather forecasts prior to sessions
- Visually assess trees for loose branches
- Avoid wooded areas during high wind conditions

Wind Speed Guidance

To support clear decision-making, the following guidance applies (including gusts):

- **Up to 25 mph** → Safe to operate as normal with standard monitoring
- **25–30 mph** → Increased vigilance; review woodland use and activities
- **31–38 mph** (approx. Force 7/8) → Adapt sessions; consider sheltered areas and restrict higher-risk activities (e.g. fire, tools)
- **39–45 mph** (approx. Force 8) → Move to sheltered area or indoor provision if available
- **46+ mph** (Force 9+) → Move session to Lower Barn/ Close setting / cancel sessions



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In all cases, staff must also consider:

- Tree density and condition
- Ground conditions
- Exposure of the site
- Met Office weather warnings (Yellow / Amber / Red)
 - **Red** Move session to lower barn/close setting
 - **Amber** consider safest option
 - **Yellow** consider safest option

Forest & Play will always seek to adapt activities or relocate to the Cabin or the Lower Barn to enable the session to continue safely where practicable. The decision to cancel or close a session will only be taken where risks cannot be safely managed.

5. Thunderstorms and Lightning

In the event of thunderstorms:

- Stop session immediately
- Move children to the Cabin or Lower Barn
- Avoid open areas and isolated trees

Sessions will not run outside during active lightening risk.

6. Extreme Heat

During hot weather:

- Use shaded areas wherever possible
- Increase water breaks
- Require hats and sunscreen
- Reduce physical activity levels

Monitor for signs of heat-related illness including:

- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Pale or clammy skin

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Sessions may be adapted and moved to shaded areas if temperatures become unsafe

7. Cold Weather and Snow

Cold weather is managed by:

- Ensuring appropriate clothing (layers, hats, gloves, hand-warmers)
- Monitoring children for signs of cold stress

Sessions will be reviewed and adapted if:

- Wind chill falls below -5°C
- Ice creates unsafe access or ground conditions
- Heavy snow impacts safe travel or site access

8. Heavy Rain and Flooding

In wet conditions:

- Waterproof clothing is required
- Activities will be adapted where needed

Sessions will be reviewed and adapted if:

- Ground becomes unsafe (e.g. deep mud, flooding)
- Access routes are compromised

9. Decision to Cancel or Modify Sessions

The Forest School Leader/Lead Practitioner will monitor Met Office and UKHSA updates daily, increasing checks during periods of adverse weather warnings.

- All reasonable options will be explored before a decision is made to cancel a session. This may include adapting activities, relocating to a safe area, utilising the log cabin or lower barn, or undertaking suitable off-site adventures where risks can be safely managed.
- Decisions regarding cancellation, early closure, or relocation will be made by 7:00am on the day of the session where severe weather is forecast
- Parents and carers will be notified as soon as possible via agreed communication methods (e.g. Olivio parent message, text, email, phone)



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- All decisions and the reasoning behind them will be recorded in the Incident & Decision Log

Records will include:

- Relevant forecast data
- Weather warnings (Met Office / UKHSA)
- Observed site conditions
- Actions taken to reduce risk
- Environmental conditions and site safety

12. Clothing Expectations

Parents are responsible for ensuring children attend with appropriate clothing for weather conditions.

The setting will:

- A comprehensive clothing and equipment list will be provided to families as part of the welcome pack.
- Parents/carers should provide a spare set of clothing in their child's bag each day, along with lots of changes of socks.
- Forest & Play has a heated drying cupboard to dry clothing and equipment between sessions where required.
- If a child attends wearing unsuitable clothing or without appropriate equipment, practitioners will work with parents/carers to identify any barriers and provide support where possible.
- Spare clothing and equipment may be available to help ensure children can participate safely and comfortably in the session.

13. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following:

- Severe weather incidents
- Changes in guidance
- Operational changes



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Related Policies

- Health and Safety Policy
- Risk Benefit Policy
- Missing Child Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracey Doidge'.

Name: Tracey Doidge

Role: Director / Registered Provider

Date: 24th March 2026