



Severe Weather Policy - Forest School

Policy Code: FS-HS-015

Policy Name: Severe Weather Policy (Forest School)

Version: 1.0

Review Date: Annually

Related Policies

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

Statement of Intent

Nurture & Grow 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 bad weather, only unsuitable clothing – unless conditions present a risk to safety.”

We aim to:

- 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



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- Heavy rain or flooding
- Snow and ice
- Extreme cold temperatures

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)

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- **39–45 mph** (approx. Force 8) → Move to sheltered area or indoor provision if available
- **46+ mph** (Force 9+) → Close setting / cancel sessions

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** close setting
 - **Amber** consider safest option
 - **Yellow** consider safest option

Sessions will be adapted, relocated or cancelled if:

- Wind speeds pose a risk of falling branches
- Safe supervision cannot be maintained

5. Thunderstorms and Lightning

In the event of thunderstorms:

- Stop session immediately
- Move children to a safe shelter
- Avoid open areas and isolated trees
- Wait **30 minutes after the last thunder** before resuming

Sessions will not run during active lightning risk.

6. Extreme Heat

During hot weather:

- Use shaded areas wherever possible
- Increase water breaks



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- Require hats and sunscreen
- Reduce physical activity levels

Monitor for signs of heat-related illness including:

- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Pale or clammy skin

Sessions may be shortened or cancelled if temperatures become unsafe.

7. Cold Weather and Snow

Cold weather is managed by:

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

Sessions will be reviewed 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 if:

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



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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.

- 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. text, email, phone)
- 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

10. Decision to Cancel or Modify Sessions

The decision to cancel, shorten or modify sessions rests with the Forest School Leader / Lead Practitioner.

Decisions are based on:

- Safety of children and staff
- Ability to supervise effectively
- Environmental conditions and site safety

11. Emergency Response

If severe weather develops during a session:

- Activities will stop immediately
- Children will be moved to a safe location or shelter
- Emergency procedures will be followed where required

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12. Clothing Expectations

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

The setting will:

- Provide guidance on suitable clothing
- Support families where clothing may be a barrier

13. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following:

- Severe weather incidents
- Changes in guidance
- Operational changes

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tracey Doidge'.

Name: Tracey Doidge

Role: Director / Registered Provider

Date: 24th March 2026