

Three Counties Academy Trust



Adverse Weather Policy

#GN4

Last updated: 26 September 2023

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Statement of intent

It is the aim of Three Counties Academy Trust (TCAT) to ensure our schools remain open during adverse weather conditions, when practically possible, providing that this can be done in a safe manner.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Make the appropriate procedures clear, in relation to operating our schools 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. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999
- Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England, and UK Health Security Agency (2022) 'Looking after children and those in early years settings during heatwaves: for teachers and professionals'
- UK Health Security Agency and NHS England (2022) 'Heatwave Plan for England'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following TCAT and school policies:

- First Aid Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Conduct for Learning (Behaviour) Policy
- School Uniform Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Executive Headteacher/CEO is responsible for:

- Deciding whether any TCAT school will close due to adverse weather in consultation with the Headteacher/Head of School and the Trust Site Manager
- Ensuring each school is fully stocked with snow clearing equipment
- Reviewing this policy
- Ensuring staff have received appropriate training and guidance on the stipulations in this policy, and ensuring staff act in accordance with this policy
- Notifying members of the Executive Team and Trustees of any closure

The Headteacher/Head of School is responsible for:

- Informing parents and staff of any closure
- Deciding whether pupils should be kept indoors during break times and reporting this decision to staff at the earliest opportunity
- Adjusting uniform requirements during periods of adverse weather and communicating this to parents in advance
- Ensuring classroom temperatures are maintained at an appropriate level
- Ensuring that staff model good practice in terms of sun safety
- Ensuring that staff understand the precautions for pupils in terms of sun safety
- Activating the Local Authority Adverse Weather School Closure line and publicising the closure of their school
- Notifying all staff members within their school through a cascade arrangement of a closure

- Communicating staffing issues to the Executive Headteacher/CEO in such time that they can be considered whilst making a decision on potential closure

The Executive Leader for Safeguarding and Inclusion is responsible for:

- Notifying all classroom based Associate Staff members across the trust of a closure

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for:

- Notifying all Administrative and Site Associate Staff members across the trust of a closure

The Trust Site Manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring each school has an adequate supply of rock salt
- Completing a risk assessment that covers adverse weather and gritting
- Ensuring gritting is carried out in line with the procedures outlined in this policy
- Ensuring all equipment is maintained and stored properly, notifying the Executive Headteacher/CEO or Chief Finance Officer of any damages

The Education Welfare Officer is responsible for:

- Ensuring that any TCAT school closure is correctly recorded and coded within the MiS

Staff members are responsible for:

- Adhering to the requirements of this policy
- Reporting any concerns relevant to this policy to the Executive Headteacher/CEO
- The safety of pupils, colleagues, and themselves
- Wearing appropriate footwear and clothing during periods of adverse weather
- Liaising with one another before the end of the day to discuss an exit plan for pupils, this includes escorting younger pupils to the entrance to be collected by their parents
- Modelling good practice in terms of sun safety
- Encouraging pupils to stay appropriately hydrated

Parents are responsible for:

- Only using the designated and cleared areas whilst on TCAT premises
- Collecting their children when a TCAT school needs to close
- Keeping all their contact information up to date
- Ensuring they and their children wear the appropriate footwear and clothing for adverse weather in line with any adjustments put in place by the Headteacher/Head of School

Pupils are responsible for:

- Following the individual School Uniform Policy
- Following the instructions and guidance of staff during adverse weather
- Attending school prepared for adverse weather conditions
- Following the Conduct for Learning (Behaviour) Policy for their school at all times

3. School closure

The decision to close a TCAT school will be made by the Executive Headteacher/CEO following consultation with the Headteacher/Head of School and the Trust Site Manager. The Chair of the Governing Board will also be consulted when making a decision about school closure. In the absence of the Executive Headteacher/CEO, the Headteacher/Heads of School will assume the responsibility of the Executive Headteacher/CEO in relation to the Adverse Weather Policy. Under no circumstances should a closure notice be issued without confirmation from the Executive Headteacher/CEO.

Any TCAT school will be closed if one or more of the following conditions apply:

- Conditions on site are considered to be unsafe and are likely to present danger to users of the site
- Staff numbers are insufficient for the school to operate safely

In the event of school closure:

- The Executive Headteacher/CEO will inform the Headteacher/Head of School, who will in turn inform staff and parents via text message or telephone and any other medium routinely used by the school
- The Executive Headteacher/CEO will request technical support to post an update on the TCAT and school websites
- Headteachers/Heads of School will update Parent Facebook Pages relevant to any closure
- The Trust Site Manager will display 'closure' signs on the school's entrance gates

In the event of a TCAT school having to close during the day, parents will be contacted via text message or telephone, using the numbers provided on the emergency contacts list, and asked to collect their child from the school as soon as possible.

Staff who are likely to face particular difficulties in getting home may have to leave work early, taking into account their personal safety. This decision will be taken in collaboration with the Headteacher/Head of School. Minimum cover arrangements in school will be provided by employees who do not have a particularly long or difficult journey home to ensure staffing ratios are maintained for the safety of pupils.

A closure of the school during the day and an early release of staff will only be considered in extreme circumstances and must be authorised by the Executive Headteacher/CEO.

It does not stand that a closure in one TCAT school will result in a closure for all TCAT schools, each decision to close a TCAT school will be based on individual circumstances as outlined.

4. Remaining open in adverse weather conditions

When deciding whether a Trust school will remain open, risks will be assessed in line with the appropriate risk assessment.

If a school remains open when there has been snowfall or the site is icy, access to the site for pedestrians will be restricted to the pedestrian gates only and all pathways, wherever practical, will have been cleared and gritted before pupils arrive on the premises.

The Trust Site Manager or their staff will place health and safety caution signs to warn users of the increased hazards on site, if there are any, and a notice will be erected to inform vehicles and pedestrians entering the school grounds that they do so at their own risk.

At the Headteacher/Head of School's discretion, during periods of adverse weather conditions, the playground may be out-of-bounds to pupils and parents.

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

5. Procedures for gritting

The first phase of gritting will prioritise those areas which are most used by pupils and staff. This includes the main entrance of the school, as well as the following areas:

Bredenbury Primary School

- Pathway from school gate to Reception door
- External area adjacent to Key Stage 1

St. Peter's Primary School

- Staff car park and turning circle
- Cherry Tree entrance pathway to Reception and Year 3/4 door
- Pathway from Bramley Orchard gate to Year 2/5/6 doors

Queen Elizabeth High School

- Vehicular entry to school site at junction with main road
- Roadways and adjacent pathways to main drive and turning circle
- Footpath from Pupil entrance through to North Block
- Music ramp through to Student Services
- Travel between blocks will be via the main entrance to each block only

Stoke Prior Primary School

- To be confirmed

The second phase of gritting will include areas that are not covered by phase one but are likely to be used. These include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

Bredenbury Primary School

- Playground immediately outside Year 5/6 classroom

St. Peter's Primary School

- Outdoor classroom areas

Queen Elizabeth High School

- Area from rear Science door to Vocational Classrooms
- Area outside Technology rooms

Stoke Prior Primary School

- To be confirmed

The Trust Site Manager decides which areas of each school are designated 'first phase' and 'second phase' for gritting.

The Trust Site Manager and their team, ensures that the correct areas have been gritted and are safe for pupils and staff. Any areas that have not been cleared or gritted are clearly marked or cordoned off, so that pupils do not enter them.

The Trust Site Manager ensures that the relevant equipment is used during gritting, any damaged equipment is reported to the Chief Finance Officer so that it can be replaced.

The supply of rock salt is monitored – if supplies are low, the Chief Finance Officer is notified and will arrange replenishment.

A record is made of the areas that have been gritted, along with the frequency of gritting. This record is retained by the Trust Site Manager.

6. Health and safety

TCAT has a duty of care to anyone accessing the site and surrounding grounds.

TCAT will be liable if it is found to have been negligent in its responsibilities and not taken all reasonable measures, given the circumstances, to ensure the health and safety of pupils, staff, visitors, and parents entering any TCAT site.

The Executive Headteacher/CEO is responsible for ensuring safety on each school site, in accordance with the Health and Safety Policy.

Staff, visitors, and parents have the personal responsibility to express caution and take responsibility for their own health and safety whilst on TCAT grounds. Staff members must take responsibility for the health and safety of any pupils under their supervision.

If anyone believes that the site is unsafe after the appropriate risk assessment has been completed, it is advised that they do not enter the grounds and inform either the Executive Headteacher/CEO, Headteacher/Head of School, or Trust Site Manager so the site can be reassessed.

A risk assessment of the site will be conducted by the Trust Site Manager in order to assess any potential hazards due to the weather conditions and the Executive Headteacher/CEO will be informed of the outcome at 6.45am.

Closing a TCAT school is a reasonable decision if pupils or staff are at risk of serious injury due to the weather conditions.

TCAT is committed to ensuring the welfare and wellbeing of pupils. To minimise the risk of ill health during adverse temperatures, TCAT will:

- Encourage staff and pupils to keep as much of their skin as possible covered up during the Summer months and wearing appropriate clothing during the Winter months

- Encourage staff and pupils to use sunscreen of at least sun protection factor (SPF) 15 with UVA protection on any part of the body that they cannot cover up during the Summer months
- Encourage staff and pupils to take their breaks in the shade, if possible, rather than staying out in the sun
- Reschedule work/outdoor lessons according to the outdoor temperature
- Situate water points and rest areas in the shade during hot temperatures
- Encourage staff and pupils to carry an inhaler at all times if needed
- Encourage staff and pupils to maintain good hand hygiene
- Encourage staff and pupils to stay hydrated

Relevant staff members will be made aware of how to recognise the signs that a pupil may be suffering from ill health due to adverse weather conditions.

Where a pupil is suffering from heat illness, the following steps will be taken immediately:

- Moving the pupil to as cool a room as possible and encouraging them to drink cold water
- Cooling the pupil as rapidly as possible, using whatever methods possible, e.g., sponging or spraying the pupil with cool (25 to 30c) water, placing cold packs around the neck and armpits, wrapping the pupil in a cool, wet sheet, using a fan
- Where the pupil does not respond to treatment within 30 minutes, an ambulance will be called
- If the pupil loses consciousness or has a fit, they will be placed in the recovery position and an ambulance called immediately; treatment to cool the pupil will continue until the ambulance arrives

7. Attendance

Where a TCAT school is officially closed, all absence is registered as authorised.

When a pupil cannot attend 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.

If the Headteacher/Head of School 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.

Parents acting on the assumption that a TCAT 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.

During periods of adverse weather conditions, staff members are expected to make all reasonable and safe efforts to attend work and are encouraged to liaise with the Headteacher/Head of School to discuss difficulties attending work due to adverse weather.

TCAT understands that, whilst staff members are expected to make all reasonable efforts to attend work, it is essential to minimise personal risk. It is therefore at the discretion of staff members as to whether they are able to safely attend work in adverse weather conditions.

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

TCAT and our schools will continue to strive to provide high-quality education in the given circumstances.

8. Exam disruption

If a TCAT 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.

TCAT 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

9. Clothing

During the Summer months, when temperatures reach above 25 degrees Celsius (°C), everyone working at or attending a TCAT school will be encouraged to protect their face, neck and ears using a sun-safe hat with a wide brim. Baseball caps are not considered sun-safe hats for pupils in our primary schools.

Pupils without sun-safe hats will only be permitted to play in an area protected from the sun unless a sun-safe hat has been provided. Pupils not wearing sun-safe clothing will be required to play in an area protected from the sun if spare clothing cannot be provided.

During the Winter months, pupils are advised to attend school with suitable clothing and footwear. Appropriate clothing should be worn that is suited to the weather conditions, e.g., wearing waterproof clothing in the rain and wearing gloves in the snow.

10. Emergency plan

In the case of an emergency relating to adverse weather, each school will follow their planned emergency procedure, in accordance with the First Aid Policy.

The 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

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

Each member of staff will have a copy of the emergency plan and paper copies of the plan will be kept at the nominated staff members' homes in case of out-of-hours emergencies.

All parents will be sent a letter informing them of their responsibilities, for instance, their duty to collect children.

11. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed in line with the published schedule at the front of this document and at any point material changes require it by the Executive Headteacher/CEO, Trust Site Manager and Headteachers/Heads of School in conjunction with the Governing Board. Any changes made to the policy will be amended by the Executive Headteacher/CEO and will be communicated to all members of staff. All staff are required to familiarise themselves with this policy as part of their induction programme.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is 31st August 2026.

Signed by:

_____	Executive Headteacher	Date: _____
_____	Chair of Trustees	Date: _____

