Severe Weather Policy
Policy Code: SCS A/009/27/09/17— *Revised to comply with DHA Regulations*
Reviewed: January 2026 | Next Review: January 2027

1. Introduction

Dubai's climate is generally suitable for outdoor learning and play for much of the academic year. However, during warmer months and periods of adverse weather, including extreme heat, thunderstorms, and sandstorms, there may be risks to health and safety.

This Severe Weather Policy outlines the procedures and control measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff during such conditions.

Any extreme climatic event that disrupts normal school operations will be managed in accordance with the school's Critical Incident Pathway.

This policy aligns with Dubai Health Authority (DHA) expectations for school health, child safeguarding, and risk management.

2. Heat-Related Risk and Rationale

Children are more vulnerable to heat-related illness due to:

- A higher body mass–to–surface area ratio
- Reduced ability to regulate body temperature
- Faster fluid loss and increased risk of dehydration

Heat stress may occur in both hot, dry and hot, humid conditions. The level of risk is influenced by three key environmental factors:

- Ambient temperature
- Relative humidity
- Solar radiation

Heat Index

The Heat Index combines air temperature and relative humidity to indicate how hot conditions feel to the human body in shaded areas with light wind.

Humidity is the most significant contributing factor to heat-related illness.

3. Preventive Control Measures

To reduce the risk of heat-related illness, the school will ensure:

- Adequate shade in outdoor play areas
- Enforcement of the "No Hat, No Play" rule
- Continuous access to cool drinking water
- Daily monitoring of temperature and humidity during warmer months
- Adjustment or suspension of outdoor activities based on Heat Index guidelines
- Provision of indoor play and learning areas when required

4. Heat Index Monitoring

- Heat Index readings will be taken daily and more frequently if required
- Monitoring will be conducted by the Medical Team using an approved Heat Index monitor
- Decisions regarding outdoor activity will be based on the measured Heat Index, not air temperature alone

Note: These guidelines apply to children without underlying medical conditions.
Pupils with medical conditions (e.g. asthma, cardiac conditions, febrile illness) require additional precautions.
Children with fever must be managed in accordance with the Infection Control Policy.

5. Heat Index Activity Guidelines

Heat Index: Below 33°C

All Sections

- Normal outdoor activities permitted
- Hats and shaded areas required
- Water available at all times
- Sunscreen recommended prior to school
- Staff to monitor pupils for signs of heat stress

Heat Index: 33°C – 36°C

Early Years

- Mandatory water breaks every 20 minutes
- Normal play with hat and shade
- Monitor closely for heat stress

Primary & Secondary

- Mandatory water breaks every 20 minutes
- Normal play with hat and shade
- Monitor closely for heat stress

Heat Index: 36°C – 37°C

Early Years

- Consider reducing outdoor activity to 10 minutes
- Mandatory water break at 10 minutes
- Sunscreen strongly recommended and reapplied as required
- Hat and shade mandatory
- Continuous monitoring for heat stress

Primary & Secondary

- Reduce intensity and duration of outdoor activity
- Mandatory water breaks every 20 minutes
- Hat and shade mandatory
- Monitor for signs of heat stress

Heat Index: 38°C and Above

All Sections

- Indoor activities only
- Red Break declared
- No outdoor play, PE, sports fixtures, or ASAs

Additional Restrictions

- No outdoor extra-curricular activities, events, or sports fixtures may be scheduled after the summer half-term break

6. Recognition of Heat Illness

Staff supervising outdoor activities must remain vigilant for signs of heat-related illness, including:

- Excessive fatigue
- Dizziness or headache
- Nausea
- Flushed or pale skin
- Behavioural changes

Any concerns must be acted upon immediately, and the pupil referred to the Medical Clinic without delay.

7. Thunderstorms

A thunderstorm is characterized by lightning and thunder, often accompanied by strong winds and heavy rain.

Procedure

- If thunder is heard or lightning is seen, all outdoor activities must stop immediately
- Pupils must be escorted indoors or to a safe shelter
- Activities may resume only when no thunder is heard and no lightning is observed for at least 15 minutes

This applies to:

- Break times
- Swimming
- PE and Games
- After-school activities
- School fixtures

8. Sandstorms

During summer months, Shamal winds may cause sandstorms, reducing visibility and air quality.

Management

- The Medical Team will assess storm severity
- Minor sandstorms: Normal lessons may continue with monitoring
- Moderate to severe sandstorms: Pupils will be kept indoors

Pupils with Respiratory Conditions

- Pupils with asthma or other respiratory conditions must be closely monitored
- Any signs of discomfort require immediate indoor relocation and medical review if necessary

9. Poor Air Quality

Poor air quality can occur in Dubai without a visible sandstorm, because of fine dust, haze and humidity. Airborne particles (PM2.5 and PM10) can irritate the airways. They pose a particular risk to pupils with asthma or other respiratory conditions, and to young children.

Monitoring

● Air quality will be measured using the Air Quality Index (AQI) and the UAE National Air Quality Platform as a source.

Readings will be taken by the designated Air Quality Lead (currently Frank Santos), using the school's on-site air quality monitor as the primary source

● Each reading will be cross-checked against the official UAE AQI for the nearest Dubai Municipality monitoring

station. Where the two differ, the higher reading will be used
- Readings will be taken at 7:15am, before morning break, before lunch and before the end of the school day
- When the AQI is above 100, or an NCM dust warning is in force, readings will be taken hourly
- The Air Quality Lead will inform the duty member of SLT, who will confirm any change to staff and notify the Medical Team
- In the Air Quality Lead's absence, readings will be taken by the Medical Team
- All readings and decisions will be recorded

AQI: 0 – 50 (Good)
All Sections
- Normal outdoor activities permitted

AQI: 51 – 100 (Moderate)
All Sections
- Normal outdoor activities permitted
- Pupils with respiratory conditions must carry their inhalers
- Staff to monitor pupils with respiratory conditions closely

AQI: 101 – 150 (Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups)
Early Years
- Indoor activities only
- Indoor break

Primary & Secondary
- Pupils with respiratory conditions remain indoors
- Reduce intensity and duration of outdoor PE and sport
- Monitor for signs of breathing difficulty

AQI: 151 – 200 (Unhealthy)
All Sections
- Indoor activities only
- Indoor break declared
- No outdoor play, PE, sports fixtures or ASAs
- Windows and external doors kept closed

AQI: 201 and Above (Very Unhealthy / Hazardous)
All Sections
- All pupils remain indoors for the whole school day
- Outdoor events and trips cancelled
- Air conditioning set to recirculate
- Leadership to review arrival and dismissal arrangements and follow KHDA and NCEMA guidance

Returning Outdoors
- Outdoor activities may resume only when the AQI has remained below the relevant level for at least one hour

Recognition of Symptoms

Staff must remain vigilant for coughing or wheezing, shortness of breath or chest tightness, and eye, nose or throat irritation. Any pupil showing these symptoms must be moved indoors and referred to the Medical Clinic without delay.

Indoor Air

● Air conditioning filters will be checked and replaced in line with the maintenance schedule, and more often during dusty months

Add to Roles and Responsibilities

Air Quality Lead (Frank Santos)

● Take and record air quality readings using the on-site monitor, cross-checked against the UAE AQI
● Inform the duty member of SLT immediately when a trigger level is reached
● Ensure the on-site monitor is maintained and calibrated

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Medical Team

- Monitor environmental conditions
- Advise leadership on activity restrictions
- Manage health incidents related to weather conditions

School Leadership

- Ensure implementation of this policy
- Communicate necessary changes to staff and parents

Staff

- Follow Heat Index and weather guidelines
- Supervise pupils closely
- Act promptly if health concerns arise

10. Review and Compliance

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required due to:

- DHA updates
- Government directives
- School incident reviews