

Extreme Weather Policy

At Little Dragons Day Nursery, we have an extreme weather policy in place to ensure our nursery is prepared for all weather conditions that might affect the running of the nursery, such as floods, snow and heat waves.

If any of these impact on the ability of the nursery to open or operate, we will contact parents via FAMILY.

We will not take children outdoors where we judge that weather conditions make it unsafe to do so.

Flood

In the case of a flood, we will follow our Critical Incident Policy to enable all children and staff to be safe and plan for continuity of care.

Snow or Other Severe Weather

If high snowfall, or another severe weather condition such as dense fog, is threatened during a nursery day, then the manager will decide whether to close the nursery. This decision will take into account the safety of the children, their parents and the staff team. In the event of a planned closure during the nursery day, we will contact all parents to arrange for collection of their child.

In the event of staff shortages due to snow or other severe weather, we will contact all available off-duty staff and/or agency staff and group the children differently until they are able to arrive. If we are unable to maintain statutory ratio requirements after all options have been explored, we will contact Ofsted to inform them of this issue, recording all details in our incident file. If we feel the safety, health or welfare of the children is compromised, then we will take the decision to close the nursery.

Heat Wave and Sun Safety

We are committed to ensuring that all children are protected from the dangers of too much sun and UV radiation, as severe sunburn in childhood can increase the risk of skin cancer in later life. Our full approach to sun protection — including UV monitoring, hats and clothing, sunscreen, shade, hydration, vitamin D and educating children — is set out in detail in our separate Sun Safety Policy, which should be read alongside this policy.

During very hot weather — for example, when the temperature is 28°C or above and/or the UV Index is very high (7 or above) — we limit or, where necessary, suspend outdoor play, based on a dynamic risk assessment that considers shade, hydration and the needs of individual children.

Weather Procedures for Forest School and Outdoor Play

Greater risks of injury and harm can occur if the weather becomes unusually severe. The most concerning conditions in an outdoor learning environment are high winds and lightning, which can lead to falling trees or branches. However, all weather extremes require planning and action.

This policy ensures the safety and wellbeing of all children, staff and volunteers during outdoor sessions by outlining procedures for assessing and responding to adverse or extreme weather conditions. It supports the principles of dynamic risk assessment, ensuring outdoor learning continues whenever it is safe to do so.

High Winds

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Definition

- Moderate winds: 20–30 mph (32–48 km/h) – caution advised (Beaufort scale 5–6)
- High winds: 30–40 mph (48–64 km/h) – potential hazard (Beaufort scale 7)
- Gale-force and above: over 40 mph (64+ km/h) – dangerous (Beaufort scale 8)

Risk Factors

- Falling branches or trees
- Reduced control over tools and tarps
- Increased fire risk due to wind spread
- Flying debris

Action Plan – Before the session

- Check weather forecasts (e.g. Met Office or local weather apps).
- If forecasted winds exceed 35 mph, carry out a dynamic risk assessment and use professional judgement (consider both gusts and sustained wind speeds).
- Cancel the session if winds exceed 40 mph (Beaufort scale 8).

Action Plan – During the session

- Monitor wind conditions continuously.
- Avoid areas with dead or unstable trees.
- Suspend activities involving fire or elevated platforms (e.g. tree climbing).
- Have an emergency exit strategy ready.

Outdoor sessions may continue during windy weather provided conditions are carefully monitored. Wind speeds will be checked using the Met Office forecast on the morning of each session and continually assessed on-site. If wind gusts exceed 35 mph in open-field conditions, sessions will be reviewed and adapted as necessary. If gusts exceed 40 mph, sessions will be postponed for safety reasons. A dynamic risk assessment approach will be used at all times. Decisions will not be based solely on wind speed figures, but also on how conditions feel on-site, with consideration given to other weather factors and environmental conditions.

Lightning

Risk Factors

- Tall, isolated trees and sheltering under tall or lone trees.
- Fire and water-based activities and using metal tools – avoid using.
- Rapid weather changes reducing evacuation time.

Action Plan – Before the session

- Check thunderstorm warnings and use professional judgement / risk assess.

If lightning is seen or thunder is heard – follow the 30/30 Rule

- If the time between lightning and thunder is 30 seconds or less, seek shelter immediately.
- Wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunderclap before resuming.

Shelter Guidelines

- Seek a substantial building if possible.
- If no shelter is available, avoid isolated trees.
- Spread out group members (minimum 5m apart).
- Adopt the lightning crouch (squat low, hands over ears, head down).

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Heavy Rain / Flooding

Risk Factors

- Slippery or muddy terrain
- Flash flooding in low-lying areas
- Reduced visibility and cold exposure
- Water-damaged equipment

Action Plan – Before the session

- Check flood alerts (e.g. Met Office or Environment Agency) and use professional judgement / risk assess.
- Ensure children have waterproof clothing and spare layers.
- Waterproof the first aid kit and forest school bag.

Action Plan – During the session

- Continuously assess ground and water conditions.
- Avoid saturated or fast-flowing water – no wading or play in floodwater.
- Walk back to the nursery if conditions worsen.
- Monitor for signs of hypothermia (e.g. shivering, lethargy).

Outdoor sessions may continue during heavy rain, provided that conditions are checked using the Met Office forecast on the morning of each session and are continually monitored on-site. A dynamic risk assessment approach must be adopted, with activities adapted, paused, or cancelled as necessary to ensure safety.

Cold Weather / Snow / Ice

Risk Factors

- Hypothermia or frostbite
- Slips on ice
- Cold-related tool handling injuries

Action Plan – Before the session

- Monitor forecasts, especially below 0°C, and use professional judgement / risk assess.
- Ensure layered clothing, waterproof footwear, and warm milk for the children is available.
- Pack emergency blankets (foil blankets in first aid kit).
- Consider shortening the session.

Action Plan – During the session

- Keep children moving to maintain warmth.
- Avoid icy or steep terrain.
- Watch for cold stress: pale skin, quietness, slowed reactions.

Outdoor sessions may continue during cold or snowy weather, provided that conditions are checked using the Met Office forecast on the morning of each session and are continually monitored on-site. A dynamic risk assessment approach must be adopted, with activities adapted, paused, or cancelled as necessary to ensure safety.

Hot Weather / Heatwave

Risk Factors

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- Heat exhaustion or heatstroke
- Dehydration
- Sunburn or UV exposure

Action Plan – Before the session

- Check UV index and temperature forecasts. During very hot weather (for example, 28°C or above and/or a UV Index of 7 or above), limit or suspend outdoor sessions based on a dynamic risk assessment.
- Ensure children are protected in line with our Sun Safety Policy (hats, sunscreen, suitable clothing and water).
- Plan shaded activities during peak sun (11am–3pm).

Action Plan – During the session

- Encourage frequent hydration.
- Rotate groups through shaded rest areas.
- Monitor for heat stress: flushed skin, nausea, dizziness.
- Limit high-energy activities.

Outdoor sessions may continue during hot weather, provided that conditions are checked using the Met Office forecast on the morning of each session and are continually monitored on-site. Temperature and UV index forecasts will be reviewed as part of this process. A dynamic risk assessment approach will be adopted at all times, with activities adapted, paused, or cancelled as necessary to ensure safety. Detailed sun protection measures are set out in our Sun Safety Policy.

Fog / Poor Visibility

Risk Factors

- Increased risk of children becoming lost
- Harder to supervise
- Hidden trip hazards

Action Plan – Before the session

- Check visibility forecasts and use professional judgement / risk assess.
- Keep hi-vis vests on in the field.
- Restrict the session to smaller, enclosed areas.

Action Plan – During the session

- Keep the group together in a clearly marked boundary.
- Use perimeter monitors and frequent call checks.
- Use walkie-talkies or whistle signals.

Outdoor sessions may continue during fog, provided that conditions are checked using the Met Office forecast on the morning of each session and are continually monitored on-site. A dynamic risk assessment approach must be adopted, with activities adapted, paused, or cancelled as necessary to ensure safety.

Severe Storms (Hail / Thunderstorms)

Lightning is covered separately above.

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Risk Factors

- Combination of wind, hail and lightning
- Sudden deterioration in weather
- Flying debris

Action Plan

- Monitor severe weather warnings (Met Office) and use professional judgement / risk assess.
- Be prepared to evacuate quickly.
- If caught in a storm, follow the high wind and lightning procedures.

Communication & Responsibility

- The Forest School Leader or member of staff in charge is responsible for monitoring all weather conditions and making real-time safety decisions.
- Staff are briefed on these weather procedures and their roles.
- Emergency contacts and evacuation routes must be accessible at all times.
- A dynamic risk assessment should be maintained throughout every session.