WEATHER AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS PROCEDURE

Purpose

Mid North Education Centre is committed to maintaining a safe learning and working environment for students, staff and visitors. This procedure outlines how the site will respond to weather and environmental conditions that may affect student safety, supervision, participation and wellbeing.

The safety of students, staff and visitors takes priority over planned activities. Weather and environmental conditions must be monitored and managed using a risk-based approach. Activities may be modified, relocated, postponed or cancelled where conditions create an unacceptable risk.

Scope

This procedure applies to:

- outdoor play and learning
- recess and lunch arrangements
- transitions and movement around the site
- excursions, camps and off-site activities
- any school activity affected by heat, storms, wind, smoke, dust, poor air quality or other environmental hazards

General Principles

Mid North Education Centre will:

- prioritise safety over convenience or routine
- monitor weather and environmental conditions throughout the school day
- act earlier where local conditions, student vulnerabilities or emerging hazards increase risk
- implement reasonable adjustments and additional controls for students with identified needs
- review controls whenever conditions change or new hazards emerge
- use current advice and warnings from relevant authorities where applicable, including the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), SA Health, Country Fire Service (CFS) and Department for Education guidance

Site thresholds are minimum controls and do not prevent earlier action where local conditions or student needs require a more cautious response.

1. Hot Weather and Outdoor Activity

Where the forecast or actual temperature, or associated conditions, create an unacceptable risk, outdoor activities will be modified, relocated, postponed or cancelled.

At 36°C or above, outdoor recess, lunch and non-essential outdoor activities will ordinarily cease and students will remain in designated indoor areas unless an alternative decision is made following a documented risk-based assessment.

Outdoor activity may cease at a lower temperature where there are additional risk factors, including:

- hot winds
- high radiant heat
- humidity
- inadequate shade
- poor ventilation
- prolonged sun exposure
- limited access to cooling or water
- individual student vulnerabilities

Students will have regular access to:

- drinking water
- shaded or cooled environments
- rest breaks and supervision appropriate to conditions

Staff must actively monitor students for signs of heat-related illness, discomfort, dysregulation or distress and respond promptly.

Sun protection requirements continue to apply in accordance with the Mid North Education Centre Sun Protection Policy.

2. Wet, Stormy and High-Wind Conditions

Outdoor areas must be assessed for safety before use during wet, stormy or high-wind conditions.

Indoor play or alternative arrangements will occur where rain, lightning, thunderstorms, hail, strong winds, water accumulation, falling debris, slippery surfaces or similar hazards create an unacceptable risk.

The Principal or delegate will determine whether outdoor areas remain safe for use when conditions change.

Staff must:

- report emerging hazards immediately
- follow revised supervision and yard arrangements
- ensure students remain supervised in designated indoor or alternative areas

3. Air Quality, Smoke and Environmental Hazards

Outdoor activity will be modified, relocated or cancelled where smoke, dust, poor air quality or other environmental conditions create an unacceptable risk.

In making decisions, the school will consider:

- current health and emergency advice
- local environmental conditions
- student health vulnerabilities
- supervision and access to safe indoor spaces

Students with asthma, respiratory conditions, medical needs or other identified vulnerabilities may require earlier or additional protective measures in accordance with their documented plans.

4. Bushfire Danger, Warnings and Severe Weather

Where relevant, bushfire danger ratings, severe weather warnings, emergency warnings, travel conditions and other official advice must be considered when determining whether activities can proceed safely.

Activities will not proceed where emergency warnings, local hazards or travel conditions make participation unsafe.

The Principal or delegate may modify or cancel activities, restrict movement, or implement additional safety controls in response to:

- bushfire danger
- smoke
- electrical storms
- severe wind
- flooding or water accumulation
- other significant environmental hazards

5. Individual Student Adjustments

Individual student needs must be considered in all decisions regarding weather and environmental conditions.

Relevant documented plans must be followed, including:

- health care plans
- health support agreements
- PEEPs
- safety and risk management plans
- behaviour support plans
- other documented adjustments

Students who have difficulty recognising or communicating thirst, overheating, discomfort, illness, anxiety or dysregulation may require:

- increased staff monitoring
- prompting and support
- earlier withdrawal from outdoor activities
- access to alternative spaces, routines or supports

Students with medical, sensory, communication, mobility or regulation needs may require additional or earlier adjustments to maintain safety and participation.

Where changes to usual routines are likely to cause distress or dysregulation, staff should use predictable routines, visual supports, social stories or other appropriate supports.

6. Excursions and Off-Site Activities

Weather and environmental conditions must form part of excursion, camp and off-site activity planning and risk assessment.

Before an activity proceeds, staff must consider:

- forecast and actual temperature
- humidity, hot winds and radiant heat
- rain, hail, storms and severe weather
- bushfire danger ratings and emergency warnings
- UV and sun exposure
- smoke, dust and air quality
- travel conditions
- access to shade, shelter, cooling and drinking water
- the needs of participating students, including students with disability, medical conditions or other vulnerabilities

Where the forecast maximum is 36°C or above, outdoor excursions will ordinarily be postponed, modified or cancelled unless the documented risk assessment shows that the activity can proceed safely and approval is provided by the Principal or delegate.

Families must be notified of significant changes, restrictions or cancellations affecting off-site activities.

7. Responsibilities

Principal or Delegate

The Principal or delegate is responsible for:

- monitoring significant weather and environmental conditions
- determining whole-site restrictions or activity modifications
- ensuring appropriate risk controls are implemented
- making decisions about cancellation, postponement, relocation or restriction of activities
- communicating significant decisions through the site's usual communication systems
- ensuring relevant department procedures are followed where early dismissal, cancellation or other major operational responses are required

Teachers and SSOs are responsible for:

- following declared controls and revised arrangements
- monitoring individual students and responding to signs of distress, overheating or risk
- ensuring students have access to water, shade, cooling or shelter as required
- implementing relevant student plans and adjustments
- reporting hazards or changes in conditions promptly

All staff are responsible for:

- taking reasonable steps to protect students from reasonably foreseeable harm
- reporting weather-related hazards immediately
- following site directions and adjusted duty arrangements
- raising concerns where existing controls are not effective

8. Communication and Review

Weather-related controls must be reviewed whenever:

- conditions change
- a new hazard emerges
- the existing controls are no longer effective
- individual student needs require further adjustment

Significant decisions will be communicated to staff through the site's usual communication systems and to families where relevant.

Where major operational decisions are required, including activity cancellation, significant restriction or early dismissal, these must be managed in line with relevant department requirements.

Related Documents

- Mid North Education Centre Sun Protection Policy
- Duty of Care to Children and Young People Policy
- Duty of Care to Children and Young People Guideline
- Camps and Excursions Policy
- Camps and Excursions Procedure
- relevant Department for Education inclement weather and sun exposure guidance
- relevant student health, safety and risk management plans

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