Bad Weather Policy

Document Name	Bad Weather Policy
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Responsibility	Trust
Approved by	Trustees

*subject to any relevant changes in legislation or other appropriate guidelines

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Our vision

For our schools to be at the heart of their local community, places of aspiration and opportunity, where everyone flourishes as a learner and global citizen.

'Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they shall not stray from it.'
Proverbs 22:6

Our values

Aspiration – for students, staff & the communities we serve.

Togetherness – a culture of belonging, equality, and equity.

Service – through collaboration, humility, love, and respect.

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Statement of Intent

It is the aim of Vantage Academy Trust to ensure that its schools remain open during adverse weather conditions, when practically possible, providing that this can be done in a safe manner.

Vantage Academy Trust intends to, wherever possible, make the decision to close the school before the teaching day commences, rather than defer the decision and delay the opening of the school.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Make the appropriate procedures clear, in relation to operating the school 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. School Policies and Procedures

1.1. This policy will be implemented in accordance with the following school policies and procedures:

- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1. The Executive Headteacher is responsible for:

- Deciding whether the school will close due to adverse weather.
- 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.
- Ensuring the school is fully stocked with snow clearing equipment.
- Ensuring the school has an adequate supply of rock salt.

2.2. The site manager is responsible for:

- 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 of any damages.

2.3. Staff members are responsible for:

- Adhering to the requirements of this policy.
- Reporting any concerns relevant to this policy to the Executive Headteacher & Head of School.
- 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.

2.4. Parents are responsible for:

- Only using the designated and cleared areas whilst on the school premises.
- Collecting their children when the 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.

3. Decision to Close

3.1. The decision to close the school will be made by the Executive Headteacher.

3.2. The site manager and the CEO will be consulted when making a decision about school closure.

3.3. In the absence of the Executive Headteacher, the CEO will assume the responsibility of the Executive Headteacher in relation to the Bad Weather Policy.

3.4. The 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.

3.5. In the event of school closure:

- The Executive Headteacher will inform staff and parents via text message.
- The Executive Headteacher or appropriate person will post an update on the school website.
- The site manager will display 'closure' signs on the school's entrance gates.
- The Executive Headteacher will call the local radio station. It is noted that parents will have previously been made aware that announcements concerning the school will be broadcasted via the local radio station.

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

3.7. A closure of the school during the day and an early release of staff will only be considered in extreme circumstances.

4. Remaining Open in Adverse Weather Conditions

4.1. When deciding whether the school will remain open, risks will be assessed in line with the School Risk Assessment.

4.2. If the 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.

4.3. The site manager will place health and safety caution signs to warn users of the increased hazards on site.

4.4. All pathways, wherever practical, will have been cleared and gritted before pupils arrive on the premises, following the procedures in section 5.

4.5. A notice will be erected to inform vehicles and pedestrians entering the school grounds that they do so at their own risk.

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

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

5. Procedures for Gritting

5.1. 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.

5.2. The site manager ensures that the correct areas have been gritted and are safe for pupils and staff.

5.3. Any areas that have not been cleared or gritted are clearly marked or cordoned off, so that pupils so not enter them.

5.4. The site manager ensures that the relevant equipment is used during gritting. Any damaged equipment is reported to the Executive Headteacher so that it can be replaced.

5.5. The supply of rock salt is monitored – if supplies are low, the Executive Headteacher is notified.

6. High Temperatures

6.1. The school will monitor local weather conditions and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and Met Office Heat-Health Alerts. There is no single maximum temperature at which a school must close; decisions will be based on a proportionate risk assessment, taking account of the school site, indoor and outdoor conditions, the age and needs of pupils and staff, and the practical measures available to reduce risk.

6.2. Children under 5, children with certain health conditions or taking certain medicines, and other pupils or staff who may be particularly vulnerable to heat will be given additional consideration. Where a child has a complex health condition or clinical vulnerability, appropriate advice should be sought from

their clinical team and relevant information shared with staff in line with the school's arrangements for supporting children with medical conditions.

6.3. The school will take reasonable steps to keep pupils and staff cool and hydrated, including providing access to drinking water and encouraging pupils to drink regularly; making use of shaded or cooler areas; reducing exposure to direct sunlight; closing blinds or curtains where appropriate; and using ventilation strategies appropriate to the weather and the building.

6.4. Where practicable, teaching and activities will be moved to cooler parts of the building or adjusted to reduce heat exposure. Timetables may be adapted so that demanding activities take place at cooler times of day, while maintaining education, safeguarding, wellbeing and attendance wherever it is safe to do so.

6.5. Vigorous physical activity, including PE, sport and strenuous outdoor activities, will not take place during very hot conditions where this would create an unacceptable risk. Staff will consider reducing intensity, duration and exposure to direct sun and will provide additional rest, shade and hydration opportunities as appropriate.

6.6. Uniform requirements may be relaxed during hot weather, particularly during amber or red Heat-Health Alerts. Pupils should be encouraged to wear loose, light-coloured and breathable clothing that is suitable for school, together with appropriate sun protection such as a wide-brimmed hat when outdoors.

6.7. Windows, doors and other ventilation measures will be managed in accordance with the school's ventilation arrangements and building security. Fans may be used to increase air movement where appropriate; mechanical fans should not be relied upon to cool rooms when the indoor temperature is 35°C or above, as they may become counterproductive. Electrical equipment that is not required should be switched off to reduce unnecessary heat generation.

6.8. Staff will actively monitor pupils for signs of heat stress, heat exhaustion and heatstroke. Symptoms may include unusual tiredness, dizziness, headache, nausea, excessive sweating, thirst, weakness or confusion. If heatstroke is suspected, emergency medical assistance will be sought by calling 999 and the person will be cooled while awaiting medical assistance, following current UKHSA/NHS first-aid advice. If a pupil loses consciousness or has a seizure, 999 will be called immediately and emergency instructions followed.

6.9. The Executive Headteacher will consider whether additional control measures are required when a Heat-Health Alert is issued, with actions proportionate to the alert level and local conditions. Yellow alerts may require additional measures for those most at risk; amber alerts require consideration of measures for the wider school population; and red alerts require a review of arrangements for all pupils and staff.

6.10. The school will normally remain open during hot weather where risks can be managed safely through reasonable adjustments. Closure, part-closure or changes to the school day will only be considered where the Executive Headteacher, following risk assessment and consultation as appropriate, determines that safe operation cannot reasonably be maintained or that significant risk remains despite available control measures.

6.11. Parents and carers will be informed of significant changes to arrangements, including any temporary changes to uniform, outdoor activities, collection arrangements or school opening. Parents and carers

should inform the school of any health condition or individual need that may require additional precautions during hot weather.

6.12. The school will keep arrangements under review throughout a period of hot weather and will follow any updated advice issued by DfE, UKHSA, the Met Office, HSE or other relevant competent authorities.

7. Health and Safety

7.1. The school has a duty of care to anyone accessing the site and surrounding grounds.

7.2. The school 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 the school site.

7.3. The Executive Headteacher is responsible for ensuring safety on the school site, in accordance with the school's Health and Safety Policy.

7.4. Staff, visitors and parents have the personal responsibility to express caution and take responsibility for their own health and safety whilst on the school grounds.

7.5. Individuals must take responsibility for the health and safety of any children under their supervision.

7.6. If anyone believes that the site is unsafe after the Risk Assessment has been completed, it is advised that they do not enter the school grounds and inform either the Executive Headteacher or site manager so the safety can be reassessed.

7.7. In the event of adverse weather conditions, the site manager will assess the school site and inform the Executive Headteacher at 7.00am of the state of site.

7.8. A risk assessment of the site will be conducted in order to assess any potential hazards due to the weather conditions.

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

7.10. When roads are impassable, the health and safety issue is overridden by the practical issue of access.

8. Limited Staff Numbers

8.1. During periods of adverse weather conditions, staff members are expected to make all reasonable efforts to attend work, whether this means they will be late or not.

8.2. Staff members are expected to assess the availability of all public transport and consider the feasibility of walking to work, if they live relatively close and are fit and able to do so, in order to attend work.

8.3. The school understands that, whilst staff members are expected to make all reasonable efforts to attend work, it is essential to minimise personal risk.

8.4. In line with 4.3, it is therefore at the discretion of staff members as to whether they are able to attend work in adverse weather conditions.

8.5. Staff members are required to consider local weather conditions, distance, availability of public transport and fitness to walk when making their decision.

8.6. Staff members are required to liaise with the Executive Headteacher to discuss difficulties attending work due to adverse weather.

8.7. 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.

8.8. The school will continue to strive to provide high-quality education in the given circumstances.

9. Attendance Statistics

9.1. Where the school is officially closed, all absence is registered as authorised.

9.2. When a pupil cannot attend the 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.

9.3. If the Executive Headteacher 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.

9.4. Parents acting on the assumption that the 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.

10. Exam Disruption

10.1. If the 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.

10.2. The school 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.

11. Emergency Plan

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

11.2. Each individual school's 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.

11.3. 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.

11.4. Each member of staff will have a copy of the emergency plan.

11.5. Paper copies of the plan will be kept at nominated staff members' homes in case of out-of-hours emergencies.

11.6. All parents will be sent a letter informing them of their responsibilities, e.g. their duty to collect children.

12. Monitoring and Review

12.1. The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored by the Executive Headteacher, and any necessary amendments will be made during review.

12.2. This policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the Executive Headteacher.

12.3. The next review date for this policy is September 2028.