

# Extreme Weather Policy



**2021-2023**

**Review date: June 2023**

## Rationale

During very hot and extreme heat conditions, students, staff and the school community are at greater risk of health problems. These can be specific heat-related illnesses or a worsening of existing medical conditions. Health risks are greater when high temperatures combine with increased humidity.

### Do we remain open?

Yes. The Government of Western Australia invested heavily in our infrastructure to ensure that all enclosed areas at Swanbourne Primary School are fully air conditioned.

### What is a heatwave?

Heatwave conditions are specifically when excessively high temperatures combine with high humidity levels and are sustained over a number of days. That means, although the predicted maximum temperature for a region may be in the mid-to-high 30s, unless this coincides with high humidity and lasts for a few days, it is considered 'hot' rather than a 'heatwave'.

People are most at risk during extreme heat conditions when the temperatures reach about five degrees Celsius above the average for sustained periods of time.

The Bureau of Meteorology provides a Heatwave Service for Australia External Link with heatwave forecasts and heatwave assessments. This service is a set of maps showing colour-coded heatwave severity for the previous two three-day periods, and the next five three-day periods.

### What are heat-related conditions?

Heat-related conditions cover a wide range of symptoms ranging from swelling of hands and feet, prickly heat occurring in acclimatised people and heat cramps, through to heat exhaustion, to the more severe and potentially fatal heat stroke.

## Strategies

### *Heat management planning:*

- All parts of the school are air conditioned
- Build staff and student awareness about the prevention, monitoring and identification of heat stress symptoms
- Our uniform options incorporate UV protection and cooling fabrics
- Hats are compulsory for staff and students

### *Managing schools during excessive heat or heatwave conditions:*

- Modify or suspend normal school activities during excessive heat
- Postpone any outdoor or sporting activities where appropriate
- Increase access to the coolest areas of the school grounds or facilities for lessons or other activities
- Ensure students with additional needs are appropriately supervised, including monitoring of their hydration
- Ensure school lunch boxes are stored in cool areas, out of direct sunlight
- Facilitate and encourage students to drink plenty of water and direct them to stay out of the sun
- The Department of Health recommends that during hot weather, water (room temperature or slightly cool rather than very cold) is the best fluid to drink
- Undertake normal first aid procedures in the event of a student or staff member becoming heat stressed

### Playing and exercising safely in hot weather

#### *Factors to consider when cancelling or postponing a sporting event include but are not limited to:*

- The temperature - both ambient and relative humidity (local weather conditions can be checked on the Bureau of Meteorology website)
- The duration and intensity of the event (for example, an endurance or distance event has more potential for problems than a stop-start team event)
- Rest and drink breaks
- Time of day
- Local environment
- Acclimatisation of the participants

- Fitness levels of participants
- Age and gender of participants

If the ambient temperature is between 31 and 35 degrees Celsius and the relative humidity is over 50 per cent there is a **high to very high** risk of heat illness. Planned vigorous, sustained physical activity should be limited in intensity or duration to less than 60 minutes per session.

If the ambient temperature is over 36 degrees Celsius and the relative humidity is over 30 per cent, there is an **extreme** risk of heat illness. Planned vigorous, sustained physical activity will be postponed to a cooler part of the day or cancelled.

The end decision pertaining to the cancellation or postponement of physical lessons, events or carnivals will be at the discretion of the Principal.

## Physical Education Lessons

The hall is spacious, fully air conditioned and may be utilised for Physical Education lessons. The covered area can also be utilised, but is not fully enclosed to protect against wet weather. Physical Education lessons can be conducted in this area in both hot and wet weather.

Physical Education lessons may need to be modified so that activities suit the weather conditions and area, but also keep the emphasis on providing physical activity for students. Modified Physical Education lessons can be held in the following areas of the school:

| <b>Weather Event</b>        | <b>Area of School</b>                 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Extreme heat                | Hall or covered area                  |
| Light rain                  | Continue activity or use covered area |
| Heavy rain                  | Hall or covered area                  |
| Thunderstorm/lightning/hail | Library or classroom                  |