Learning in Nature CIC & Beccles Forest Schools



Extreme Weather Policy

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement:
3.80 Providers must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children, staff, and others on the premises in the case of fire or any other emergency.

This policy was adopted by:	Learning in Nature CIC & Beccles Forest Schools
Date of adoption:	27th July 2026
Date to be reviewed:	27th July 2027
Signed, on behalf of the provider:	
Name of signatory:	Rach Whitwood
Role of signatory:	Co-Director

Policy Statement

At Beccles Forest Schools, the safety of children and adults is our primary concern. As an outdoor setting, with nature at its core, we are significantly influenced by the weather. Sometimes, this weather may pose a risk to children and staff. We undertake thorough risk assessments every session to ensure the safety of attendees and staff, and thankfully our Wild Meadow provides a wonderful shelter from much of the inclement weather. However, where we deem the weather to be a risk factor, we respond accordingly.

Please see Appendices for the legal framework and definitions upon which this policy is written.

Procedures

If there is a severe weather warning for when a session is due to run, we will need to consider whether or not to cancel the session in order to keep children, young people and adults safe. If the warning is red, the session will be cancelled, if amber, it is likely to be cancelled, if yellow, the session may possibly be cancelled.

There are many and varied factors that go into deciding if we need to cancel a session all together and our risk assessments and professional conversations happen within the setting to decide this. Where possible, we will aim to contact families and organisations to let them know the night before or by 8:00am on the same morning. Initially we will send an email or text message, and, if we get no response, we will contact each family or organisation individually by phone & leaving messages if there is no answer, and we will also send another email in this instance. This process will be repeated for drop-off sessions. Where sessions have to be cancelled in advance, we try to offer a discount code for future sessions wherever possible.

There may be occasions when the weather turns bad unexpectedly and children are already on site. If this happens, we will contact families and organisations using emergency procedures and arrange a suitable meeting point. If remaining onsite poses a threat to the learners' welfare, and it is safer for them to make their way offsite, we will all walk together to the closest sheltered public building (B&M).

We gather information about weather and wind speed warnings from:

1. https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/
2. https://www.bbc.co.uk/weather
3. https://www.metcheck.com/
4. https://www.windy.com/?52.461,1.568,16,m:e6BagdM
5. PredictWind
6. Lightning tracker website https://www.blitzortung.org/en/live_lightning_maps.php?map=12

7. Lightning tracker app - “My Lightning Tracker & Alerts”

(Checking more than one app increases the likelihood of accuracy of forecast.)

Specific Weather Considerations

Wind: The site we are on contains mostly trees (above head height) of willow. Willow is a tree full of moisture and as such tends to bend rather than snap in high winds. There are, of course, exceptions to this, and we do avoid the Wild Willows in winds over 30mph in case of Sudden Branch Breakage. It is unlikely with Willow trees, but obviously is not impossible. We monitor the trees as part of the daily risk assessment, looking for hanging dead wood and noticeable cracks in the branch joins. The remainder of the site is open, and as such the likelihood of debris and falling is not relevant. The gate can be heavy in strong winds, so staff often support parents collecting children.

So, over 30mph – no one goes in the wild willows – this is for gusts as well as wind speed. The rest of the site may be raw from wind exposure and each Leader can make the call whether their group goes ahead or not.

Rain: the biggest danger from rain is the children getting cold if they get wet and have no dry clothes with them. Flooding is an issue with sustained rain although the dykes do contain the biggest rainfalls we have seen whilst on site. Rain presents a lot of fun with splashing in puddles and getting muddy.

Storms: Storms are incredibly unpredictable, and it is impossible to predict when lightning may strike. If a storm is predicted then the Leader will have to make a decision about how to keep safe. The Wild Willows will be avoided as the tallest trees on site, and activities restricted to the roundhouse and Early Years Dome. The Leader will monitor the current strike distance from the site. They can use Blitzortung website as a reliable record of where strikes have been, but they cannot be predicted and maps and apps should not be used for this purpose. Taking shelter and staying out of the storm is the safest method - storms don’t often last long during the daytime due to atmospheric peaking, usually about 30-60 minutes. If there is a storm warning then evacuation may be safest, but this must be in advance of the storm, not during it.

Cold, snow and ice: hypothermia is a real concern, especially with younger attendees, so parents are advised how to layer children up for the colder months. We often have a fire and make warm drinks, we have small hot water bottles and blankets to give to children too. We encourage physical activity during colder weather. If we suspect a child is becoming too cold we may ask parents to collect them. Ice becomes a slip hazard and if we have heavy rain followed by a freeze, the whole site can be slippery, including the approach across the Common.

Extreme heat: in the event of extremely high temperatures, shade is sought for play and parents are asked to double the water quantity sent in with children. Parents/carers are asked to supply sun cream and hats and pack ice packs in lunches. Early closure of sessions may occur if the predicted temperature exceeds reasonable working temperatures, for example, if there's a red warning for temperatures, we will cancel in advance, and if a warning changes to 'stay indoors' we will ask parents/carers to collect early.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Statutory Guidance and Legal Frameworks

All the Above Tree Service (n.d.) *Sudden Branch Drop Syndrome*, available at https://alltheabovetreeservice.com/2021/03/02/sudden-branch-drop-syndrome-what-you-need-to-know/#:~:text=This%20syndrome%20is%20known%20by,warm%20weather%2C%20day%20or%20night. (Accessed 27th July 2026)

BBC Weather (n.d.) Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/weather (Accessed 27th July 2026)

Blitzortung (n.d.) *Live Lightning Maps,* Available at https://www.blitzortung.org/en/live_lightning_maps.php (Accessed 27th July 2026)

Department for Education (2025) *Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for group and school based providers, Available at* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68c024cb8c6d992f23edd79c/Early_years_foundation_stage_statutory_framework_-_for_group_and_school-based_providers.pdf.pdf (Accessed 27th July 2026)

Met Check (n.d.) Available at https://www.metcheck.com/ (Accessed 27th July 2026)

Met Office (n.d.) Available at https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/ (Accessed 27th July 2026)

PredictWind (n.d.) Available at https://www.predictwind.com/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=66055735&utm_content=153204599457&utm_term=predict%20wind&gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwy8i0BhAkEiwAdFaeGJWpKVVrTRF7OEfVQiT0r8fHHajJ5UZjUKBmmptL26VC1IPVBWZithoC65gQAvD_BwE (Accessed 27th July 2026)

Windy.com (n.d.) Available at https://www.windy.com/?52.461,1.568,16,p:favs (Accessed 27th July 2026)