Stowey Bears Preschool – Risk Assessment

Emergency Closure Due to Sun Safety Risks & Met Office Red Weather Warning

Age Group: 0–4 years

Reason: Extreme heat / UV exposure creating unsafe conditions for young children

Dates: As required during Red Weather Warning

1. Activity / Situation

Emergency closure of the early years setting due to **extreme heat**, **dangerous UV levels**, and a **Met Office Red Weather Warning**, where remaining open would pose a significant health and safety risk to children aged 0–4.

2. Children at Risk

- Babies (0–2 years): highest risk of dehydration, overheating, heatstroke
- Toddlers (2–3 years): limited ability to regulate temperature or communicate discomfort
- Preschoolers (3–4 years): increased outdoor activity levels increase heat exposure
- Children with SEND or medical needs (e.g., eczema, asthma, epilepsy)
- Children taking medication that increases sun sensitivity

3. Hazard Identification (Specific to 0–4 Years)

- **Heatstroke & dehydration** due to immature temperature regulation
- **Burns from high UV levels**, even in shade
- **Inability to maintain safe indoor temperatures** (above 26°C becomes unsafe for early years)
- **Increased irritability, lethargy, or distress** in young children
- **Unsafe outdoor environment** (hot surfaces, equipment, artificial grass, metal fixtures)
- **Staff unable to maintain safe ratios** due to travel or heat-related illness
- **Risk of sudden deterioration** in vulnerable children
- **Increased safeguarding risk** if families experience heat-related stress at home

4. Risk Evaluation & Control Measures

A. Decision to Close

- Closure triggered when:
  - Met Office issues a **Red Warning for extreme heat**
  - Indoor temperatures exceed safe limits for early years
  - UV index reaches **8+** (very high)
  - Outdoor play becomes unsafe even with shade, hydration, and sun protection
- Manager/DSL makes decision based on:
  - LA guidance
  - Met Office updates
  - Staff availability
  - Site temperature checks

B. Communication with Families

- Parents informed via:
  - Tapestry
  - Email and text alert
- Message includes:
  - Reason for closure (sun safety / Red Warning)
  - Expected reopening date
  - Advice on keeping children safe at home (hydration, shade, cool rooms)
  - DSL contact details

C. Staff Safety & Duties

- Staff instructed **not to travel** during peak heat risk
- Remote check-in to confirm safety
- Remote tasks include:
  - CPD
  - Planning
  - Updating learning journals
  - SEND paperwork

D. Safeguarding During Closure

- DSL and Deputy DSL remain contactable
- Daily welfare checks for:
  - Children with social care involvement
  - Children with medical vulnerabilities
  - Families previously identified as needing support
- Any concerns recorded and followed up on reopening

E. Site Safety

- Keyholder attends **only if safe**
- Indoor temperatures monitored
- Blinds closed, windows opened only when safe
- Outdoor area secured:
    - Hot surfaces checked
    - Equipment covered or stored
    - No staff or children permitted outside during Red Warning

F. Health Risks Specific to 0–4 Years

- Babies cannot sweat effectively → high heatstroke risk
- Toddlers may refuse drinks → dehydration risk
- Preschoolers may not recognise symptoms → delayed response
- Children with SEND may struggle to communicate discomfort
- Medication (e.g., antibiotics, antihistamines) may increase sun sensitivity

G. Reopening Procedures

- Full site safety check:
    - Indoor temperatures safe
    - Ventilation working
    - Outdoor surfaces cooled
    - No heat-related damage to equipment
- Staff briefing before children return
- Record rationale for reopening

5. Residual Risk Rating

Low, provided the setting remains closed during the Red Warning and all reopening checks are completed.

6. Responsibilities

- **Manager/DSL (Rachel):** Closure decision, safeguarding oversight, communication
- **Deputy DSL:** Support safeguarding and family contact
- **Keyholder:** Site checks when safe
- **All staff:** Remote duties and daily safety check-ins

7. Review

A post-incident review will be completed after reopening to evaluate:

- Effectiveness of communication

- Any safeguarding concerns
- Staff availability
- Temperature management
- Updates needed to the **Sun Safety Policy** or **Extreme Weather Plan**