

The Ryde School

Heatwave Risk Assessment



July 2022

Heatwave Risk Assessment

During the current period of very hot weather, we are already taking actions to protect children and staff. A national emergency has been declared after a **red extreme heat warning** was issued for Monday 18th July and Tuesday 19th July 2022.

The potential impacts from the high temperatures can be significant to both adults and children, including a risk to life. These could include health impacts on the most vulnerable, including those with pre-existing medical conditions such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.

The extreme temperatures that are predicted could also lead to heatstroke and heat exhaustion, even to those who are normally fit and healthy.

In anticipation of temperatures rising as predicted and to the additional risks from this extreme heat, we are taking the following measures, some of which are already in place:

- children will not take part in vigorous physical activity
- when children are outdoors, they will be encouraged to stay in the shade as much as possible
- children should wear suitable loose, light-coloured clothing (or their PE kit if they wish) to help keep cool (no crop tops or very short shorts please).
- children should not wear open toed or open backed shoes (as these can cause accidents and offer no protection to children's feet).
- children should wear sunhats, with wide brims where possible, to avoid sunburn.
- parents are encouraged to apply sunscreen (preferably a 'once a day' type) before children come to school
- children will have access to plenty of cool water and will be encouraged to drink more than usual
- staff are encouraged to wear loose, light-coloured clothing to help keep cool and encouraged to drink more water than usual

Which children are likely to be most affected by high temperatures?

Children's susceptibility to high temperatures varies.

- Those who are overweight or who are taking medication may be at increased risk of adverse effects
- Children under 4 years of age are also at increased risk
- Some children with disabilities or complex health needs may be more susceptible to temperature extremes

Within the school we will:

- reduce the time children are outside
- open windows as early as possible in the morning before children arrive to allow stored heat to escape from the building
- almost close windows when the outdoor air becomes warmer than the air indoors – this should help keep the heat out while allowing adequate ventilation
- close indoor blinds or curtains, but not let them block window ventilation
- keep the use of electric lighting to a minimum
- switch off all electrical equipment, including computers, monitors and printers when not in use – equipment should not be left in ‘standby mode’ as this generates heat
- where possible, use spaces which are less likely to overheat, and adjust the layout of teaching spaces to avoid direct sunlight on children
- encourage children to eat normally and drink plenty of cool water
- plan to stay open, but be prepared to close if the school building becomes too hot to be safe

Health risks from heat

Children cannot control their body temperature as efficiently as adults during hot weather because they do not sweat as much and so can be at risk of ill-health from heat. Heat-related illness can range from mild heat stress to potentially life-threatening heatstroke. The main risk from heat is dehydration (not having enough water in the body). If sensible precautions are taken children are unlikely to be adversely affected by hot conditions, however, all staff should look out for signs of heat stress, heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

Heat stress

Children suffering from heat stress may seem out of character or show signs of discomfort and irritability (including those listed below for heat exhaustion). These signs will worsen with physical activity and if left untreated can lead to heat exhaustion or heatstroke.

Heat exhaustion

Symptoms of heat exhaustion vary but include one or more of the following:

- tiredness
- dizziness
- headache
- nausea
- vomiting
- hot, red and dry skin
- confusion

Heatstroke

When the body is exposed to very high temperatures, the mechanism that controls body temperature may stop working. Heatstroke can develop if heat stress or heat exhaustion is left untreated, but it can also occur suddenly and without warning.

Symptoms of heatstroke may include:

- high body temperature – a temperature of or above 40°C (104°F) is a major sign of heatstroke
- red, hot skin and sweating that then suddenly stops
- fast heartbeat
- fast shallow breathing
- confusion/lack of co-ordination
- fits
- loss of consciousness

We have many staff who are first aid trained and who would recognise any of the above symptoms and take actions immediately.

Actions to protect children suffering from heat illness:

1. Move the child to as cool a room as possible and encourage them to drink cool water (such as water from a cold tap).
2. Cool the child as rapidly as possible, using whatever methods you can. For example, sponge or spray the child with cool (25 to 30°C) water – if available, place cold packs around the neck and armpits, or wrap the child in a cool, wet sheet and assist cooling with a fan.
3. Dial 999 to request an ambulance if the person doesn't respond to the above treatment within 30 minutes.
4. If a child loses consciousness, or has a fit, place the child in the recovery position, call 999 immediately and follow the steps above until medical assistance arrives.

Government guidance about actions in response to a heatwave:

- Heatwave Plan for England: Protecting health and reducing harm from severe heat and heatwaves (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- [Looking after children and those in early years settings during heatwaves: for teachers and professionals - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)