



Downs View

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Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: School Closure During Red Heat Warning

I am writing to clarify the decision to close the school during the recent red heat warning and to outline the steps we are taking to strengthen our response to extreme weather in the future.

As you will be aware, the Met Office issued a red weather warning for extreme heat, indicating a level of risk that could have serious impacts on health and wellbeing for pupils and staff. In a special school context, many of our pupils have complex medical needs, sensory sensitivities, and vulnerabilities that make them particularly susceptible to the effects of high temperatures.

After careful risk assessment, we made the decision to close all sites in line with the red weather warning. This was not taken lightly. Key factors included:

- Internal classroom temperatures reaching levels that were unsafe for sustained learning and care
- Limited ability to effectively cool most parts of the building
- The increased risk of dehydration, overheating, and medical complications for pupils
- Staffing challenges in maintaining safe ratios where colleagues were also affected by the heat

Our priority is always to ensure the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of every pupil, and on this occasion, we judged that we could not guarantee this safely onsite.

Looking Ahead: Strengthening Our Approach

We recognise the impact that school closure has on families and are committed to being as prepared as possible for future extreme weather events. As part of this, we are actively reviewing both our immediate response procedures and longer-term improvements. We will be exploring options for air conditioning or enhanced cooling systems in key areas. We also review our risk assessments and continuity plans to see if in the event of a similar red heat warning we will be able to partially open for some students or parts of the day.

I would like to apologise to some families who did not receive the appropriate communications about the closure. I will address this immediately.

Respect Aspiration Resilience

An **aspirational** learning environment with dignity and **respect** at its core, where everyone reaches their potential through effective communication, building **resilience** and having fun.

I would like to thank you for your understanding and support. We recognise the disruption that closures can cause and remain committed to balancing continuity of provision with our overriding responsibility to keep pupils safe.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "V. Hickey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot at the end.

Vanessa Hickey
Executive Headteacher