

Adverse Weather Policy

Middle East

Kuwait

Oman

Qatar

Saudi Arabia

United Arab Emirates

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1. Purpose

This policy sets out Cognita Middle East's approach to safeguarding students, staff, contractors and visitors during adverse weather conditions typical to the Middle East region.

These include:

- Extreme heat and high humidity
- Poor air quality (dust, sandstorms, pollution or combined environmental effects)
- Fog and reduced visibility
- High winds and blowing debris
- Rainfall and localised flooding
- Thunderstorms and lightning

This policy establishes a consistent, regulatory aligned framework for managing adverse weather across all Cognita Middle East schools, nurseries and Enrich ME programmes.

2. Scope

Applies to all Cognita Middle East schools, nurseries and the Enrich ME programmes taking place during the school day, covering staff, students, visitors and third-party contractors. This must be applied across the full school operational day including curriculum hours, breaks and lunchtimes, swimming, before or after school activities, educational visits, events and fixtures. This policy supersedes locally drafted school level procedures unless local legislation mandates stricter requirements.

3. Policy Statement

Cognita Middle East is committed to safeguarding students, staff, contractors and visitors from risks associated with adverse weather conditions common to the Middle East. This policy establishes a single, consistent decision-making framework across all Cognita Middle East operations, ensuring that:

- Decisions are based on verified, objective environmental data
- Controls are proportionate to the level of risk
- Local regulatory guidance is considered, where applicable
- Vulnerable individuals are protected
- Learning disruption is minimised, wherever reasonably practicable

Heat Index readings must be obtained using Wunderground. Air Quality Index (AQI) readings must be obtained from approved, recognised AQI sources. On-site environmental measuring equipment must not be used as the primary basis for decision-making due to variability and calibration risk. All decisions, risk assessments and escalations must be documented and communicated clearly.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Regional H&S Lead	Owns and reviews this policy, ensures alignment with regulatory requirements and ISO framework.
Principal/Head of School	Final authority for operational decisions relating to adverse weather rests with the Principal/Head of School (or delegated Senior Leader), after being advised by the Medical Team.

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Clinic/Medical Team	Monitor Heat Index and AQI at required intervals, issues daily guidance, maintains and circulate lists of vulnerable students and advise PE, Enrich ME and Trip Leaders. Readings must be taken from Wunderground and approved AQI sources.
PE/Aquatics/Enrich ME	Plan activities so high-intensity sessions occur in cooler weather. Adapt or cancel sessions according to thresholds, complete required risk assessments and ensure all staff delivering physical activity understand the guidelines.
Operations Lead	Implement site controls as appropriate such as shaded areas, hydration stations etc. Ensure third party providers align with the policy. Coordinate adjustments for arrival/dispersal and plans for safe movement on campus.
Leaders/All Staff	Follow daily guidance, reinforce hats and hydration. Adjust lessons accordingly and report any concerns. All staff are authorised to pause or move activities immediately if conditions appear unsafe, with escalation to Leaders as necessary.
Staff on Outdoor Duty	Continue to monitor conditions and alert the medical team if you notice a change or are concerned. Adapt play/activities where required. Report any concerns immediately. Model hydration and sun safety.
Health and Safety Lead	Supports the Medical Team, communicates any policy changes and conducts safety walks and assurance checks to verify compliance.

5. Definitions

Air Quality Index (AQI):	A numerical scale used to indicate outdoor air pollution levels, based on the concentration of regulated airborne pollutants, primarily particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10) and other key pollutants known to affect respiratory and cardiovascular health.
Dust/Sandstorm:	Acute airborne particulate conditions that significantly reduce visibility, cause respiratory irritation or are accompanied by official advisory. Background environmental dust typical to the region does not in itself trigger suspension unless AQI thresholds are exceeded or visibility is materially compromised.
Fainting:	Loss of consciousness due to insufficient blood flow to the brain; frequently caused by some emotional or sensory stimulus.
Fog:	Water droplets reducing visibility, may visually resemble pollution but is not inherently linked to high AQI.
Heat cramps:	Painful muscle spasms, usually of the leg muscles, that occur after vigorous exercise - can also occur in the arms and stomach. No long-term problems should arise from heat cramps.
Heat exhaustion:	Mild hypovolemic shock arising when the body loses water and electrolytes from excessive sweating after exposure to heat.
Heat Index:	A calculated value representing the combined effect of air temperature and relative humidity on perceived heat stress.

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Heat stroke:	Breakdown of the body's cooling mechanisms causing core body temperature to exceed 41C; a life-threatening emergency causing unconsciousness and death if not promptly treated in hospital.
Relative humidity:	The moisture content of air expressed as a percentage of the maximum it can hold at a given temperature, (% RH). Optimum relative humidity for comfort is between 30% and 60%.
Wet Bulb Thermometer:	A device that measures temperature using a sensor covered with a moistened wick, reflecting the cooling effect of evaporation and indicating the combined influence of heat and humidity on the human body.

6. Heat Index Guidelines

These guidelines apply, always, during the school day, school run extra-curricular activities, Enrich ME curriculum support, educational visits and activities/events. Reading should be taken from www.wunderground.com – select your location. Readings of x.1-x.5 should be rounded down and x.6-x.9 should be rounded up to a whole number. Maintain a list of vulnerable individuals and provide guidance to teachers and staff. Early Years and students up to age 8 must be treated as vulnerable individuals for the purposes of supervision, hydration prompting and duration control. Additional caution must be applied within each threshold category.

Use of Wet Bulb/WBGT Measurements

The Heat Index obtained via Wunderground remains the primary and required control measure for all decision-making across Cognita Middle East. Wet Bulb or Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) measurements are not mandated by regulators in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait or Oman for school based activities and must not replace Heat Index thresholds within this policy.

Where Wet Bulb or WBGT devices are used as a supplementary tool only, the following conditions apply:

- Online Heat Index readings must still be checked and recorded
- Devices must be:
 - Professionally calibrated
 - Maintained in line with manufacturer guidance
 - Supported by calibration and maintenance records
- Staff using the equipment must be trained to do so
- Readings must be logged with date, time, location and user

Due to the potential for instrument variance and unreliable readings, Wet Bulb measurements must never override Heat Index or AQI thresholds set out in this policy.

Schools may apply more conservative controls for identified campus hotspot areas where localized conditions present an increased risk.

Heat Index 35 - 40°C (Caution)

Outdoor Physical Activity

- Moderate to low intensity activity only
- No hat or water bottle equates to no participation - alternative indoor activity provided
- Hydration breaks every 15 minutes, more frequent if needed
- Continuous monitoring for heat stress
- Early Years may use shaded outdoor areas only

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Breaks & Lunchtime

- Students encouraged to remain under shade
- Misting fans may be used where available
- Outdoor time reviewed
- Hats and water bottles to be used by students

Swimming

- Swimming continues as normal - ensure hydration before pool use and increase consideration to poolside staff, including Lifeguard breaks

Day Trips

- Outdoor elements proceed with shade and hydration controls
- Walking pace reduced - avoid prolonged exposure

Residential/International Trips (local weather considerations)

- Outdoor activities permitted with caution and increased hydration monitoring
- Monitor International SOS guidance for any local updates

Staff Outdoor Duty

- Staff rotation required
- Risk assessment or alternative duties for vulnerable individuals
- Shade must be provided

Heat Index 40 - 45°C (Extreme Caution)

Outdoor Physical Activity

- Only low intensity, short duration (<10 minutes) activities allowed
- Mandatory 5-minute hydration breaks between activities
- Activities must take place under full shade

Breaks & Lunchtime

- Students must be in shaded areas or indoors
- EYFS must remain indoors

Swimming

- Swimming permitted only if the pool is fully shaded
- Water breaks provided at least every 10 minutes through poolside accessible water
- Staff exposure must be monitored via rotation, shaded positioning and breaks
- No waiting on poolside for additional staff or students not involved in the session

School Trips (Day Trips)

- Outdoor components must be significantly reduced or moved indoors
- Trips without adequate shade must be postponed or adapted to be indoors

Residential/International Trips

- Outdoor daytime activity severely limited - alternatives required
- No high exertion adventure activities

Staff Outdoor Duty

- Maximum 10 minute rotation
- Hydration before and after duty required
- Consideration for vulnerable individuals

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Heat Index Above 45°C (Danger)

Outdoor Physical Activity

- All outdoor activity must stop immediately
- Extracurricular and Enrich ME activities may proceed indoors only

Breaks & Lunchtime

- Students must be indoors in air conditioned areas
- Where constrained, fully shaded outdoor areas may be used with misting fans and close supervision
- No physical play permitted

Swimming

Unshaded or partially shaded pools

- Swimming must cease immediately

Fully shaded pools

- Hourly Heat Index checks must be recorded using Wunderground
- Swimming allowed only up to 47.0°C, with a Principal approved risk assessment
- Students must be hydrated ahead of the activity and take regular water breaks
- No waiting on poolside - non participants must be indoors
- Extra controls required for non acclimatised students

When the Heat Index is above 47.1°C - all swimming must stop. After 3pm, a school specific risk assessment may be used for extended hours sessions.

School Trips (Day Trips)

- Outdoor trips must be cancelled or replaced with indoor alternatives
- Trips may proceed only if all programmed activities occur indoors
- Consideration must be given to cool the buses and ensure an adequate supply of water is provided

Residential/International Trips

- All outdoor activities must stop until safe thresholds return
- Evening outdoor sessions permitted only once temperatures fall significantly

Staff Outdoor Duty

- No outdoor duty permitted for breaks
- Arrival/dismissal duty to be rotated, where possible amongst staff
- Wide brim hats, sunglasses and water to be available for all staff on duty

Swimming Pools

Indoor, fully enclosed, climate-controlled pools are exempt from outdoor Heat Index restrictions, provided internal temperature and ventilation remain within safe operating parameters.

Hydration and Clothing Controls (all thresholds)

- Students and staff must always have access to water
- Staff must actively encourage regular hydration
- Hats are mandatory for outdoor activities during the hotter season
- Lighter uniform options are encouraged in hotter months
- Communication to families is sent regarding application of sunscreen before school
- Metal playground equipment must be checked for heat retention and if required, not used in hotter months

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Transitions Between Buildings

- Limit movement, wherever possible, during peak heat periods
- Use covered/shaded walkways where available
- Avoid outdoor queues or waiting areas

Vulnerable Individuals

- Students and staff with medical vulnerabilities must remain indoors when the Heat Index is $\geq 40^{\circ}\text{C}$
- Clinic maintains and shares relevant information with staff on a need to know basis
- Additional consideration should be given to fasting students and staff during the holy month of Ramadan

Application to Enrich ME

Enrich ME programmes operate under Dubai Sports Council regulations when regular after school slots have finished and require a separate risk assessment. The Enrich ME team will make further calls regarding activities based on monitoring of the weather conditions and in line with their risk assessments and operational procedures

Application to Educational Trips and Visits

- Heat Index to be checked pre-departure
- Trip Leaders must confirm shade, hydration points and emergency response arrangements
- Dynamic monitoring is required throughout the visit
- Immediate notification of plans if thresholds are breached
- For overnight stays, leaders must monitor indoor sleeping conditions and humidity levels
- Trip Leader retains responsibility for environmental monitoring during residential visits. Monitoring intervals must be agreed within the trip risk assessment

7. Air Quality Index (AQI)

Air Quality Index (AQI) readings must be obtained from reliable, verifiable and consistent sources, using school location specific data wherever possible. Country/City/Emirate media reporting may not accurately reflect conditions at individual school sites. Visual conditions such as fog may reduce visibility but do not necessarily indicate poor air quality. Decisions must be based on verified AQI data, supported by local observation and known student sensitivities.

The Clinic Team must monitor AQI at the start of the school day and at appropriate intervals throughout the day, with additional checks undertaken where environmental conditions change or were advised by regulatory authorities, providing updates if/when conditions change.

Suggested monitoring frequency:

- Beginning of school day
- Before morning break
- Before lunch

Air quality updates must be communicated when thresholds require activity adjustments. Schools may include AQI in the daily hot weather email between May and September and as required at other times.

Approved AQI Sources

To ensure accuracy, the following sources are approved for use across Cognita Middle East:

Groupwide AQI Source - IQAir

- Provides real-time AQI, including PM2.5, PM10 and pollutant-specific data
- Mobile and web access for leadership, staff and parents
- Offers historical and forecast data for planning

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- Recommended as the primary groupwide reference

Secondary Groupwide Source - AQICN

- Useful for validation or cross-checking
- Provides global AQI monitoring and pollutant breakdown

Country-Specific Recommended AQI Providers

United Arab Emirates

- MOCCA (Ministry of Climate Change & Environment) – official UAE AQI
- Dubai Municipality AQI Portal – when applicable
- Abu Dhabi Environment Agency (EAD) – for Abu Dhabi and Al Ain schools

Saudi Arabia

- General Authority for Meteorology and Environmental Protection (GAMEP)
- IQAir (localised stations in Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam)

Qatar

- Ministry of Environment and Climate Change monitoring stations
- IQAir (Doha stations)

Kuwait

- Environment Public Authority (EPA) real-time AQI
- AQICN (Kuwait City monitoring)

Oman

- Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs (where data is available)
- IQAir (Muscat stations)

Cross Checking and Reliability Protocol

To ensure robust decision making:

- Use IQAir as the *baseline* groupwide reference
- Cross validate against a country specific regulatory source where available and appropriate
- If values conflict, the higher-risk reading must always be applied
- Consider site-specific conditions (visibility, dust, odour, student symptoms) as part of the decision
- AQI must not be inferred visually - fog often reduces visibility without increasing pollutant levels, and dust may be present even when AQI remains within acceptable limits

AQI Activity Thresholds

Important Note: Fog may distort visibility but does not always represent polluted air. Decisions must be based on verified AQI readings plus site observation.

AQI 0–50 (Good)

Outdoor Physical Activity	Normal operation, hydration and sun safety remain essential
Breaks & Lunchtime	Normal outdoor play
Swimming	Continues as normal
Trips/Enrich ME/ECAs	No restrictions
Staff Duty	Standard rotation

AQI 51–100 (Moderate)

Outdoor Physical Activity	Normal activity - monitor students with respiratory conditions
Breaks & Lunchtime	Outdoor play permitted - hydration encouraged
Swimming	No restrictions
Trips/Enrich ME/ECAs	Proceed normally - leaders must be aware of vulnerable students
Staff Duty	Normal duty rotation

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AQI 101–150 (Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups)

Outdoor Physical Activity	Reduce vigorous activity, sensitive students moved to indoor/modified activity
Breaks & Lunchtime	Outdoor play permitted at low intensity, sensitive students indoors
Swimming	Monitor vulnerable students
Trips/Enrich ME/ECAs	Outdoor activities permitted but low intensity - shading required
Staff Duty	Vulnerable staff assigned alternative duties where possible

Where exposure exceeds 20 continuous minutes, additional caution must be applied and activity intensity reduced.

AQI 151–200 (Unhealthy)

Outdoor Physical Activity	All outdoor PE moved indoors
Breaks & Lunchtime	Indoor breaks required
Swimming	Swimming may continue unless airborne dust creates irritation
Trips/Enrich ME/ECAs	Outdoor activities must be cancelled, postponed or moved indoors
Staff Duty	Outdoor duty minimised, rotation tightened, masks may be offered

AQI 201–300 (Very Unhealthy)

Outdoor Physical Activity	All outdoor activity must stop
Breaks & Lunchtime	Students indoors only
Swimming	Cancelled unless pool is indoors and air quality unaffected
Trips/Enrich ME/ECAs	All outdoor activities cancelled - indoor only programme permitted
Staff Duty	No outdoor duty except essential tasks with reduced exposure

AQI >300 (Hazardous)

Outdoor Physical Activity	No outdoor activity under any circumstances
Breaks & Lunchtime	Indoor shelter only - no external movement unless emergency
Swimming	All sessions cancelled
Trips/Enrich ME/ECAs	All outdoor activities cancelled. Indoor only programmes allowed
Staff Duty	Outdoor work stops - essential safety staff only, with minimal exposure

Vulnerable Individuals

For AQI \geq 101:

Students and staff with asthma, chronic respiratory illness, allergies, or recent respiratory infection must be offered indoor alternatives.

Medication (inhalers, spacers) must be immediately accessible.

Teachers must be informed of any students requiring modified activity.

Communication Protocol

- Clinic Team shares AQI updates at scheduled times and whenever conditions change
- Principal approves any operational changes
- Trip Leaders must be briefed before departure and updated dynamically
- Parent communication should occur as soon as practicable and no later than 30 minutes following confirmation of threshold breach

8. Dust, Sandstorms, Rain, Fog and High Winds

Dust and Sandstorms

- Close windows and switch AC to recirculation mode
- Suspend all outdoor activity
- Monitor vulnerable students closely

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Rain and Slippery Surfaces

- Deploy mats in high-traffic areas
- Facilities teams to patrol frequently
- Outdoor trips and events reviewed for safety

Fog and Low Visibility

- Visibility may deteriorate despite acceptable AQI levels; decisions must be based on verified AQI data and site safety
- Increased caution required for transport, arrival and dismissal
- Trip Leaders must review conditions and postpone travel if visibility poses a safety risk

High Winds

- Suspend outdoor structures (e.g., inflatables)
- Cancel activities if debris risk increases

Thunderstorms

- All outdoor activities must stop immediately
- Activity may resume only 15 minutes after the last lightning or thunder

9. Heat and Discomfort Index Table

Heat and discomfort index

Additional guidance should be sought with reference to Figure 1. Activities must be adapted to reflect student and staff discomfort. No on-site temperature measurements are permitted for decision-making due to the variability of device accuracy, however, may be used to support. Wunderground remains the required reference.

THOM'S DISCOMFORT INDEX

Relative Humidity	25%	30%	35%	40%	45%	50%	55%	60%	65%	70%	75%	80%	85%	90%	95%	100%
42 °C	37	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51
41 °C	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46
40 °C	30	31	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44
39 °C	30	30	31	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43
38 °C	29	30	30	31	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42
37 °C	28	29	29	30	30	31	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
36 °C	28	28	29	29	30	30	30	31	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38
35 °C	27	27	28	28	29	29	30	30	30	31	31	32	33	34	35	36
34 °C	26	27	27	28	28	29	29	29	30	30	30	31	31	32	33	34
33 °C	26	26	27	27	27	28	28	29	29	29	30	30	30	31	31	31
32 °C	25	25	26	26	27	27	27	28	28	29	29	29	30	30	30	30
31 °C	24	25	25	26	26	26	27	27	27	28	28	28	29	29	29	30
30 °C	24	24	24	25	25	26	26	26	27	27	27	28	28	28	29	29
29 °C	23	23	24	24	25	25	25	26	26	26	27	27	27	27	28	28
28 °C	22	23	23	23	24	24	25	25	25	25	26	26	26	27	27	27
27 °C	22	22	22	23	23	23	24	24	24	25	25	25	26	26	26	26
26 °C	21	21	22	22	22	23	23	23	24	24	24	25	25	25	25	26
25 °C	20	21	21	21	22	22	22	23	23	23	23	24	24	24	25	25
24 °C	20	20	20	21	21	21	22	22	22	22	23	23	23	24	24	24
23 °C	19	19	20	20	20	21	21	21	21	22	22	22	22	23	23	23
22 °C	18	19	19	19	19	20	20	20	21	21	21	21	22	22	22	22

Up to 21	No discomfort
From 21 to 24	Less than half population feels discomfort
From 25 to 27	More than half population feels discomfort
From 28 to 29	Most population feels discomfort and deterioration of psychophysical conditions
From 30 to 32	The whole population feels an heavy discomfort
Over 32	Sanitary emergency due to the very strong discomfort which may cause heatstrokes

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10. Air Quality Index Table

Air Quality Index (AQI) Values	Levels of Health Concern
0 to 50	Good
51-100	Moderate
101-150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
151-200	Unhealthy
201-300	Very Unhealthy
301 to 500	Hazardous

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11. Document Control

Ownership and Consultation	
Document sponsor (role)	Regional Head of Health and Safety
Document author (role)	Regional Head of Health and Safety
Legal advice	-
Consultation	Medical Leads H&S Leads Principals PE Teams Enrich ME Head of Operations Director of Education
Document review and maintenance	Regional Head of Health and Safety

Compliance	
Compliant with	ISO 45001 OSHAD SF Dubai Municipality Technical Guidelines DHA HAAD ADEK Qatar MoEHE Kuwait EPA Oman Ministry of Labour Saudi Ministry of Education Cognita Emergency Response Plan

Audience	
Internal	All staff – Middle East
External	Internal document

Document Application	
Region	Middle East

Version Control	
Implementation date	17/05/2026
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