

Learning in hot weather – summary



“The heat makes you tired, so when you’re trying to focus but just sat there struggling to keep eyes open you feel awful and can’t process anything you’re supposed to be learning.”

Youth takeover day attendee, November 2025

Warm and hot weather affects many Sheffield schools, and with the climate changing, this is expected to worsen in coming years.

Sheffield schools and young people have highlighted that:

- hot weather negatively affects children’s learning, attendance and wellbeing
- classroom and other building temperatures over 30°C are not uncommon in summer
- many playgrounds or areas of grounds become unusable on hot days
- some schools have closed early or not opened at all due to extreme heat, although government guidance recommends schools stay open in hot weather
- whilst most schools will have some risk management plans in place or respond reactively in the event of extremely high temperatures and heatwaves, many schools respond only when an official health warning is issued
- fewer schools have proactive plans and adaptations which ensure that learning and wellbeing is optimised over the summer months.

Research shows that:

- many teachers do not know if their school has proactive plans to deal with heatwaves
- very few schools have publicly available information about how they deal with extreme heat
- health and learning outcomes are negatively impacted well below heatwave levels (grades are affected once temperature increases beyond the optimum learning temperature of 20°C) and so action outside of heatwave periods can improve student wellbeing and outcomes
- there is a lack of awareness and understanding amongst school leaders, teachers and building managers about how to adapt their school to warm and hot weather
- there are additional barriers to adapting to warm and hot weather, including finance and capacity.

About this toolkit

The Learning in Warm and Hot Weather Toolkit:

- aims to support schools to achieve their improvement plan priorities and to comply with government expectations
- recognises that most schools have very limited financial resources and may not be able to invest in significant changes to buildings and grounds and focuses on practical operational and behavioural changes
- builds on government hot weather guidelines
- uses Sheffield school and student experiences and suggestions
- has insights from academics working with the UK Health Security Agency

It includes:

- **a warm and hot weather audit and action plan template** to help you consider how and where warm and hot weather impacts your students, staff and school improvement plan priorities and to help you to plan your response
- **information sheets** with practical, evidence-based, local student and school-informed information covering:
 - Key information for SLT and governing bodies
 - Learning in hot weather – evidence and actions
 - Supporting student needs and safeguarding
 - Managing attendance in warm and hot weather
 - Managing summer temperatures on your site
 - Sheffield's current and future climate
- **templates and resources** you can use to communicate with students, staff and families.

The documents and resources found in this toolkit are a combination of original content, resources from other organisations, and templates to be adapted by settings.

Who is the toolkit for?

The toolkit is designed for education providers in Sheffield, particularly schools but elements will also be relevant for early years, post-16 and special provision. It includes short information sheets and resources which may be useful for:

- school and MAT senior management and governors
- sustainability leads
- learning leads
- SENCOs and pastoral leads
- building managers
- teachers
- administration teams