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13c. Severe Weather Guidance

Date adopted: September 2024

Next review: September 2026

See EOTAS policy control document (held by the Business Manager) for status, notes and actions about this policy



Severe Weather Guidance

Version	Status	Date	Title of Reviewer	Purpose/Outcome
1.0	adopted	September 2024	Headteacher	Adoption of severe weather guidance



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Application

During recent winters, we have experienced the most severe weather conditions for many years. Although we don't know when we might suffer such a severe winter again, we can all take steps to ensure that we are prepared.

Every effort must be made to keep schools open, even if only a limited number of pupils can attend. There is a legal requirement to keep schools open for children to attend for 190 days per year. However, schools may close due to “unavoidable” circumstances, which are usually health and safety reasons. Unavoidable circumstances are those that mean it is no longer safe for staff or pupils to be onsite.

This guidance provides advice on:

- Risk assessments/management
- How to prepare for severe weather conditions
 - Check the weather forecast
 - Ensure the building has been maintained
 - Ice and Snow
 - High winds
- Ensure Adequate Supervision
- Announcing the school closure or partial closure
- Useful websites

Risk assessment/checklist

A risk assessment/checklist (Appendix 1) should be carried out before a severe weather event. This allows the school to identify all the health and safety issues and implement the controls in advance of the poor weather.

It is vital a risk assessment/checklist (Appendix 1) is reviewed on the day of the event, this allows the Headteacher to review the risk on the day, and it will assist in the decision of whether the conditions are safe. It will also serve as evidence should justification be needed to defend the school closure.

The decision to close or restrict attendance should be taken by the Head teacher or, in their absence, the most senior member of the teaching staff available. This should be done in consultation with the governing body after the completion of a risk assessment/check list

Please note: Your risk assessment concerns onsite conditions, not the state of approaching roads and paths or staffing levels linked to safety.

How to prepare for severe weather conditions

To prepare for opening when there are severe weather conditions, Head teachers should take the following actions:

Check weather forecast

If the Local Authority receives a severe weather warning this will be communicated to schools by e-mail. This does **not** necessarily mean that your school has to close. The decision to close must be assessed by each school.



Regularly check weather forecasts via news and websites by a designated member of staff. The Met Office website home page, www.metoffice.gov.uk, gives details of any current severe weather warnings.

Ensure the building has been maintained

- Boilers and heating systems are maintained regularly, and ventilation is free from obstruction
- Repair any dripping taps
- Ensure tanks and pipes are properly lagged
- Ensure that you know where the mains water valve (main stop cock) is located in case of frozen pipes
- Check for cracked or dislodged tiles
- Ensure that drains and gratings are clear
- Check your lighting
- Check the condition of your absorbent mats.
- Radiators should be kept clear of obstruction to enable a proper circulation of warmed air
- Where curtains or blinds are fitted, these should be closed at night to retain heat.
- Doors between areas of differing temperatures should be kept closed as much as possible
- Consider leaving the heating on a low setting overnight
- Clear fallen leaves regularly

Ice and Snow

To reduce the risk of slips on ice, frost, or snow, assess the risk and implement a system to manage it.

- Ensure salt/sand stocks are plentiful
- Identify the outdoor areas used by pedestrians most likely to be affected by ice, i.e., building entrances, pedestrian walkways, slopes, and areas in constant shade or wet.
- Put a procedure in place to prevent any icy surface from forming and/or keep pedestrians off the slippery surface.
- Grit/salt on areas prone to be slippery in icy conditions. Gritting should be carried out when frost, ice or snow is forecast or when walkways are likely to be damp or wet and the ground temperatures are at, or below freezing. The best time is early in the evening before the frost settles or, if this is not possible, early in the morning before people arrive. Salt does not work instantly and needs time to dissolve into the moisture on the ground.
- Divert pedestrians to less slippery walkways and barriers of existing ones.
- If warning cones are used, remember to remove them once the hazard has passed
- It is not always necessary to clear the car park of snow as it can be taken out of use until such time as it is safe to be used, with staff making alternative parking arrangements

High winds

When high winds are experienced that are or have been forecast with gusts of speeds of 80mph, all mobile classrooms and other similar buildings should be evacuated, and pupils moved to a permanent building.



Visually check for loose structures such as:

- Tiles Masts
- Lean-to's
- Sails
- Wires etc

This must be done before and after high winds are forecast and be carried out from ground level.

Ensure Adequate Supervision

The school must ensure staff-to-pupil ratios are maintained.

- Estimate how many staff members need to get into the school to operate safely.
- Identify how many staff would be safe to travel to work in severe conditions

The Schools Severe Weather—Staff Planning Form (Appendix 2) will help schools assess the level of attendance of staff in severe weather situations. This is intended to ensure adequate supervision.

Please remember you cannot insist a member of staff drive into school. However, the expectation is that staff will turn up irrespective of weather conditions except in the most extreme cases where they can demonstrate a high degree of risk.

Announcing the school closure or partial closure

During severe weather, the Headteacher will review their risk assessment throughout the day. It is expected that a school will remain open until the normal time; however, if the revised risk assessment indicates that circumstances have changed to such an extent that the Headteacher believes conditions are now unsafe, early closure may be necessary. In such circumstances, the school shall refer to The Emergency Planning and Emergency School Closures – A Guide for Schools

It is also essential to inform other agencies of the school closure, e.g., school transport, catering and cleaning contractors, road crossing patrols, mid-day supervisors, etc.

A school must never close completely unless the head teacher is certain that no child will present himself/herself. A school staff member must remain on site in case any students or staff arrive at the school after it has announced it is closed. Arrangements must always be made for the security of children, and parental assent must be sought if sending them home.

Adequate supervision.

Local School Closure Procedure Due to Severe Weather

1. Send a text out to parents
2. Put a notice of school closure on the school website
3. Contact Wiltshire BBC radio

Email: Wiltshire@bbc.co.uk the night before if possible



Or on the day Tel: 01793 513651 or 01793 513652

When you call or email, please give:

- your name
- the exact title of the school
- a contact number for you between 6 am and 9 am on the day of the closure
- any extra details
- your DFES number.

Useful websites

The Emergency Planning and Emergency School Closures – A guide for Schools:

<http://schoolsonline.swindon.gov.uk/sm/Pages/epbc.aspx>

<http://www.education.gov.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cold-weather-plan-for-england-2012-published>



Schools Severe Weather – Risk Assessment/Check List – Appendix 1

HSRA050

Workplace / Location:		Assessment date:	
Names of Assessors:		Review date:	

Are the following control measures in place		Hazard	Control's	Are the controls in place?	Are the controls in place on the day
				Y/N	Y/N
1	Is there enough salt/grit available on site to keep a clear path around the school site?	Slip/Trip causing a twist, strain or fracture	Allocate a responsible person to watch weather reports and grit/salt prior to snow/ice forming		
			Ensured that there are adequate resources to complete the gritting activities during the winter. (grit, equipment, tools)		
			Identify which walkways or areas need to be kept clear to allow people to get around the premises safely		
			Ensure all staff are aware of designated paths / access routes and take responsibility for using these. Reinforce this with pupils / visitors.		
			Ensure access routes are well lit and where appropriate additional lighting provided for gritting		
			If slopes and steps remain in a dangerous condition it may be necessary to prevent access to affected area – cones / barrier/ tape etc.		
			Where playgrounds remain slippery due to compacted snow / ice it may be necessary to accommodate pupils indoors at break time. If playgrounds remain in use supervision levels may need to be increased.		
			Absorbent mats are all in good condition		
2	Is there an acceptable ratio of staff to pupils to attain adequate supervision?	Inadequate supervision	Estimate how many staff members need to get in for the school to operate safely by identifying how many pupils could attend		
			Identify how many staff would be safe to travel to work in severe conditions		
			Inform staff to listen to road safety reports to see if the roads are safe to travel on.		
			Staff to inform the Head teacher by 7.45 if they cannot attend school.		

3	Are there procedures in place for heating failure	Insufficient heating in school to the minimum working temperature 18°C causing staff and pupils to suffer from the cold	Arrangements made for emergency heaters		
			Consider only using the parts of the school that has heating		
			Keep doors, curtains and blinds closed during the night to retain the heat		
4	In the event of a closure, has it been identified which pupils are safety to be sent home?	Pupils unable to get into their homes, left stranded	Identify pupils have alternative arrangements if they were to be sent home		
			Identify weather there are enough staff that can stay on site to supervise the pupils unable to return home and that those staff will be able to get home at a later time		
5	Will the school have adequate welfare facilities?	Staff and pupils are unable to wash their hands, flush the toilets, or have access to drinking water	Ensure that there is anti-bacterial wash on site		
			Reserve supplies of bottled water		
			Consider actions if all the toilets are un-operational, is there alternative toilets that can be used		
6	Would the school have provision for the pupils to cross the road safety?	Pupils involved in a vehicle collision	Pedestrians and vehicles are segregated where possible		
			If the road patrol officer is unable to get to school there are alternative arrangements.		
			Ensured that persons directing traffic or clearing the snow & ice are highly visible		

7. Gritting operations	Manual Handling injury	Have you identified individuals to carry out gritting activities. Where possible more than one employee is designated to complete the task.		
		Is the person physically capable of the task? Pregnant women and staff with specific medical conditions will not be expected to act as nominated persons		
		Have they been trained on lifting techniques		
		Does the person have adequate equipment and clothing to carry out the work including Personal protective equipment?		
	Grit penetrating the eye	Mechanical Spreading which presents this risk to be carried out at times when pupils & others are not in the area		
		Where grit can be flung (by machine) at eye level safety glasses or goggles will be worn by staff involved in such operations		

Severe Weather Action Plan

Pre-planned control measures that are not in place	Actions to be taken	By Who	Date Completed

The decision for closing the school has been based on the following risk areas (highlight relevant question number): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Signed by:	Date
Completed by:	
Signed by Head teacher:	
Chair of Governors	

