

'They will soar on wings like eagles ...'
Isaiah 40:31

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St George's CoE Primary School



Multi-Academy Trust Policy

Common Trust Policy, Use as Published

Severe Weather Procedures

Date adopted by Trust Board: 07/2022

Date of Review: 04/07/2024

Date of next Review: 07/2026

Version	Date	Author	Change Description
1.1	04.07.24	A Snelling	Inclusion of employees reporting absence, hot weather considerations and format changes

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1. Introduction

The Department for Education offers very clear guidance when it comes to severe weather and emergency planning

“During severe weather conditions, such as flooding or snow, you should keep your school or early years setting open for as many children as possible.

However, it might be necessary to close temporarily due to inaccessibility or risk of injury. You should do all you can to reopen as soon as possible.” ([Emergency planning and response for education, childcare, and children’s social care settings](#))

The Trust will endeavour to open all academies and the central office every normal working day regardless of weather conditions, unless it is unsafe to do so.

The following circumstances will be assessed with any decisions made to close a school.

- The safety of pupils and employees cannot be guaranteed
- There is an insufficient number of employees available to supervise children on site
- Employees will be lone working in the central office

2. Preparation for Severe Snow and Ice/Hot temperatures

Schools must consider long and short-term actions to ensure they are prepared and able to remain open during severe weather, example considerations:

Long-term – consider these actions well in advance of winter weather:

- Ensure stocks of salt/grit/sand and the appropriate tools and safety equipment are adequate for the time of year and foreseeable weather
- Pre-identify the outdoor areas used by pedestrians most likely to be affected by ice, for example - building entrances, pedestrian walkways, shortcuts, sloped areas and areas constantly in the shade or wet (in line with the Snow Code <https://www.gov.uk/clear-snow-road-path-cycleway>)
- Ensure water, boiler and heating systems are regularly maintained
- Ensure air conditioning systems are regularly maintained
- Ensure frost guard is enabled on boilers
- Inspect windows and exterior doors for draughts. Consider repairs and draught-proofing during summer months
- Consider installation of reflective film to windows to reduce direct sun rays and heat
- Move workstations away from direct sunlight where possible
- Check that pipes are appropriately lagged
- Consider making arrangements with contractors to clear the school site in heavy snow
- Talk to local community groups that may be able to provide support during heavy snow and ice
- Consider shaded external areas within playgrounds
- Ensure there are discussions with and agreements in place with employees in advance of severe weather
- Ensure all employees have completed a severe weather emergency contact form (please see below)
- Establish a procedure for notifying employees, parents and the Trust in the event of school closure or reduced access arrangements.

Short term – consider these actions days before forecasted severe snow and ice:

- Regularly check weather forecasts via news and websites. Take action whenever freezing/extreme hot temperatures are forecast. A designated employee should regularly monitor the sites highlighted in Appendix 1
- Leave heating on a low setting overnight.
- Where curtains and blinds are fitted consider closing them at night to retain heat and during the day to reduce heat
- Close doors between areas of differing temperatures.
- Ensure radiators are clear of obstruction
- Put procedures in place to prevent any icy surface forming and/or to keep pedestrians off the slippery surface
- Use grit or similar on areas prone to being slippery in frosty/icy conditions
 - Gritting should be carried out when frost, ice and 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 evening before the frost settles, if this is possible (or additional salt is required), use it early in the morning before people arrive. Salt doesn't work instantly; it needs sufficient time to dissolve into the moisture on the ground. Please remember, if gritting when it is raining heavily the salt will be washed away causing a problem if the rain then turns to snow
- Divert pedestrians to less slippery walkways and barrier off inaccessible ones
- Consider plans to restrict the movement of pupils and employees around the school grounds
- Ensure that any paths cleared are clearly marked and appropriate signage advises where to walk
- Remember 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. Employees can make alternative parking arrangements providing it is safe to do so
- Try to ensure access points into buildings have the means for people to wipe off water, snow or ice from their shoes
- Keep lights off where possible to help with room temperatures
- Consider temporary portable air conditioning units

3. Risk Assessment/Management

It is vital that a risk assessment such as Appendix 4 is completed prior to taking any decision to close, in order to ensure all the safety issues have been considered and control measures implemented. It will also serve as evidence should justification be needed to defend the closure.

Prior to and during each day of severe weather Headteachers must review their risk assessment. It is expected that a school will remain open until normal time for the end of the school day. However, the risk assessment could indicate that circumstances have changed to such an extent that the conditions are now unsafe, early closure may be necessary. In such circumstances, the school should follow its methods of communication covered later in this document.

For all closures, an employee must remain on site in case any students or employees arrive after a closure has been announced. Arrangements must always be made for the security of children and parental consent must be sought if sending any child home.

If you have any questions about completing a risk assessment, please contact WorkNest.

4. The General Procedure for a closure

If, after assessing the risks, it is deemed necessary for the school to close, the following steps should be followed.

4.1 If closure is deemed necessary before the start of the school day:

- The Headteacher must inform the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at the earliest possible opportunity

of a decision to close.

- The closure details should be added on www.kentclosures.co.uk. This will trigger Kent radio stations (KMFM, Radio Kent, Heart FM) to broadcast these details at regular intervals.
- Publish the details of the closure on the website and inform parents/carers via Bromcom or other instant messaging service the school subscribes to.
- Inform coach/taxi companies in case of school closure and they may also publish this information.
- Use locally agreed procedures to inform all employees of the closure.

4.2 If closure is deemed necessary during the course of the school day.

- The Headteacher should inform the CEO at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Publish the details of the closure on the website and inform parents/carers via Bromcom or other instant messaging service the school subscribes to
- Publish the information on the school website and on www.kentclosures.co.uk and contact parents/carers via our messaging service.
- Inform any coach/taxi companies that the school is closing early

5. Parents

If parents take their own decision to remove their child from the academy due to severe weather, then employees will request that parents/carers telephone the main office if they wish to collect their child early due to poor travel conditions in their local area.

The school must record when pupils have left the site and with whom in Bromcom.

If a pupil is on site they should be able to remain at school supervised until the end of the normal school day, or such time as the parents/carers are able to collect them (please see risk assessment for employee safety in these instances).

6. Employees

All employees must ensure they have familiarised themselves with the Staff Handbook which outlines the procedures to follow during severe weather.

If the school or central office is open, it is the responsibility of the employee to attend work.

If it is impossible for you to attend work due to adverse weather condition or other traffic disruptions, you must telephone the Headteacher or CEO as soon as you are aware. If there is a substantial delay in your arrival at work, you must notify the Headteacher or CEO as soon as possible.

The decision as to whether any lost time should be paid, unpaid, taken as a holiday, or whether you will be permitted to work from home will be at the absolute discretion of the HeadTeacher or CEO.

Where the conditions prohibit travel to your normal place of work or the decision to close your school has been by the Headteacher, employees should refer to the schools remote learning policies and prepare to provide lessons and resources online.

Employees are responsible for ensuring their emergency contact details are stored via Access People. Appendix 3 should be used to collate additional emergency information and any information stored securely and encrypted to safeguard privacy.

Below are some questions for senior leaders to consider

Are all your employee contact details up to date?

- Are employees clear about the school's expectations and when leave may be granted?
- Have you discussed with your employees how they should contact the school to advise you of absence arising from bad weather?

- Where individual employees are likely to experience particular difficulties attending work– have you discussed contingency arrangements with them in advance?
- Where teaching employees are unable to support their class, are there sufficient employees such as TA's to available to offer cover?
- Are students in school able to receive remote learning if their class teacher is not able to get into school?
- Have you considered any temporary flexible working arrangements that could be appropriate?
- Have you ensured your school is registered with the Kent School Closure website to enable you to post updates about school opening during adverse weather?

Appendix 1: Useful Websites

Kent County Council	School closures, gritting routes and traffic information	http://www.kent.gov.uk/winter https://www.kentclosures.co.uk/ https://www.kenttraffic.info/
WorkNest	Event Safety, First Aid and Lone Working	https://worknest.com/
National Highways	Conditions on motorways and trunk roads	https://nationalhighways.co.uk/
Health and Safety Executive	Risk assessment/management	http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/index.htm
Weather information	Met Office BBC Weather	http://www.metoffice.gov.uk http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather

Appendix 2: Severe Weather Employee Details Form

ACADEMIC YEAR 20XX/XX

Name:

Single carer: Yes ☐ No ☐

Disability: Yes ☐ No ☐

Distance from school: Walking Under 5 miles 5 – 10 miles 10+ miles
 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Place to stay locally if required: Yes ☐ No ☐

Are you a confident driver in snow, ice, floods, etc? Yes ☐ No ☐

Have you been driving for under 12 months? Yes ☐ No ☐

Other contributing factors – please state.....

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Appendix 3: Task Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment Form							
Location/Dept: St Georges			Date Assessed: Sept 2024		Assessed by: H Fisher		
Task/ Activity: Snow and Ice on Premises			Review Date: Sept 2025		Reference Number:		
Activity/ Task	Hazard/Risk	Persons at risk	Controls in place	Severity (1- 5)	Likelihood (1-5)	Risk/ Priority	Additional controls required
Snow and ice present on premises due to adverse weather conditions .	Slips, trips and falls	All visitors and employees	<p>Site manager to monitor weather conditions, anticipate when snow / ice clearance may be required and prioritise areas for clearing snow and gritting of paths, steps etc.</p> <p>Restrict access to cleared areas only (lock off gates and cordon off un-cleared areas)</p> <p>Pre-determine paths for treating with salt and grit.</p> <p>Check outdoor lighting prior to winter; ensure adequate lighting over proposed route especially in the evenings.</p> <p>Ensure all employees, children and parents are aware of designated paths / access routes.</p> <p>Assess outdoor play equipment.</p>	4	2		<p>Formally remind employees of their responsibility to report hazards to Headteacher and site employees.</p> <p>If slopes and steps remain in dangerous condition it may be necessary to prevent access to affected area – cones / barrier / tape etc.</p>

Snow and ice present on premises due to adverse weather conditions	Manual handling	Site/ premises staff	Staff who are responsible for gritting / clearing paths have adequate equipment and clothing to carry out the work. Equipment and supplies are checked six monthly and replenished prior to possibility of poor weather .	2	2		Formally remind employees of their responsibility to report hazards to Headteacher and site employees. If slopes and steps remain in dangerous condition it may be necessary to prevent access to affected area – cones / barrier / tape etc.
	Exposure to extreme temperatures		Personal protective equipment provided; weatherproof “hi visibility” outer clothing, coat, gloves, hat, suitable footwear etc. Avoid long periods of exposure to low temperatures and provide warm drinks	2	2		
	Inadequate hygiene facilities?		Ensure that there is anti-bacterial wash on site. Some supplies of bottled water are kept for emergency. Consider if all toilets are operational or whether alternative toilets can be used.	2	2		
	Heating Failure		Systems relating to the heating are understood by multiple persons on the site. Heating and boilers are serviced regularly. Electric heating current issues.	5	5		

Snow and ice present on premises due to adverse weather conditions			<p>Heating is kept on but at a lower temperature overnight.</p> <p>Doors, curtains and blinds closed during the night to retain the heat.</p>				
	Staff not being able to attend school, leaving pupils without adequate supervision,		<p>Estimate how many employees need to get in for the school to operate safely by identifying how many pupils could attend.</p> <p>Identify how many employees would be safe to travel to work in severe conditions.</p> <p>Inform employees to listen to local radio and other media sources to see if the roads are safe to travel on.</p> <p>Employees report to Headteacher by 7.30am to provide an assessment of their journey.</p>	4	4		
	Access routes mean employees, children and parent cannot leave the school	Children, Parents Employees	<p>Identified which pupils and employees have alternative arrangements if they were to be sent home.</p> <p>Consider if enough staff can stay on site to supervise the pupils unable to return home, and that those employees will be able to get home at a later time.</p>	3	3		

	Lone working	Employees	<p>There are clear procedures in place to ensure those undertaking lone working can report back.</p> <p>Those working outside are checked by line managers to ensure of their location and safety.</p> <p>Those working to clear the snow avoid long periods of exposure to low temperatures and provide warm drinks regularly</p>	2	2		
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Risk/Priority Indicator Key

Severity (Consequence)
1. Negligible (delay only)
2. Slight (minor injury / damage / interruption)
3. Moderate (lost time injury, illness, damage, lost business)
4. High (major injury / damage, lost time business interruption, disablement)
5. Very High (fatality / business closure)

Likelihood
1. Improbable / very unlikely
2. Unlikely
3. Even chance / may happen
4. Likely
5. Almost certain / imminent

RISK / PRIORITY INDICATOR MATRIX						
LIKELIHOOD	5	5	10	15	20	25
	4	4	8	12	16	20
	3	3	6	9	12	15
	2	2	4	6	8	10
	1	1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		SEVERITY (CONSEQUENCE)				

Summary		Suggested Timeframe
12-25	High	As soon as possible
6-11	Medium	Within next 3-6 months
1-5	Low	Whenever viable to do so

Appendix 4: Letter to Parents

Dear Parent/ Carer,

RE: SNOW AND CLOSURE

I am writing to let you know about our system this year for snow and school closure.

If the school has to close you will receive a text from our MCAS system. Please ensure you have updated your mobile phone number on the system. Please do not rely on the radio as we are often in a lengthy queue to report this.

- 1) If a closure is going to be before school you will receive a text to say school is closed. We aim to do this by 7am. Your child can then access home learning via DOJO.
- 2) If school needs to close during the day; you will receive a text to tell you the school is closing. When you arrive, please go to outside the class as usual. If very severe and the classes are inaccessible then go to the main office where members of the school team will meet you to fetch your child to you.

What about the next day?

A text will be sent to the whole school by around 5pm each day to let you know about subsequent closures.

Daisychains and Others

Daisychains is a private nursery and will take their own decision on closure. It is highly likely that they will close if we do as the conditions are often the same. However, on occasion they can open without us as we have staff that travel in from a long distance and other considerations that the nursery may well not have.

Breakfast club, after school club and sports clubs are run by the school and would be closed if the school closes.

Yours sincerely,

Mr H Fisher

Headteacher