

# HOLLINS GRUNDY PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Snow day procedures

When adverse weather is experienced which might cause danger to the pupils or staff, including journeys to and from school, it may be necessary to consider closing the school. Decisions to close a school, whether for a full day or part of a day, needs to be taken in the context local circumstances, and on the basis of the most current weather forecasts.

A decision to close the school will never be taken lightly and will always be taken in the best interests of pupils and staff.

A decision to close the school as a result of snow will be taken before 8.00am in the morning, to balance the need to give parents the chance to make alternative child care arrangements if necessary and the need to make decisions based on up-to date information as forecasts can vary in accuracy and conditions can change quickly.

Factors to bear in mind are:

- Are conditions safe for children and their parents to be able to make the journey to school safely?
- Are enough teaching staff able to get to work to ensure that children will be safe if the school is open?
- Can the school site be made safe for children and staff should the school be open?
- If the school is open are conditions likely to deteriorate to a degree that would prevent parents being safely able to pick their children up at the end of the day?

Bearing these factors in mind the headteacher, in consultation with the chair of governors, will make a decision as to whether the school will be open based on up to date information from weather forecasts and staff who are on or close to the school site.

Options to consider would be:

1. Can the school safely remain fully open?
2. Would a late start or early closure enable the school to remain partially open?

Parents and members of staff will be informed promptly by text message and/or email (before 8.00am)

*In exceptional circumstances, local authorities may instruct all schools for which they are responsible that is, all community and voluntary controlled schools to close.*

In addition to the decision as to whether the school opens or closes parents may be asked to help clear the immediate area around the school of snow in order to maintain a safe pedestrian access to the school. This is intended to overcome the potential access problems due to the steep approach paths to school.

Further guidance on schools closures as a result of adverse weather, issued by the Department for Education, is shown at appendix A.

Managing the school site during snowy conditions is dealt with according to the Risk Assessment form attached as Appendix B, this is revised annually or as necessary.

## Appendix A

### Planning for, and responding to, severe weather

#### Guidance issued by the Department for Education

The Department recommends delegating as far as possible any advice on whether an individual school stays open in bad weather. It is clear that the LA makes the judgement on the day about delegating any advice or decision to schools. Local authorities may however take decisions with respect to community and voluntary controlled schools if they wish to adopt a consistent approach across an area; it is hoped that they would only use their powers in this respect in exceptional circumstances which would on a case-by-case basis justify the closure of almost all schools in the area. Local authorities do not have the power to oblige foundation or voluntary-aided schools or academies to close, but may come to an agreement with the governing bodies of those schools that they will follow LA advice in the event of the blanket closure of community and voluntary-controlled schools.

As school staff and governors will appreciate, school closures disrupt children's education and make life very difficult for working parents who may not be able to make childcare arrangements at short notice. This in turn disrupts the services and businesses in which those parents work.

Schools should therefore plan for severe weather on the assumption that they will generally stay open. In the outbreaks of severe weather in early 2010, staff at many schools worked hard to keep their school open for the pupils who could get in. Of course exceptionally severe weather may disrupt even the best of plans.

As well as general information, such as how to contact pupils' families and staff, plans for severe weather could include:

- maintaining stocks of salt or grit
- identifying which walkways or areas need to be kept clear to allow people to get around the premises safely
- estimating how many staff members need to get in for the school to operate safely, if not to deliver the full normal curriculum.

You need to be clear who will make any decision about closure. In most cases this decision is delegated, rightly in the Department's view, to Head Teachers, who will know local weather and ground conditions, and the likely impact of the weather on the numbers of staff and pupils who will be able to get into school. In timing your decision, you need to balance the likely accuracy of weather forecasts against the benefits of early decisions to help parents and staff plan ahead; in many cases, decisions will however need to be taken in the hours immediately before the start of the school day.

As a decision-maker, you need to take a proportionate approach to assessing risks. Closing the school has a clear impact on children and families. Remaining open may increase risks arising from less supervision, longer journeys to and from school, minor slips and bumps, etc. There may be practical steps you can take to manage these increased risks, for example:

- reducing the extent to which children have to move between school buildings for different lessons
- bringing some classes together in the hall to ensure adequate supervision
- ending the school day early so that children do not get home too late (while making arrangements for children who cannot get collected by parents until later).

In some cases, closing your school will be the right decision. If you judge that children or staff will face significant risks of injury in school, or travelling to and from school, then a balanced decision may be that the school should close.

Information about local road conditions will normally be available on local media, and the police may issue advice to travellers.

If you cannot get enough staff in to manage safely the expected numbers of pupils, closure may again be advisable. But you may wish to consider whether varying the school's activities for the day will enable you to operate safely with fewer staff.

When severe weather coincides with public examinations, you should make every effort to open for examination candidates even if the rest of the school is closed. In early 2010, schools and other examination centres made great efforts to enable candidates to take examinations, and very few centres had to close.

In exceptional circumstances, local authorities may instruct all schools for which they are responsible that is, all community and voluntary controlled schools to close. Local authorities do not have the power to oblige foundation or voluntary-aided schools, or academies, to close, but may come to an agreement with governing bodies that these schools will close if LA-wide closure seems necessary. In the context of severe weather, we would only expect local authorities to take this approach if there were extreme circumstances, such as advice that all roads in an area were unsafe. In other cases local authorities may wish to give a steer to schools to aid them in decision-making without directing or advising them to close.

### **Communicating closure to students and parents**

You will appreciate the importance of timely and clear messages to parents and students. Different schools will use different methods and those who have closed in recent outbreaks of severe weather may wish to seek the views of parents and students on how the decision was communicated to them.

### **Supporting education if school closes**

In some cases schools will need to close for a temporary period. In these cases, we hope that it may be possible to support pupils' learning during the closure, though the extent to which this will be possible will vary from school to school and may depend on the length of the closure.

### **Mutual support and networking**

We recognise that many members of staff will live some distance away from their schools and transport difficulties may prevent them reaching their school; they may however be able to get to another school nearer to their home.

Though this will not be possible everywhere, it may be possible in some instances for schools to agree between them that staff who cannot get to their own school should report to a more local school and help that school cover staff shortages. This may only be feasible where there is the possibility of arrangements being made in advance and set out in contingency plans, for example between federated schools or schools that work together in some form of network.

### **More information**

- Find information on sensible risk management from the HSE.
- Find out about local conditions forecast for your area by checking the Met Office website.

Every lesson counts and it is right that schools should stay open during extreme weather conditions where it is safe to do so. Schools that do remain open, however, should not be penalised because absence rates have risen due to pupils having difficulty in travelling to school. Ofsted will be providing their inspectors with additional guidance on inspecting attendance which covers the impact of the 2010 period of extreme weather. This was incorporated in the March 2010 edition of *Schools and Inspection* which is published on Ofsted's website.

# Workplace/Activity Risk Assessment



This form should be completed in conjunction with the guidance notes contained in HS 3a (rev).

<b>A</b>	<b>Workplace details</b>				
<b>Department</b>	<b>Children's Services</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Location</b>	Hollins Grundy Primary School

<b>B</b>	<b>Workplace activity</b>	Opening school to children during periods of snowy weather
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<b>C</b>	<b>Persons affected</b>	Children, parents, staff
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<b>D</b>	<b>Assessment of risk</b>				
<b>Hazard and cause of hazard</b>	<b>Existing control measures</b>	<b>Risk L/M/H</b>	<b>Further control measures needed</b>	<b>Action taken by whom</b>	<b>Risk remaining L/M/H</b>
<u>Approach To School</u>					
Falls & injuries including broken bones due to slipping on snow/ice when walking to school.	None	M	Treatment of pavements in residential areas and on approaches to school.	Bury LA	M
			Approach paths to school & areas around school gates.	Caretaker to grit	
Injury due to traffic accident on untreated roads.	Major roads gritted, residential roads not gritted.	M	Gritting of residential roads	Bury LA	M
Lack of available parking in school vicinity for staff or parents due to The Hags being impassable. Potential for congestion around school to cause traffic accidents.	Potential to ask parent volunteers to clear the path down from Hollins Lane to school. Depending on conditions.	M	Clear school car-park – last priority	Caretaker	M
			Grit/clear The Hags and residential streets	Bury LA	

D	Assessment of risk					
	Hazard and cause of hazard	Existing control measures	Risk L/M/H	Further control measures needed	Action taken by whom	Risk remaining L/M/H
	<u>School Site</u>					
	Falls & injuries including broken bones due to slipping on snow/ice when walking into school or playing out	<p>Paths cleared and gritted from school gates to school doors.</p> <p>Conditions underfoot to be assessed by SW before each playtime. If conditions are dangerous then indoor playtime.</p>	L	<p>Maintain clear paths by gritting regularly</p> <p>Clear school car-park – last priority (It may be necessary to keep car-park locked until it is cleared &amp; gritted)</p>	Caretaker	L
		No children to play out in the snow unless they have sensible outdoor footwear and an alternative indoor pair	L	Monitor footwear of children outside on yard. Send them in if inappropriate	Teaching staff	L
	Injury due to being hit by hard snow/ice thrown by other children.	All children reminded of the no snowballs rule each day.	H	Monitor observance of no snowballs rule.	Teaching staff	L
	Lack of access for emergency service vehicles.	None		Clear school car-park – last priority (It may be necessary to keep car-park locked until it is cleared & gritted)	Caretaker	

<b>E</b>	<b>Assessment prepared by</b>						
Name	Simon Waddington	Signature		Position	Headteacher	Date	January 2015

<b>F</b>	<b>Assessment review</b>						
Date for review		Carried out by		Position		Signature	
November 2016							

#### HAZARD AND SEVERITY INDEX

HAZARD INDEX		
<b>5</b>	<b>Probable</b>	Reasonably certain or expected to occur. Likely to occur repeatedly.
<b>4</b>	<b>Likely</b>	Expected to occur. May occur several times.
<b>3</b>	<b>Possible</b>	May occur sometime.
<b>2</b>	<b>Unlikely</b>	Will not usually occur, but is conceivable.
<b>1</b>	<b>Improbable</b>	<u><b>So unlikely that the probability is close to zero.</b></u>

SEVERITY INDEX	
<b>5</b>	Fatality - single or multiple.
<b>4</b>	Major injury; permanent disability; disabling illness
<b>3</b>	Injury; non-disabling illness; more than 3 working days lost-time.
<b>2</b>	Minor injury; less than 3 working days lost-time.
<b>1</b>	No injury.

RISK FACTOR (Hazard Index x Severity Index)		
<b>1 - 2</b>	<b>LOW</b>	Comply with legislation; reduce if practicable; ensure that personnel are competent for the activity.
<b>3 – 9</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	Comply with legislation; reduce to the lowest level reasonably practicable; written procedures required; only trained personnel to undertake the activity.
<b>10 - 25</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	Immediate action required. If there is a risk of serious or imminent danger stop activity until the risk has been reduced to the lowest level reasonably practicable. If the remaining risk is <u>high</u> the activity is only to be undertaken by highly trained, specialist personnel using specific control measures e.g.

		permits-to-work, specific safe systems of work etc.
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