



## **Severe Weather Procedures**

**This document has been adopted by all schools within The Golden Thread Alliance and should be used in conjunction with the school's Business Continuity Plan.**

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## Severe Weather

Preparing for a Severe Weather event.

If severe weather is forecast or has happened over the weekend or school holidays, the School Business Manager in conjunction with the Headteacher/Head of School and Site Teams, should be making sure the school is safe for children and staff to enter the school.

These guidelines are intended to inform schools of procedures for dealing with exceptional and emergency closures during severe weather. School closures disrupt children's education therefore schools should plan for severe weather on the assumption that they will generally stay open wherever possible, with closure always considered as the last resort. School severe weather contingency plans should be prepared well before the bad weather season so that all staff, parents/guardians and pupils understand them.

They should contain general information, such as:

- how to contact pupils' families and staff,
- 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.
- know how many staff members need to get in for the school to operate safely, if not to deliver the full normal curriculum.

It is therefore important that contingency plans are developed according to the local requirements of the individual establishment. Plans should include arrangements for issues such as roles and responsibilities, communication and media management, as well as how information about potential school closures and re-opening will be communicated to pupils, staff and parents. Points to remember when remaining open during Severe Weather: Remaining open during severe weather 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). When severe weather coincides with public examinations, every effort should be made to remain open for examination candidates, even if the rest of the school is closed.

Points to remember when making the decision to close during severe weather:

- Closing a school is never an easy option. In taking a decision to close a school, the safety of pupils, staff and visitors is of paramount importance. The decision to close is delegated to Headteacher/Head of Schools 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. However, before making the decision to close, the Head Teacher, in conjunction with the governing body should undertake a risk assessment and decide if there is significant risk of severe injury, ill health or inability to comply with relevant legislation which would then lead to their decision to close part or all of the school.

If the Council receives a severe weather warning this will be communicated to schools by e-mail. This does not mean that your school has to close. The decision to close must be assessed individually by each school and may relate to whether children live within walking distance or where most pupils travel by public transport.

The attendance of many pupils will depend on road conditions and the decision of transport providers whether or not to operate. Schools should liaise with transport contractors before making any decision as this will provide information on how many pupils to expect if the school remains open. If the school decides to close, the contractors must be notified as soon as possible.

School staff must remain at school to supervise the pupils remaining on site until contractors can take them home. In timing the decision, it will be important 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.

However, it may sometimes be necessary for schools to close during the day; for example, if the weather is deteriorating and children may not be able to get home later. Once the decision to close the school has been reached it will be necessary to communicate this message as promptly as possible to all relevant parties, including the local authority, local radio stations and any transport services. School should have a variety of methods to get information to parents, staff and pupils about closures and re-opening.

These could include:

- Posting notices on the school gates
- Messages via the local media
- School and LA websites
- Staff and Parent communication via Parentmail/Arbor
- Text messaging, social networking sites such as Twitter.

### **Staff Attendance**

Many members of staff will live some distance away from their schools and transport difficulties may prevent them reaching their school, however in the event of schools being closed to pupils, staff are still expected to report for work, unless notified differently by the

head teacher. Headteachers/Heads of School should, in consultation with governors, staff, trade unions and professional associations, take into account, among other factors (including the well-being and family needs of staff); how/where staff could best support the school's approach to remote learning.

### **Learning during School Closure**

Prolonged school closures could seriously affect children's education and schools have a 'legal duty to provide education at school or otherwise' for children who for any reason, may not for any period, receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them". Schools should ensure that a reasonable level of education is provided for all children if pupils are unable to attend schools due to school premises being closed to students during term time.

In cases where schools decide to close for a temporary period 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. In considering this issue, schools need to take account of:

- The accuracy of contact details they have for pupils and their families;
- The proportion of children who have access to the internet and e-mail at home, and whether the school's IT systems allow those pupils with IT facilities to access the school's own systems from home;
- Security and child protection issues; for example, the personal addresses, e-mail and telephone details of staff should not be made available to pupils or their parents.

## Flowchart of Severe Weather

