



Severe Weather Policy & Procedures

Date Reviewed: October 2018

Date Governing Body Approved: Not Applicable

Review Period: Annually

Staff Responsibility: Stephen Houlton-Allen

Date for Next Review: October 2019

1. Rationale

Our primary duty is to educate students in a safe environment. Extreme weather conditions may lead to a conflict between our duty to educate and our concern for safety. This document sets out the procedure for such conditions and sets out the actions the schools need to take in the event of severe weather.

2. Closure Decisions

2.1 Schools are expected to remain open in all but the most extreme circumstances. The decision to close a school in severe weather, or when responding to a public emergency, should be taken by the Executive Head/Head of School based on the following:

- ❖ Local conditions;
- ❖ This Guidance;
- ❖ Emergency Evacuation Policy;
- ❖ An Assessment of Risk;
- ❖ Information from the Local Authority.

2.2 When we experience severe adverse weather conditions, it is always very difficult to determine how this will affect travel and site safety, particularly when we have snow and ice. When making a decision to close the school, there are a number of issues that have to be considered:

- Many students are reliant on public taxis, therefore school needs to be sure that the taxis will run and that journeys are safe;
- Some staff live some way from school, some a considerable distance away. School therefore have to be confident that there will be sufficient staff able to get in, in order to teach the students as school has a duty to ensure a safe level of supervision;
- The condition of the site – is it safe for students and staff to move around the school? Clearing paths and gritting takes a long time. It is a difficult decision to make and parents will appreciate the dilemma between giving everyone sufficient notice of closure and trying to guess what road and weather conditions will be between 8.00 and 8.30am

2.3 If at all possible a decision will be taken by 9.00pm the night before or at the very latest by 7.30am on the day. It is possible that a decision will be taken to open the school but with a delayed starting time. Our decision will be posted on the school's website and on the school's Facebook page and will be updated regularly. In addition, the office will send out a message via Schoolcomms.

2.4 We will inform local radio stations – **BBC Three Counties 103.8FM, Heart Four Counties 97.6FM or Bob FM 106.7FM and 106.9FM**. We will also inform the local authority of closure – this information will be found on the [Herts Direct](#) website.

No closure message on our website means that we intend to open and all students will be expected to attend.

2.5 **During the school day**

- Once a decision has been made to open the school, we will endeavour to remain open for the duration of the school day. If the weather becomes severe during the day, then parents should

contact the school if they feel that they would like to collect their child early for safety reasons (i.e. travelling or walking long distances or collecting other children from other local schools).

- If the school decides to send pupils home early then the school has a duty to notify all parents to ensure that there is an adult at home to receive their child. No child will be sent home early on transport if this has not been substantiated.
- The school will endeavour to remain open until 2.30 pm (Collett) 3.15pm (St Luke's/FHEC). If parents anticipate being delayed due to adverse weather conditions, please leave in good time to collect your child. If they are delayed they should contact the school to give an estimated time of arrival.
- Any Afterschool Clubs will run if at all possible. Parents of children who are due to attend on that day will all be contacted to let them know if there are any different arrangements.
- In such circumstances, parents must consider their own safety, traffic congestion and the safety of others.

3. Staffing

- 3.1 Unless specifically told otherwise, staff will be expected to use their best endeavours to attend work without putting themselves or others at risk. When the Police recommend that motorists undertake only essential journeys, this is considered to include travel to work and school.
- 3.2 Staff will always make every reasonable effort to undertake the journey to school. It is appreciated that the journey may take longer than normal and therefore some staff may not be able to arrive before the normal start of the school day.
- 3.3 It may be necessary to ask all children to bring packed lunches if the kitchen staff are unable to reach school safely. Parents will be notified by Schoolcomms/website if this is the case.
- 3.4 Where it is deemed too unsafe or difficult for staff to attend their workplace, other options should be considered. For example, working from home via LARA or attending a partner site if closer to home.
- 3.5 Staff **must** always make contact with the Head of School or their line manager to discuss their situation and consider options. For example, working from home, coming in later or working from another site.

4. Preparation for Severe Weather

- 4.1 In the event of severe weather the premises manager/caretaker will make sure that the heating is left on during 'out of hours' periods for frost protection purposes.
- 4.2 The Head of School will brief staff in advance to ensure they know what is expected of them.
- 4.3 The Head of School will frequently brief parents, children etc. in advance to ensure they understand where they can get up to date information from, e.g. Schoolcomms, School Website or local radio stations. In

addition, remind parents they can sign up to receive messages via the Everbridge Schools Closure Notification System by signing up through the following link:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/at-school/emergency-school-closures/emergency-school-closures.aspx>

- 4.5 Where schools are open, risk assessments must be undertaken by the Head of School to ensure the health and safety of staff, pupils and all site users. Inspections of paths and walkways should be carried out regularly and documented. This should include local arrangements for clearing and salting when ice or snow appears, as well as any failures to the surfaces.
- 4.6 Where gales or high wind warnings have been issued, the site should be checked for dead or damaged branches/trees and other potential hazards to people or property.
- 4.7 Where it is not possible for some staff and/or children to return home, the Head of School will ensure there are plans in place to provide warmth and hot refreshments.
- 4.8 In extreme circumstances HCC may request that schools or other establishments be used as rest centres for members of the public.

5. Responding to Severe Weather

- 5.1 The Head of School will keep a regular check on the forecast for severe weather conditions. The Head of School should ensure there is an up to date list of home contact/mobile phone details of all staff and parents.
- 5.2 The Office/Communications Officer will log on to Everbridge Schools Closure Notification System to update it. Schools do not need to call the Local Authority or local radio stations. The Everbridge Schools Closure Notification System will inform both the Local Authority and radio stations. Where possible this will be done between midday and mid-afternoon of the day before.
- 5.3 Each school will have nominated radio station(s). An email is automatically sent to the nominated radio station(s) when a school sends a message into the system. The radio stations will notify their listeners of school closures wherever possible.
- 5.4 In case parents have not signed up to the Everbridge Service, the Head of School/Office Staff will use all other means possible to inform parents and staff that the school will be closed:
 - The website will be updated regularly by the Communications Officer/Executive Head to reflect the current situation;
 - Office staff will update the message on the school answer machine to reflect the school's situation;
 - Office staff will send out a message via Schoolcomms;
 - The School Emergency Response Team (SERT) will have contact numbers for staff and parents and others to hand and will use a cascade system where possible;
 - Where possible a message will be posted on the main entrance or gate and in the case of schools, ensure someone is there to meet any children/parents etc. who may turn up.

- 5.5 The Head of School/Office will keep in close contact with the HCC transport team on 0300 123043/01992 556459 to keep them updated.
- 5.6 School will keep a copy of these procedures with their copy of the Schools Emergency Evacuation Plan and publish it on the school website.

6. Re-opening of Schools Following Closure

- 6.1 If the school has to be closed for several days, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors will make the decision as to when it is safe to re-open the school, liaising with the Local Authority if necessary.
- 6.2 When the severe weather has passed, establishments should check their premises before announcing that it will re-open. The Premises Manger, Caretaker and/or Head of School should inspect the premises for signs of damage, e.g. heating failure, flooding, burst pipes or damaged trees.
- 6.3 School sites that have experienced damage serious enough to warrant declaring a Critical Incident should follow the guidance in the School Emergency Evacuation Plan and use the relevant contact numbers below to report it:

Monday – Friday	08.30 – 17.30	01438 737261
Saturday	09.00 – 16.00	01438 737261

- 6.4 The Head of School should use the school contact systems for advising staff of the situation and send an **updated message to the Local Authority and parents via the Everbridge Schools Closure Notification System.**

7. Review

The Severe Weather Policy should be reviewed by the Head of Operations/Heads of School biannually and after any severe weather incidents, to ensure that procedures are appropriately implemented and are effective at safeguarding pupils, parents and staff against severe weather

Appendix 1

Key Staff Details

School Emergency Response Team (SERT)

The School Emergency Response Team (SERT) has responsibility for activating and implementing the School Emergency Plan. The SERT team should record all decisions and actions and be available for briefings sessions, handovers and emergency de-briefs.

All members of the SERT must:

- have a copy of the School Emergency Plan at home and at School
- be aware of their role and responsibilities, and that of others
- have an on call rota for SERT members

Current list of SERT Members

Name	Role	Contact Number(s)
Stephen Houlton-Allen	Executive Headteacher	
Pam Stocks	Head of School (Collett)	
Jamie Caple	Head of School (St Luke's)	
Huw Bucknell	Head of School (FHEC)	
Manda Sides	Head of Operations	
Neil Vaughan	Caretaker (Collett)	
Trevor Hall	Premises Manager (St Luke's)	
Josh Pollard	Safeguarding Lead	
Harry Crawford	Communications Officer	
Rachael Lampey	Bursar (Collett)	
Mary Ellis	PA Executive Headteacher	

The following check lists are provided to assist the SERT in carry out their roles and responsibilities, it is not intended to be exhaustive as further actions may be required that are specific to the incidents as it occurs.

Name	Role	Contact Number(s)
HCC Transport Team	Transport	0300 123043
Reachers	Taxi (Collett & St Luke's)	01923 711211 / 0208 4201716
Skyline	Taxi (Collett)	01442 241111

Lucketts	Taxi (St Luke's)	01923 093185
Kings Cars	Taxi (St Luke's)	01923 262266/ 07785 500247
AIA Taxis	Taxi (St Luke's)	01707 334499
Rainbow Travel	Taxi (St Luke's)	01923 555000
Beds Out of County Transport	Taxi (St Luke's)	01582 547387