



## Southcote Primary School

### Snow and Bad Weather Policy

As a fundamental principle every effort must be made to keep schools open, even if only limited numbers of pupils can attend.

In the event of bad weather we will endeavour to make any decisions on the closure of the school by 7.00am. The Headteacher will review the situation at 2.30pm.

In the event of closure we will send a group text to all parents for which we have a mobile number. If you currently do not receive text messages from the school, please contact the school office with a number we can text you on, as the number we have for you may be out of date.

We will inform local radio stations: BBC Berkshire, Heart FM and Reading 107 of our school closure as they will announce a list of all regional school closures regularly within their program.

In the event of heavy snow fall during the school day that causes us to be concerned about children's welfare in relation to returning home, we will again text for immediate collection. Reading Borough Council and the local radio stations will also be advised.

It is always difficult to make the right decision due to the unpredictability of the weather, we will aim to do this as swiftly as we can. Please rest assured that any decisions taken will be based around ensuring that your children are kept as safe as possible.

Please note that if the school is closed, Breakfast Club and After School Club will also be closed.

#### **Further considerations in the event of inclement weather follow, as taken from the Rainbow Plan:**

##### **Risk Assessment**

Any closure of the school is a most unusual occurrence and each closure is unique, making forward planning complex.

The Headteacher 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.

##### **A range of factors needs to be considered such as:**

- Whether there are on-site hazardous conditions that cannot reasonably be mitigated (for example the pathway to the school entrance or where pupils have to move around the site during the school day).
- Will there be enough staff to supervise (but not necessarily teach) the number of children likely to be present?

- Can a reasonable temperature be maintained in the building or parts of the building where children and staff are likely to be?
- Is water available and are sufficient toilets working satisfactorily?
- What are the general safety conditions around the site and building?
- What is the information on road conditions from RBC and Road Agencies e.g. AA/RAC.
- What is the amount of snow and ice accumulated?
- What is the temperature and wind chill. Some pupils walk to school and some must wait outside for the bus.
- What are the weather predictions?

If health and safety conditions are satisfied, then the school should remain open.

When considering early closure Headteachers should regard the health and welfare of pupils as paramount. All arrangements should ensure a standard of care for each and every pupil as would be expected of a prudent parent. Arrangements should take account of age, ability and capacities (physical and mental) of the pupils concerned; the location of the school in relation to pupils' homes and to road traffic and other hazards; the home circumstances of the pupils and any other emergency arrangements.

Arrangements must always be made for the security of children and parental assent must be sought if sending them home.

A school must never close completely unless the Headteacher is certain that no child will present his/herself.

#### **Action to be taken**

Upon receipt of a severe weather warning from the LA or on their own initiative the Headteacher will consider the following possible actions:

- Circulate the warning or situation to key staff including teachers
- Monitor the weather conditions as they deteriorate
- Alert the Site Controller to review heating settings and to make arrangements for frost protection and the gritting of roads and footpaths on site
- Decide to close the school in advance where this seems sensible

Obviously you will try to give parents as much notice as possible. If you are warning them that you might wait until the following morning to make a firm decision, remind them which radio stations to listen to for the information. If sending a SMS to parents ensure you include the school name.

#### **Staffing**

Please remember that you cannot direct a member of staff to drive in conditions they consider to be dangerous, but they should be able to demonstrate that they have considered all other travel options.

In order to ensure that the school is prepared for the winter months, at the beginning of the autumn term the school should ensure that they have assessed their stocks of salt grit and sand.

To prepare for opening when there are severe weather conditions, Headteachers should take the following action.

- Ensure salt/sand stocks are plentiful and boilers are fully serviced.
- Check weather forecasts regularly via news and websites. Designated member of staff could do a regular check on <http://uk.weather.com> or <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/>
- Ensure staff travel distance is mapped and a plan is in place for designated staff who can get in by walking/short drive (five miles) / long drive (10 miles) / very long drive (10 miles +). Take into consideration disability, nervous/new drivers, four-wheel drive and other things that affect ease of journey.
- Your decision making regarding expectation of staff arrival will be based on this, i.e., staff will indicate likelihood prior to event. Please remember, you cannot direct a member of staff to drive in conditions they consider to be dangerous. They do, however, need robust reasons not to turn up and ultimately the decision is their responsibility.
- If possible, arrange for staff to accommodate each other locally in severe conditions if return home is impossible. Arrange for your accommodation if you are not local, should it be possible – local hotel arrangement may need to be made.

#### **Clearance of Snow**

Within the school site, the school is responsible for snow clearance and the clearing of approach paths is the specific task of the caretaker. When severe weather is forecast, the caretaker should be tasked to lay salt and grit in advance.

The clearance of public roads will depend on the availability of the Highways Department vehicles or contractors who will not normally be able to clear snow on school sites.

Headteachers will be aware that they have a responsibility in inclement weather to keep the children indoors if there is any question of children's safety being at risk, for instance if they are let out at break time and the playground area is unsafe.

#### **Advice to Staff re Severe Weather**

The Senior Leadership Team will discuss the ability for staff to attend school in adverse weather conditions. Staff will need to make their own risk assessment regarding travelling to and from school and should inform the school immediately if a decision is made to stay at home, giving robust reasons. Staff should support the Senior Management in running the school when conditions are difficult.

Staff with disabilities or who are pregnant should make appropriate professional judgements. Staff should as early as possible in the winter period, arrange with colleagues local accommodation should they be unable to return home at the end of the school day and share transport arrangements if at all possible.

Signed	L Telling	HEADTEACHER
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Date	6 <sup>th</sup> December 2016
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Review Date	Autumn 2018
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