

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

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Multi-Academy Trust Policy

Common Trust Policy, Use as Published

Severe Weather Procedures

Date adopted by Trust Board: 07/2022

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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.” [\(Emergency planning and response for education, childcare, and children’s social care settings\)](#)

As such, the Board wish to ensure that all schools in Aquila, The Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust (hereafter referred to as the Trust) remain open wherever possible.

However, the Board also accepts that in the following circumstances decisions may need to be made to close an academy.

- The safety of pupils and staff cannot be guaranteed
- There is an insufficient number of staff available to supervise children on site

Any references to School in this document means an Academy within the Trust.

2. Preparation for Severe Snow and Ice

There are long and short-term actions schools must take to ensure they are prepared and able to remain open during severe weather.

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 (inline with the Snow Code <https://www.gov.uk/clear-snow-road-path-cycleway>)
- Ensure water, boiler and heating 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.
- 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.
- Ensure there are discussions with and agreements in place with staff in advance of severe weather.
- Ensure all staff have completed a severe weather emergency contact form (please see below)
- Establish a procedure for notifying staff, 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 temperatures are forecast. A designated member of staff 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.
- 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 staff 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. Staff 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.

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 Head Teachers 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, a member of school staff must remain on site in case any students or staff 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 0345 226 8393.

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 Head teacher 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 staff of the closure.

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

- The Head teacher 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 staff 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 staff safety in these instances).

6. Staff

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

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

Staff 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 staff are unable to support their class, are there sufficient staff 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

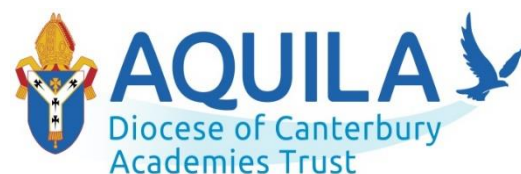
Kent County Council	School closures, gritting routes and traffic information	http://www.kent.gov.uk/winter https://www.kentclosures.co.uk/ https://www.kenttraffic.info/
Worknest	Event Safety, First Aid and Lone Working	https://worknest.com/
National Highways	Conditions on motorways and trunk roads	https://nationalhighways.co.uk/
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: Key Contacts

Name	Position	Email	Contact Number
Annie Wiles	Chief Executive Officer	AWiles@aquilatrust.co.uk	01303 297020 07895 108744
Marian Scally	Chief Financial Officer	MScally@aquilatrust.co.uk	01303 297019 07814 940253
Jason Nye	Head of Estates	jnye@aquilatrust.co.uk	01303 297020
Nicholas Morgan	Head of Governance and Compliance	nmorgan@aquilatrust.co.uk	01303 297020 07845 100976
Chris Clarke	Educational Psychologist	CClarke@aquilatrust.co.uk	01303 297020 07764 946138
Sandra Morgan	Head of Human Resources	SMorgan@aquilatrust.co.uk	01303 297020
Naomi Jackman	Payroll Manager	NaomiJackmon@aquilatrust.co.uk	01303 297020 07881 698619
Tracey Howard	Senior Administrator / Data Protection Officer	THoward@diocant-aquila.org	01303 297020
Deinma Ateli	Worknest	DeinmaAteli@worknest.com	0345 226 8393 07715 181880

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Appendix 3: Severe Weather Staff 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.....

.....

Name of nearest Aquila school.....

Appendix 4: Model Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment Form							
Location/Dept:			Date Assessed:		Assessed by:		
Task/ Activity: Snow and Ice on Premises			Review Date:		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 staff	Nominated member of staff to monitor weather conditions, anticipate when snow / ice clearance may be required and prioritise areas for clearing snow and gritting of paths, steps etc. Restrict access to cleared areas only (lock off gates and cordon off un-cleared areas) Pre-determine paths for treating with salt and grit. Check outdoor lighting prior to winter; ensure adequate lighting over proposed route especially in the evenings. Ensure all staff, children and parents are aware of designated paths / access routes. Assess outdoor play equipment.				Formally remind employees of their responsibility to report hazards to Head teacher and site staff. If slopes and steps remain in dangerous condition it may be necessary to prevent access to affected area – cones / barrier / tape etc.
	Manual handling	Site/ premises staff	Staff who are responsible for gritting / clearing paths have adequate equipment and clothing to carry out the work.				

Snow and ice present on premises due to adverse weather conditions			Equipment and supplies are checked six monthly and replenished prior to possibility of poor weather .				Formally remind employees of their responsibility to report hazards to Head teacher and site staff. 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				
	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.				
	Heating Failure		Systems relating to the heating are understood by multiple persons on the site. Heating and boilers are serviced regularly. Heating is kept on but at a lower temperature overnight. Doors, curtains and blinds closed during the night to retain the heat.				
	Staff not being able to attend school, leaving pupils without adequate supervision,		Estimate how many staff members need to get in for the school to operate safely by identifying how many pupils could attend. Identify how many staff would be safe to travel to work in severe conditions.				

Snow and ice present on premises due to adverse weather conditions			Inform staff to listen to local radio and other media sources to see if the roads are safe to travel on. Staff report to Head teacher by 7.30am to provide an assessment of their journey.				Formally remind employees of their responsibility to report hazards to Head teacher and site staff. If slopes and steps remain in dangerous condition it may be necessary to prevent access to affected area – cones / barrier / tape etc.
	Access routes mean staff, children and parent cannot leave the school	Children, Parents Staff	Identified which pupils and staff have alternative arrangements if they were to be sent home. Consider if enough staff can stay on site to supervise the pupils unable to return home, and that those staff will be able to get home at a later time.				
	Lone working	Staff	There are clear procedures in place to ensure those undertaking lone working can report back. Those working outside are checked by line managers to ensure of their location and safety. Those working to clear the snow avoid long periods of exposure to low temperatures and provide warm drinks regularly				

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