



**Safeguarding Policy on
Emergency Closure of School
due to Inclement Weather**

**Learning Directorate
Children and Families**

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Author and Document Location

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Revision History

This policy has been through the following revisions:

Version No. Changed	Revision Date	Filename/Location Stored	Comments Brief Summary of Changes
31.10.2003 Version 1		Current policy	Issued by Paul Hayward on Schools Bulletin Board – Circular 304
02.11.2007 Version 2		Issued and rescinded	Issued by Phil Watts on Schools Bulletin Board – Circular 285
14.12.2007		Circular rescinding 2007 policy	2007 policy rescinded – advice issued by DCSF in conflict with policy – 2003 policy reactivated and still current – Circular 335
May 2008		Not issued?	Draft "School Attendance in Inclement Weather" policy – drafted by Keith Smith? – no evidence of it being implemented.
17.12.2009 Version 3		Working draft for consultation.	This is constructed on previous versions but updated to reflect DCSF guidance.
18.01.2010 Version 3a		Working draft for consultation	Amended to include reference to Equality Impact Assessment
21.01.2010 Version 4a		Working draft for consultation	Amended as a result of meeting between Bob Brooks and Trades Unions on 20.01.10 and separate meeting between Laura Hadley, Paul Hayward and Jackie Kimberley on 21.01.10.
01.02.2010 Version 4b		Working draft for consultation	Inserted Appendix B draft health and safety template and guidance from Laura Hadley
23.02.2010 Version 4c		Working draft for consultation	Amended following further consultation with Unions on 24.02.2010 (see minutes of meeting for details).
26.04.2010 Version 4d		Working draft for consultation	Amendments made to Health and Safety Template (Appendix B) by Laura Hadley
26.04.10 Version 4e		Final Draft Policy from Working Group for consultation	Minor amendments suggested by Trade Union reps following meeting with them on 26 April 2010 (see minutes for details)
20.07.10 Version 4f		Final Draft Policy for JUP consideration	Minor amendment suggested by Trade Union reps following JUP meeting on 20 July 2010 (see minutes for details)

Authorisation

This policy has received the following approval(s):

Authorisation	Name	Comments	Date
Policy Working Group	Trade Union Reps	TUs reserve the right to revisit the policy at later date, particularly Appendix C	26.04.10
Joint Union Panel	Trade Union Reps	TUs agree policy with minor amendment as outlined in minutes of meeting.	20.07.10
Cabinet Advisory Team	Cabinet Advisory Team	Policy agreed with recommendation for governing bodies to adopt	18.11.10

Related Documents

Summary of filenames and locations of related legislation/guidance/documents:

Document Type	Filename/Location Stored
Leave of Absence Policy for School Based Staff dated 31.3.2006	Schools Virtual Office
Health & Safety Commission "Principles of sensible risk management"	www.hse.gov.uk/risk/riskmanage.pdf
DCSF Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions on Schools and Severe Weather	www.teachernet.gov.uk/educationoverview/briefing/news/severeweather/faqs/
Recording Pupil Absence Guidance	http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/ See also The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Please indicate the level of Equality Impact Assessment carried out (if "not required" indicate such in the comments column):

	Date Completed	Lead Officer	Comments
Initial Screening			
Partial Assessment			
Full Assessment			

Colleagues/Forums Consulted

Name and Title	Date Consulted	Date Response Received	Comments
Bob Brooks, Service Lead, GMAS			Initial brief received from Bob and ongoing discussions continue.
Paul Hayward, School Organisation	17.12.09	17.12.09	No significant comments/changes.
Laura Hadley, Health and Safety	17.12.09	18.01.10	Few additions suggested – further discussion required.
Inclement Weather Working Group (Union Reps)	20.01.10 24.02.10 26.04.10	20.01.10 24.02.10 26.04.10	Ongoing consultation – see minutes to track changes,

Distribution

This document has been distributed to:

Name	Title	Version Issued	Date of Issue
All Sandwell schools and Academies		4f	3.9.10

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1. "Every Lesson Counts" - Keeping Schools Open

Schools operate normally whenever possible and only resort to closure or early closure in exceptional circumstances when conditions are such that the health, safety and welfare of pupils and staff are at risk.

The local authority has powers to close community and voluntary controlled schools across the borough. The local authority, however, does not intend to exercise its powers of closure in inclement weather, determining that this is a matter for the Head Teacher in consultation with the Chair of Governors (unless by prior agreement with the Governing Body the decision is delegated solely to the Head Teacher).

Head Teachers and governing bodies should determine in advance to who the decision whether or not to close the school is to be delegated - to the Head Teacher or Head Teacher in consultation with the Chair of Governors.

When severe weather is forecast, the DfE encourages schools to review measures in place to reduce disruption to learning. It is important to plan ahead, ensuring that a proportionate approach to risk is taken concerning whether or not to close a school or keep it open.

Plan Ahead:

- Assess immediately what hazards any snow, for example, could bring;
- Identify the measures already in place to reduce risk to pupils and staff
- Identify any additional measures that would help to keep your school open

Proportionality:

- The decision to close or remain open will rest with the Head Teacher (in consultation with the governing body unless delegated by agreement to the Head Teacher alone). The risks arising from less supervision, late return journeys, minor slips and bumps, etc, will have to be judged against the disruption to pupils' learning.
- The DfE advocate the Health and Safety Commission's "Principles of Sensible Risk Management" available at: www.hse.gov.uk/risk.riskmanage.pdf

2. Inclement Weather Defined

Inclement weather is defined as:

- a. Prolonged and/or excessively high temperatures
- b. Prolonged and/or excessively low temperatures
- c. Prolonged and/or excessively high winds that render travel dangerous
- d. Prolonged and/or excessive snow fall or icy conditions.
- e. Excessive and prolonged rainfall/flooding.

One or more of these criteria may prompt consideration of an emergency school closure.

See Appendix C for guidance on clearing snow and ice.

3. Guiding Principles

The following principles seek to support Head Teachers and governing bodies in responding appropriately during periods of inclement weather:

- a. Governing bodies should adopt an Inclement Weather Plan that provides for the health, safety and welfare of pupils and staff during periods of inclement weather. **See Appendix D** for template.
- b. The Head Teacher and Chair of Governors¹ are responsible for making the decision to close the school due to inclement weather conditions and must undertake a risk assessment to determine the appropriate course of action. **See Appendix B** for guidance and template.
- c. The school will notify the Local Authority in the event of closure and remain in contact until such time as the school is fully reopened.

4. Procedure for Head Teacher Closing a School

4.1 Inclement Weather Plan – Closure Prior to School Day

If the Head Teacher determines that the weather in the immediate locality is serious enough to raise concerns about the health, safety and welfare of pupils and staff travelling to or from school, the Head Teacher should implement the school's **“Inclement Weather Plan” – closure prior to the school day.**

¹ Unless by prior agreement the decision is delegated solely to the Head Teacher

The plan should contain information on:

- a. What types of inclement weather may constitute a health, safety and welfare issue and require the school to be (and remain) closed.
- b. How parents will be notified that the school will be closed.
- c. What actions individual staff should take if the school is to remain closed.
- d. Which organisations and/or individuals should be contacted if the school is to remain closed.
- e. Contact telephone numbers for all necessary organisations and individuals.

A decision to close the school prior to the school day should be made as early as possible whilst attempting to take into account the time that staff and children may be leaving home to travel to school.

4.2 Inclement Weather Plan – Early School Closure

If the school remains open for the day, every effort should be made to send pupils home at the normal dismissal time. However, if the local weather condition becomes a concern during the day, to the extent that pupils travelling home at the normal dismissal time may represent a potential health, safety and welfare issue, the Head Teacher should implement the school's **Inclement Weather Plan - early school closure**. The plan should include information on:

- a. What types of inclement weather may constitute a health, safety and welfare issue and require the school to close early.
- b. How parents will be notified that the school is closing early.
- c. What actions individual staff should take if the school is to close early.
- d. Which organisations and/or individuals should be contacted if the school is closing early.
- e. Contact telephone numbers for all necessary organisations.

4.3 Partial School Closure (ie closure of part of the site or closure of the school to a specific year or year groups)

In the event of inclement weather, which has health, safety and welfare implications, consideration should be given to whether a partial closure rather than a full closure could be achieved in order to minimise disruption to education. Further contingency measures may be required if the closure is to be lengthy (eg offsite provision).

See the procedure flow chart on emergency school closure – **Appendix A**.

4.4 The Risk Assessment

The risk assessment undertaken to determine whether school closure is appropriate, should take into account the following key areas of risk:

- Supervision of pupils (eg staff shortage)
- Access to and movement around the school (eg icy paths)
- Failure or loss of amenities on site (eg failure of heating system)
- Disruption to provision of school transport (eg hazardous road conditions).

Governing bodies should take these into account when writing and implementing their Inclement Weather Plans.

See Appendix B for a general risk assessment template and guidance to assist Head Teachers and Chairs of Governing Bodies in determining whether their school should remain open or not.

5. Recording Attendance of Pupils

Guidance on how to record pupil absence is available at:

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/>

In summary, if the school closes completely, all pupils should be marked code “Y” – “forced and partial closure”. Code “Y”, does not count as absence in the statistics.

If the school remains open, pupils who are not within walking distance of the school who get to school by transport provided by the school or Local Authority, and that transport is not available because of adverse weather conditions, should also be recorded as Code “Y”.

All other children should be expected to attend and should be marked as present or absent as normal. DfE advise that Head Teachers should determine whether children’s absence should be recorded as authorised or unauthorised during very severe weather conditions. If the Head Teacher is satisfied that the reason a child could not get to school was because of the adverse weather, then that absence should be authorised; if the Head Teacher judges the child could have made it to school, then that absence should be unauthorised.

DfE advise it is persistent absence that is a key indicator and short periods of adverse weather are not likely to impact upon this. Ofsted inspectors look at trends over time and take into account incidents of adverse weather.

Further details on “Schools and Severe Weather” can be found on the Teachernet Frequently Asked Questions page at:

www.teachernet.gov.uk/educationoverview/briefing/news/severeweather/faqs

6. Attendance of School Based Employees

This is covered by the Schools Policy on Leave of Absence but in summary is as follows:

- employees who arrive late as a result of adverse weather conditions will not lose pay or be required to make up time.
- disabled employees with mobility problems should not attempt to come to work and will not lose pay or be required to make up lost time
- where a school is closed to both pupils and staff, time off will be with pay

This policy, together with other school policies, can be found on the following website:

<http://www.lea.sandwell.gov.uk/members/bulletin/virtual-offices/personnel/schools/policies-procedures-guidance.htm>

Headteachers and Governing bodies should also be aware and take account of the conditions of service of other school based employees, as they will be covered by the policies of their employing bodies. E.g. school meals staff will be covered by FRESH.

7. Contact Details for Radio Stations and Local Authority

Radio Stations

The following radio stations have provided their latest contact details for Head Teachers who need to publicise school closures in the event of inclement weather. Please supply the school's name, location and DCSF number in all cases. **A password is required when contacting those radio stations marked with an asterisk (*)** – please contact the School Organisation Unit for the current password.

***Beacon:** 01902 461231

Email: snowline@beaconradio.co.uk

***BRMB:** 0121-566 5430

Email: snowline@brmb.co.uk

Galaxy/Heart FM: 0121-607 7288

Radio WM: 08453 009956

Email: bbcwm@bbc.co.uk

Local Authority Contact to Advise of School Closures

School Organisation Unit: 0121-569 8298/8468

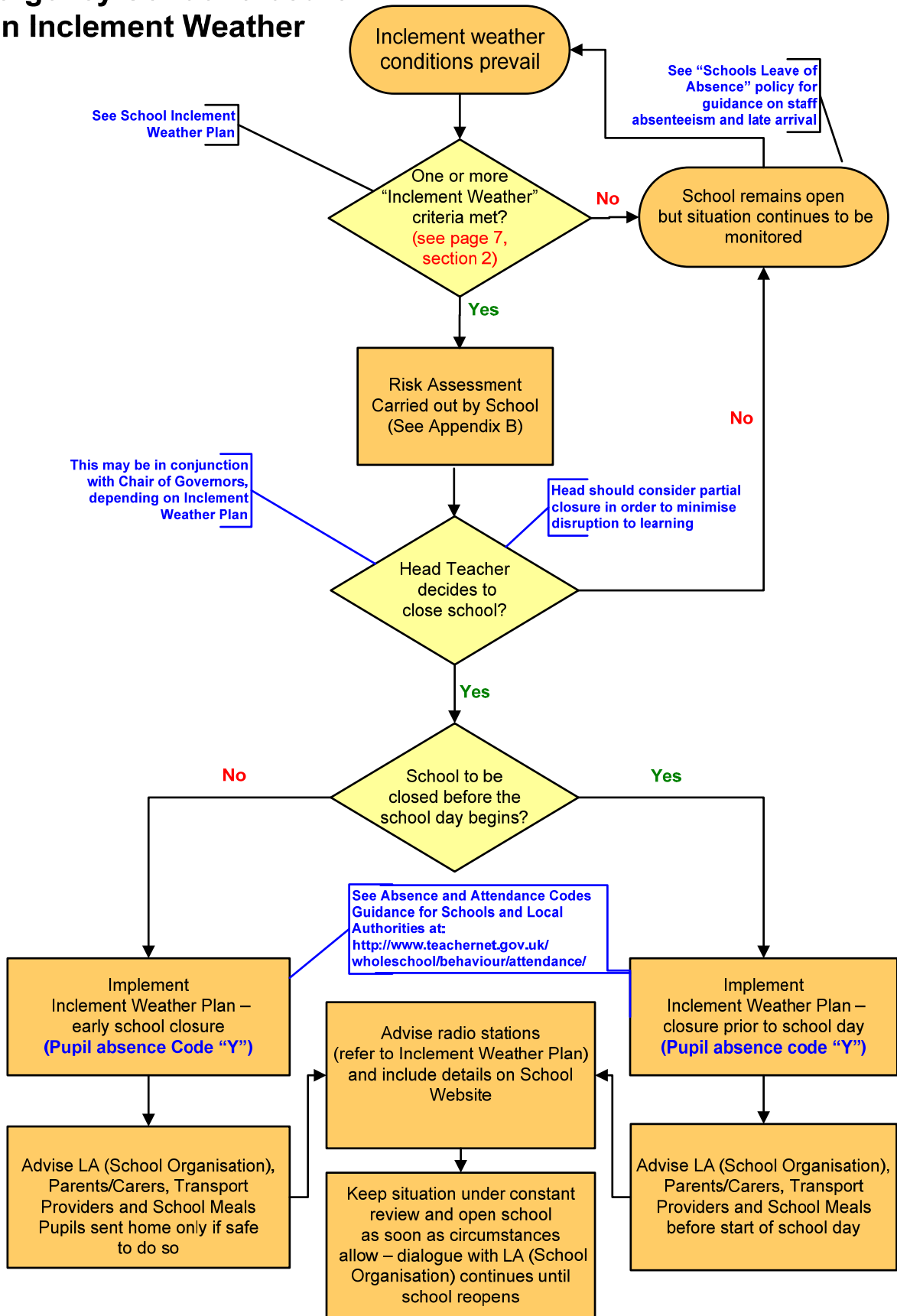
E-mail: school_organisationunit@sandwell.gov.uk

8. Policy Review Timetable

This policy will be reviewed in December 2011 or before that date if circumstances warrant.

Appendix A

Emergency School Closure in Inclement Weather



Appendix B

Keeping schools open and school attendance in inclement weather

Risk assessment guidance issued by Sandwell MBC

The following information is provided for Head Teachers and Chairs of Governing Bodies to assist them when completing their own risk assessment to decide whether their school should remain open in bad weather, or whether a decision to close the school should be made. This information is provided in accordance with guidance provided by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Hazard Description	Control Measures
Insufficient staff in attendance to ensure safe levels of supervision of the pupils	Network of teacher / staff contacts – early warning of non-attendance. Consider bringing classes together in the school hall to ensure adequate supervision levels. Ensure compliance with schools' supervision policy – if compliance cannot be made, decision to close the school.
Absence of members of staff with key roles for health and safety, e.g. fire marshals, first aiders	School should have contingency arrangements in place, ensuring an adequate number of staff have been trained in these roles to cover any absences.
Snow / ice on playground / entrance and other pathways, resulting in slips/trips and personal injury	Clearance of primary routes i.e. those access routes which are used the most, to ensure staff and pupils have safe access to the school building (s). As time permits, clearance of secondary routes. See also Appendix C for further guidance on the requirements for snow and ice clearance. Adequate supply of materials, e.g. grit / salt. Reduce the extent to which children and staff have to move between school buildings for different lessons. If necessary, consider taking the playground out of use until weather improves.

Appendix B

Hazard Description	Control Measures
Loss of amenities on site, e.g. failure of heating, lighting, toilets, water, causing welfare concerns for pupils and staff	Supplementary heaters (subject to completion of risk assessment), temporary lighting, independent water supplies. Contact either the Estates and Facilities Team (0121 569 8162 / 8159), or Building Services (0121 569 4539) for further advice on the above measures. Consider partial closure or the availability of alternative accommodation.
School provided transport – risk of personal injury to pupils during transportation to / from school	Discuss with, and take advice from the transport provider. If the provider advises that transport is not running, then those children would be excused from school.
If weather deteriorates, risk of personal injury to staff during journeys home	Consider possible arrangements for those living further away or in more remote areas to leave first.
In the event of school closing earlier than normal due to deterioration of weather conditions, safeguarding of the children and young people	Arrangements for ensuring the security of children who may be sent home early e.g. parent / carer at home so that the child is not going home to an empty house. Network of parent / carer contact details.

Guidance on maximum / minimum temperatures in classrooms

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations state that “During working hours, the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be reasonable”. High temperatures, heat stress and dehydration can be serious problems at temperatures above 35 degrees centigrade so that should be regarded as the maximum reasonable temperature for prolonged periods of time in classrooms.

This temperature is above comfort temperatures, but healthy children should be able to cope with this if they are given generous supplies of cool water to drink. More sensitive children may experience problems at much lower temperatures and staff need to watch for signs of heat stress at temperatures above 28 degrees centigrade. Schools need to make arrangements to ensure they have adequate supplies of drinking water. It should be remembered that the amount of water that can be delivered through drinking fountains is small.

Minimum temperatures are specified in the school premises regulations. 18 degrees centigrade is normal for classrooms, 15 degrees centigrade in areas where there is a higher level than normal of physical activity (e.g. PE), and 21 degrees centigrade in areas where there is a lower than normal level of physical activity because of sickness or physical disability (e.g. sick rooms, isolation rooms).

The following information was circulated as a Priority 1 Circular from the Caretaking and Cleaning Support Officer to All Head Teachers and Principals (with a copy to Managers of Early Years and Childcare Settings) on Friday, 8 January 2010 (see Circular No. 12).

Snow and Ice Clearance

In light of the recent spell of snow and icy weather conditions I would like to draw your attention to the following guidance notes.

Each year, many staff and members of the public suffer personal injuries as a consequence of slipping and falling on ice and snow. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers liability Act place a responsibility upon the employer, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the means of access and egress from its premises are maintained in a condition that is safe and without risk to either its employees or other persons.

The approved code of practice which supports the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations states that "arrangements should be made to minimise risks from snow and ice. This may involve gritting, snow clearing and closure of some routes ..."

It is a popular misconception that an occupier cannot be held liable for failing to clear snow/ice, but can be held liable once an attempt at clearance has been made and then someone is injured. The true position is that an occupier can be held liable for 'failing to act reasonably' in order to prevent accidents.

Heads of establishments are responsible for ensuring that the means of access to their establishment is safe for both employees and visitors and that adequate arrangements are made to ensure that the risks from snow and ice are minimised.

It is recognised that it is not possible to remove immediately every piece of snow or ice. It does however, require those responsible for premises to exercise careful judgement and prioritise de-icing and salting of key access routes.

All reasonable efforts should be made to ensure that the establishment remains open as normal.

Head Teachers/premises managers must ensure that a risk assessment is in place, which covers the hazards associated with snow and ice on their premises. The following recommendations are provided as a guide to typical arrangements which should be in place. The premise manager is responsible for reviewing and revising the arrangements as determined by their local risk assessment.

Appendix C

- Staff to be aware of their duties and responsibilities, it may be necessary for site staff to start work earlier on a particular day to commence a gritting plan.
- Adequate equipment available (including salt/grit).
- Determine which access routes are the most used/important ie primary routes.
- Clear a path 1 metre wide (minimum) from site entrance(s) to the main building entrance and any peripheral buildings in use. Slopes and steps on route should be regarded as a priority.
- Pathways leading from car parks to buildings are primary routes. Car parks are not deemed priority areas
- Treat cleared paths with salt/grit to maintain a clear pathway especially where temperatures remain below freezing.
- As time permits, other pathways to entrances and between buildings should be cleared and gritted ie secondary routes.
- Appropriate checks to be made to ensure continued safety.
- Identify any particularly dangerous areas which require extra care and should be checked/treated more frequently eg steps, slopes, gullies which may be hidden etc.
- Consider the needs of any visitors with particular needs (elderly, disabled etc).
- A plan identifying both primary and secondary routes should be filed in the Premise Log Book

Where the Head Teacher/premises manager has concerns over the safety of certain external pathways, circulation routes, playgrounds etc, it may be appropriate for affected areas to be taken out of use. If this is the case this must be marked clearly using signs/cones/tape to ensure everyone is made aware.

If playgrounds remain in use, supervision levels may need to be increased. All staff should be aware of the risk assessment in place for snow and ice and take responsibility for following the designated paths and access routes when such conditions exist.

In case of queries, please contact the Caretaking and Cleaning Support Officer on 0121 569 8522.

Inclement Weather Policy A Skeleton Model Policy Document for Governing Bodies Guidance for parents/carers and staff in the case of bad weather

1. Criteria

It is our policy to remain open unless we are forced to close because there is a risk to the health, safety and welfare of staff and pupils. The Head Teacher in consultation with the Chair of Governors is responsible for making the decision to close the school due to inclement weather conditions in the immediate locality².

The decision will be taken on the basis of one or more of the following criteria:

- (a) Prolonged and/or excessively high temperatures
- (b) Prolonged and/or excessively low temperatures
- (c) Prolonged and/or excessively high winds that render travel
- (d) Prolonged and excessive snow fall or icy conditions
- (e) Excessive and/or prolonged rainfall/flooding

2. How Parents will be Notified that the School will be Closed

a. Closure Before the School Day

If the school is to be closed, there will be an announcement on the following radio stations to state this:

INSERT RADIO STATION(S)

INSERT SCHOOL WEBSITE: Additionally this announcement will be posted on the school website (details will also be posted on the LA website following notification by the school to the LA).

Such an event is highly unlikely and will be avoided where possible. There is no need for parents to contact the school to check whether or not the school is open. Unless announced on the radio stations above, the school will be open.

While we understand parental concerns, it would be helpful if parents/carers were aware of the difficulty for an office potentially responding to literally hundreds of calls. Parents should not telephone the school at these times unless there is an emergency. If the school is forced to close overnight for any other reason, a notice will be also displayed outside the school at the entrances.

² Unless the decision is delegated solely to the Head Teacher by prior agreement with the Governing Body

Appendix D

b. Closure During the School Day

Should the weather turn worse during a school day, pupils will only be sent home if there are satisfactory arrangements for them returning safely.

AGE RELATED ISSUE PARTICULARLY FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS: No child will be sent home to an empty house. Should any parent/carer wish to make any alternative arrangements for their child they should put these in writing to the Head Teacher.

INSERT: school arrangements for contacting parents/carers (consider the most appropriate/effective method of communication depending on individual circumstances eg telephone, text messaging, e-mail, radio; website).

INSERT: school arrangements for dealing with pupils using bus/coach transport

INSERT: school arrangements for dealing with School Meal deliveries.

3. Actions for Staff if the School is to Close

INSERT: school arrangements for contacting staff about school closure before start of school day.

INSERT: staff responsibilities for dealing with early closure during the school day eg responsibilities for communicating decision within the school, contacting parents/carers, dealing with bus/coach travel, dealing with children whose parents/carers cannot be contacted etc.

4. Organisations and Individuals to Contact if the School is to Close

List appropriate organisations and individuals relevant to your school, specifically the selected radio station(s), bus/coach/transport, school meal organisations.

Appendix D

5. Contact telephone numbers for all necessary organisations and individuals

Organisation	Telephone Number
Radio WM	08453 009956 bbcwm@bbc.co.uk
Galaxy/Heart FM Radio	0121-607 7288
Beacon Radio	01902-461 231 snowline@beaconradio.co.uk
BRMB	0121-566 5430 snowline@brmb.co.uk
Smooth Radio	0121-452 1057
CENTRO (Public Transport)	0121-200 2787
Sandwell Community Transport	0121-520 8168
Meteorological Office Website	www.metoffice.gov.uk
Sandwell LA Contact: School Organisation Unit	0121-569 8298/8468 school_organisationunit@sandwell.gov.uk