

London Borough of Enfield

Severe Weather External Guidance

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	Name	Signature	Date
Prepared by:			
Checked and Reviewed by:	Vicky Gardner		30/10/08
Approved by:	Jacqueline Martyr		30/10/08
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This plan is subject to ongoing change and will be updated as and when required.

Schools Severe Weather Guidance

Contents

Page No:

Contents List	3
Notification of Severe Weather	3
Severe Weather Helpline	4
Staffing	4
Additional considerations	4
Reopening schools	5
Non School Establishments	5
Considerations	5
Appendix A – Staff details	6
Appendix B – Risk Assessment	7
Appendix C – Model Letter to parents	8
Appendix D – Utilities	9

Schools Severe Weather Guidance

Introduction

Severe weather, which may affect council staff buildings or schools, can include:

- Snow or prolonged very cold weather
- Very strong or gale force winds
- Very heavy rain leading to the potential for flooding

This guidance provides general advice in the event of any of these conditions. If a school has a particular concern they should contact

Health and Safety Team 020 8379 3223
Borough Control Centre 020 8379 1000

1. Notification Of Severe Weather

- 1.1. The Borough's Emergency Planning Team receives notifications of expected adverse weather conditions, which may have an impact upon the area from the Met Office. This information is disseminated to Council employees, premises and schools via email.
- 1.2. If the weather is predicted to be severe, the Chief Executive or the Director of Education, Children's Services and Leisure (ECSL) or a designated deputy will provide advice on the Council's Website or via email as to whether staff are required to attend or if it is deemed unsafe for establishments to be open. The Director of ECSL, or his designated deputy, will state whether, in his opinion, the weather is expected to be so severe that schools and other educational establishments should be shut.
- 1.3. If a decision is taken to recommend closure to all non-essential establishments within the Council, this will be relayed to Schools via the email communication network.

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher in each school to make the decision on whether the school should close, if at all.

It is also the responsibility of the headteacher to ensure that staff, parents/carers and pupils are advised of the decision to close the school. This should also include advice on how those affected will know when the premises have reopened.

- 1.4. The decision to close any establishment should not be taken lightly but as a last resort and due to an unacceptable risk as determined by a risk assessment. This will, inevitably, vary between establishments.
- 1.5. Where at all possible, advanced warning will be given, particularly if the severe weather is likely to be prolonged. Where this has been issued, establishments should consider how this might impact on their establishment, for example:
 - Staffing issues
 - Fuel supplies
 - Catering supplies
 - Transport e.g. personal cars, taxis, buses
- 1.6. Where it is likely that there will be prolonged severe weather, the Council will provide a departmental team to co-ordinate advice over the phone. In this situation, you should ring the main Borough Control Centre on 020 8379 1000 who will transfer you to the nominated advisory team. Regular updates will also be issued on the council website and via email communications.

Schools Severe Weather Guidance

- 1.7. Critical services within the Council that need to remain operational will be following their Business Continuity Plans during a period of disruption.
- 1.8. If an establishment is experiencing problems as a result of the severe weather issues e.g. lack of heating or damage to the building which constitute a hazard, the Schools' Health and Safety Team should be contacted on 020 8379 3223.

2.0 Severe Weather Helpline

- 2.1 In the event of predicted severe weather a Helpline will be set up providing 24-hour telephone advice. This can be accessed through Borough Control Centre (BCC) on **020 8379 1000**. During normal working hours BCC will transfer you to the nominated co-ordinating team providing up-to-date advice.
- 2.2 Any practical advice on hazardous or potentially hazardous situations may also be discussed with the Schools' Health & Safety Team **020 8379 3223**.

3.0 Staffing

- 3.1 In the case of schools, unless there has been a specific instruction from the Headteacher, staff are expected to use all practical means to attend work, without putting themselves or others at risk.
- 3.2 Headteachers should ensure there is an up to date list of home contact and mobile phone details for all staff.
- 3.3 Schools need to plan to stay open, however, this can only happen if there are sufficient staff present. It would be sensible to look at how far staff live from the school and the probability they will be able to arrive at school during periods of severe weather disruption or at the least their journey may take longer and they may arrive late. However, if sufficient staff live within a reasonable distance from the school, or you are able to get additional staff through the Borough's supply pool, it may be possible to ensure sufficient staff are present to operate, albeit with a reduced curriculum for those days.
- 3.4 Remind staff (even parents) to keep stoked up with fuel during predicted prolonged periods of disruption.

4.0 Additional Considerations

- 4.1 In severe weather it may be appropriate to leave the heating on constantly for frost protection and to reduce the risk of frost affecting the heating and pipes.
- 4.2 Brief staff in advance to know what is expected of them.
- 4.3 Brief parents and children on how to access information.
- 4.4 Where Schools are operating, risk assessments should be undertaken to ensure the health and safety of staff, pupils and site users.
- 4.5 Liaise with suppliers/contractors on the schools current procedures and confirm new arrangements in place for accessing services and deliveries. Also, try to mediate on issues which the suppliers may have accessing the site and internal resourcing issues.
- 4.6 Where high winds are expected and warnings issued, the site should be checked for loose fixings and all persons to be kept away from glass as much as possible. Regular

Schools Severe Weather Guidance

tree surveys and maintenance should be undertaken to ensure trees are sufficiently stable to withstand high winds.

- 4.7 In extreme conditions it may not be possible for children or staff to return home, establishments and schools should ensure there are plans in place to provide warmth, and hot refreshments.
- 4.8 Once the Borough have received notification from the Met Office that the severe weather is due to pass, this information will be disseminated as before via email, the Councils Website and a Team will be available to provide up to date information via calling BCC.

5.0 Reopening Schools

- 5.1 When the severe weather has passed, establishments should do a visual check of their premises before announcing that it will reopen. The Headteacher and Site Manager may do the inspection and check amenities are functional i.e. heating, water/frost/wind/heat damage or damaged trees etc. It may be necessary to instruct a competent contractor to undertake exploratory work if a problem has been found. It may be necessary to contact the Schools Health and Safety Team for advice and notify them of the situation.
- 5.2 School Premises that have experienced damage serious enough to affect the structure and the fabric deeming the building unsafe and unable to occupy you should contact Asset Management: 020 8379 3220. If you suspect Asbestos has been damaged, you may need to seek advice directly from the Asbestos Team 020 8379 8594.

6.0 Non School Establishments

- 6.1 Non School establishments will be operating under the Boroughs advice. However, if they are not part of the councils email system Emergency Planning and the Schools Health and Safety Team will not have contact details to include in the circulation list. It is therefore advisable for these establishments to ring the BCC for guidance and log into the Councils Website.

7.0 Considerations

- 7.1 Before taking a decision to close or remain open, it is important to complete a suitable and sufficient assessment of hazards present and the risk after controls are implemented. When making your decision also consider the following:
- Impact of closure on parents
 - Impact of closure on pupils
 - Adapting lessons and classes according to staff numbers
 - Health and safety
 - Informing parents
 - Risk assessment

Appendix B

RISK ASSESSMENT – SNOW AND ICY WEATHER

Hazard	Impact	Options	
Snow/ice on playground / walkways	Pupils/ staff/ visitors may slip and injure themselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements in place to grit main access and egress routes on site; • Keep pupils indoors during break times 	
Insufficient staff able to attend work	Not enough staff at school for supervision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure minimum number of staff by identifying which local staff will be attending work; • Contact the Supply Pool to arrange supply staff; • Make arrangements for staff to stay overnight locally; • Arrange alternative lesson plans, which can be managed by skeleton staff. 	Close school the day before if minimum number of staff cannot be guaranteed.
Cold temperatures indoors (<16°)	Prolonged exposure to cold weather.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use only heating part of building; • Arrange portable equipment hire; • Close school if there is no means of heating the school. 	
Headteacher not able to attend work		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated deputy 	
Cold temperatures outdoors	Pupils and staff suffer from exposure to cold weather.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep children inside if more appropriate • Ensure children have appropriate waterproof clothing and footwear; • Send out letter to parents the day before (see appendix C); 	
Snow on ground	Pupils, staff, visitors sustain injury due to slips trips and falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange for snow on playground to be cleared and make the field out of bounds. • Keep pupils indoors during break times • Consider snowball ban 	
Pupils may still come to school though it is closed	Unnecessary trip to school, parents not informed and may not be able to make alternative childcare arrangements Older children not supervised, safeguarding issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If possible send letter home the day before either instructing that the school will close, (see letter) or instructing parents to check in the morning on the website or answer phone if school is closed • Provide minimal childcare / holding arrangements for children whilst parents are contacted 	

Appendix C

Letter to parents

Dear Parent / Carer

Severe Weather Conditions

The school has been advised that severe weather / snow / high winds / flooding is predicted and the local authority has advised that the school should be closed / however, the local authority has advised that there is no need to close the school.

As is normal practice, if at all possible the school will stay open, however that may change due to staff numbers. Therefore, before your child leaves to come to school, please check the school website (insert here) or phone (insert here) to confirm whether the school is open. Please note that classes may also differ from normal activities.

Parents and carers have the responsibility for getting children/pupils to and from school safely and need to decide if the journey is safe when severe weather affects transport and/or walking conditions. If you believe the current conditions make the journey unsafe you should inform the school of your child's absence in the usual way. **Please consider carefully and only keep children at home if conditions are unsafe.**

Please ensure that your child is dressed appropriately for the weather and the journey. It maybe appropriate, for example, for children to wear Wellingtons to make the journey to and from school and trainers/shoes for inside / good winter coat, gloves, scarf and a hat.

If conditions worsen during the school day and parents feel it is absolutely necessary to collect children, the school should if possible be contacted prior to collection. **Please avoid collecting children before the end of the day unless you feel their safety is at risk.**

On occasions, school meal services may be affected by weather conditions, although in this instance we are confident a normal service can be provided / on this occasion, our Suppliers are experiencing difficulties due to the adverse weather condition and will not be able to provide school meals, please provide your child with a packed lunch for tomorrow.

Updated information on when the school will reopen will be available on the school's website (*insert address*) or by phoning (*insert number*).

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix D

UTILITIES

In the event of loss of utilities:

- Check the main switch
- Contact the supplier and report the fault

	Location of main switches	Action in event of failure	Supplier / Contact Number
Gas		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check main switch / boiler • Contact supplier and report fault • Find out when service is likely to be restored • If the indoor temperature drops below 18° C, then close the school. 	
Electric		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check main switch • Contact supplier and report fault • Find out when service is likely to be restored • If the indoor temperature drops below 18° C, then close the school. 	
Water		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check main switch • Contact supplier and report fault • Find out when service is likely to be restored • Close the school for reasons of health and safety due to lack of sanitation facilities. 	
Telecoms		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact supplier and report fault • Find out when service is likely to be restored • Use mobile phone for essential calls • Inform the public of temporary unavailability via the website. 	