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## Bearwood Primary School Emergency School Closures

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It may be necessary to close Bearwood Primary School for various reasons including:

- Severe weather e.g. snow, flooding or storms
- Unsuitable accommodation e.g. no power/heating, fire damage
- Less than the legal amount of adult to child ratio

Head Teachers are required to ensure that schools remain open wherever possible.

### **The following extract is from the Head's Legal Guide (Croner – Sept 2005):**

“Considerations of safety may lead a Head to decide that the school, or part of the school, should be temporarily closed. One must presume that such a decision would not be taken without first consulting appropriate persons including the chairperson of governors and, if the school is maintained by an LEA, an officer of the authority. Clearly, parents and others affected by the decision (e.g. the school meals service and transport providers) would need to be informed immediately. Such a temporary closure would not count against the requirement for a school in the maintained sector to meet for a minimum number of sessions each year.”

Closing a school is never an easy option and every effort must be made to give adequate notice to parents. Consideration also needs to be given to a contingency plan to protect children who turn up at school despite closure.

### **Closure due to severe weather**

School closure contingency plans will be prepared well before the bad weather season so that all staff, parents and pupils understand them.

### **When should a school close?**

The decision to close a school rests with the Head Teacher, on the basis of weather forecasts and on-the-spot observations. When making this decision, the Head Teacher will always put the pupil's health and safety as the main priority.

Factors contributing to this decision:

- Pupils travelling to school on icy and snowy pavements
- Pupils injuring themselves on school property due to ice and snow
- Less than the legal numbers of teachers to pupils
- Severe weather warnings issued by the Met Office
- Following advice from Wokingham Borough Council

### **Closing the school after the beginning of the school day**

It may sometimes be necessary for schools to close during the day; for example, if the weather is deteriorating and children may not be able to get home later. If Wokingham Local Authority receives a severe weather warning this is communicated to schools by e-mail. The decision to close will still be assessed by the school and then taken by the Head Teacher.

The Met Office website home page [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk) gives details of any current severe weather warnings.

Once the decision is taken to close the school, parents will be informed via the Bearwood Primary School Website and local Radio Stations.

Wokingham Local Authority has agreed with the following radio stations that they will broadcast school closures:

**BBC Radio Berkshire**  
**Heart FM**  
**Reading 107FM**

**berkshire.admin@bbc.co.uk**  
**thamesvalley.snow@heart.co.uk**

Updates will need to be provided on a daily basis.

Where the decision is taken to close the school during the day, pupils will not be sent home until the parents have contacted the school and made safe arrangements.

### **Off Site Activities**

If there is an off-site activity scheduled to take place, where there is a risk of severe weather, a decision will be made by the Head Teacher in conjunction with Children's services as to whether the activity can go ahead.

The school will inform the Local Authority that the decision has been taken to close the school.

**Bearwood Primary School will remain open wherever possible.**

**NB: When radio stations advise people to avoid non-essential travel, it is directed at travel that could quite easily be deferred or cancelled altogether. It does not mean that travel to school or work is unnecessary.**

**School closure information will be available on the School's Website. Please check to see any update. Please do not congest essential telephone lines by calling the school.**

School closure information will be posted as soon as the decision is made to close the school.

### **Clearance of snow**

The school is responsible for snow clearance within the school site. The clearing of approach paths is the specific task of the Site Controller, who should be instructed to lay salt and grit when severe weather is forecast. Supplies of salt and grit should be ordered well before cold weather starts.

Children will be kept indoors in bad weather if there is any question of their safety being at risk; for example, if they are let out at break time and the playground area is unsafe. The usual process of risk assessment and sensible supervision can help to ensure that children are safe at school in snowy weather.

### **School closures for other reasons**

It may be necessary to close the school due to circumstances including:

- Breakdown of the heating system
- Loss of essential services such as water or electricity
- Fire damage

The Head Teacher will inform the Local Authority of any loss of essential services.

### **Timetable for closing the school before the beginning of the school day**

1. Risk assessment made of conditions by Site Controller in conjunction with the Head Teacher. Complete risk assessment form.
2. Staff responsibility to inform Head Teacher if they are able to travel to school.
3. Head Teacher will let staff know if they are required to be in school.
4. Head Teacher makes decision to close school and staff telephone cascade is activated.
5. Inform:
  - a. Local Authority
  - b. Radio Stations
  - c. Put on Website
  - d. Chair of Governors
6. Letter sent to parents as soon as school re-opens to give reasons for closure if deemed necessary.

### **Timetable for closing the school during the school day**

1. Risk assessment made of conditions by Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team. Complete risk assessment form.
2. Head Teacher along with Site Controller makes decision to close school.
3. Inform:
  - a. Local Authority
  - b. Radio Stations
  - c. Put on Website

- d. Chair of Governors
- e. Phone parents
4. Pupils will not leave school until parents have collected their child or made safe arrangements for their child to be collected by a named person.
5. Letter sent to parents as soon as school re-opens to give reasons for closure.

***Registers for pupils will remain open until 10.00am***

### **Extreme Weather Checklist**

#### **Ongoing**

1. The school will be well stocked with grit/salt and on receipt of a weather warning if necessary, stock will be ordered immediately.

#### **In periods of extreme weather**

1. Throughout the period of extreme weather, the Site Controller will check the site for frozen/burst water pipes.
2. The responsibility for immediate routine gritting and emergency clearance of snow/ice is the responsibility of the Site Controller and Head Teacher.
3. Where additional manpower is required the Head Teacher will arrange for a working party to assist in snow clearance.
4. Any staff involved in snow clearance in the school car park will wear high visibility jackets.
5. Snow and ice will be completely removed using a snow scraper or shovel. It will not be brushed or dissolved using hot water.
6. As a general rule, a pathway of at least one metre wide will be cleared to provide access to the main entrance and across the playground to link doors.
7. All paths cleared will be treated with grit/salt and checked regularly for refreezing throughout the day by the Site Controller.
8. The steps and ramp out to the KS2 playground will be thoroughly gritted and monitored. Staff are expected to supervise exit and entry via these doors.
9. Where access to the site is restricted, hazardous areas will be put out of bounds and coned and taped by the Site Controller. This will include places where ice has accumulated, potentially unsafe structures due to snow accumulation or wind damage, trees and perimeter fences.

#### **Risk Assessment**

When carrying out a Risk assessment for snow clearance the following issues will be considered – manual handling, suitability of equipment, protective equipment/appropriate clothing, individual health and capability, assigned supervision, rest periods and refreshment.