



## Emergency Weather Procedure - Including Snow Closure

Adverse weather may include snow, extreme cold and icy conditions and exceptionally windy conditions. The Met Office is usually able to give several days' warning of bad weather and when there is a significant likelihood of dangerous conditions, the Met Office will liaise with the Emergency Planning Team to give regular, local weather forecasts. These will then be communicated to the school via circulars and we will in turn communicate them to our parents and carers.

Townhill Junior School will monitor weather forecasts and warnings through the Met Office website: <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/>

### **Preparing for adverse weather**

Townhill Junior School will prepare for adverse weather in advance by ensuring the following issues have been addressed:

- Staff and pupil contact details are up-to-date
- A communications plan for staff and parents
- A 'chain of command' should the Head be unable to reach school
- Remind parents in winter newsletters about arrangements in adverse conditions, e.g. listening to local radio, checking school website
- Buy and fill salt bins
- Buy additional salt and grit for paths
- Develop plans for partial opening
- Plan how to supervise children safely with fewer staff
- Have lessons ready to post onto the school website should the school be closed or partially closed
- Consider the possibility of different opening times, e.g. opening later and/or closing earlier, if appropriate for the school

### **What to do when adverse weather is forecast**

There is usually some uncertainty about whether forecast adverse weather will arrive and most Heads make the decision to open or close on the day, depending on weather conditions. However, if adverse weather is forecast, it we will send a letter home with children advising parents that:

- Poor weather is forecast
- The school is planning to remain open if possible, but parents should check the school website, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter feeds, BBC Radio Solent and Southampton City Council website in the morning for announcements
- Parents should ensure that children have warm, waterproof clothing and sufficient money to catch the bus home if appropriate
- Parents should make plans for childcare should school be closed either in the morning or later during the day and ensure children are aware of these plans

## **On the day – staying open**

If the decision is made to remain open, the school will consider the following issues:

- The safety of the paths around school
- The temperatures in the classrooms
- How lunch arrangements may be affected
- The teacher: pupil ratios
- If tests are scheduled and if any children may find it difficult to reach school
- If trips are scheduled and the likely impact of the weather on the advisability or possibility of these going ahead

## **Closing during the day**

It may become necessary to close the school during the school day, for example:

- Deteriorating weather conditions
- Ensuring pupils and staff are able to get home safely
- A significant drop in classroom temperatures
- A power cut or burst water mains
- Suspension of public or school transport

Where this is necessary, Townhill Junior School will:

- Contact parents
- Update the school website and Twitter / Facebook feeds
- Contact the Council
- Contact BBC Radio Solent
- Send a letter home with children outlining how the school proposes to make the decision about closure the following day
- Contact any expected visitors informing them of the closure to prevent unnecessary journeys

## **Risk management**

The guidance given by the Department for Education is that schools should try and remain open if possible, as long as it is safe to work. In their view, ‘essential travel includes pupils going to school to keep learning and school staff going to work.’

## **Met Office warnings and decisions to close**

The DfE Guidance (2022) states: “During severe weather conditions, such as flooding, storms, or snow, you should keep your setting open for as many children, pupils or students 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. Where settings are temporarily closed during severe weather, they should consider providing remote education for the duration of the closure in line with DfE guidance. Providing remote education does not change the imperative to remain open, or to reopen as soon as possible.”

The Depart for Education advises that when schools are trying to decide whether or not to close, based on weather forecasts for the following day: ‘Schools and LAs will want to balance the benefits of an early decision (parents having time to plan childcare, avoiding

wasted journeys) against the risk of closing schools and finding next day that there is no problem. If forecasts make it very likely that a school will not be able to open the next day then a decision the previous afternoon may be appropriate.’

### **Extended closure**

It may be that weather conditions are severe enough to make re-opening problematic, if, for example, further heavy snow or icy conditions are forecast. Should that be the case, the Head will consider the following:

- The number of staff who are likely to find travel to work difficult
- Whether volunteer parents are able to help with clearing snow around the school site
- Conditions on the roads around school and if they are likely to be gritted by the Council (the Council will prioritise main routes, particularly if there is pressure on salt stocks)
- Whether work can be sent home or posted on-line, should closure for a number of days be likely
- Whether a skeleton staff is able to maintain partial opening or classes via email or other electronic means
- Whether a shortened day may be appropriate (later opening and closing earlier, before temperatures begin to drop) if appropriate for the school
- How decisions will be communicated to pupils, staff, parents and other visitors

### **Absence**

If the school is able to open but pupils are absent because of the weather, they will be marked using code Y (Forced and Partial Closure). Code Y does not count as absence in the statistics.

### **Methods For Parents To Check For School Closure**

Before leaving for school in the morning, parents should check we are open. They can also do this in the following ways:

- School website
- School Twitter and Facebook feeds
- Check the Council’s website at:  
<http://www.southampton.gov.uk/learning/schools/schoolclosures/>
- Listen to BBC Radio Solent at 96.1FM
- Check BBC Radio Solent’s website at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/solent/>
- Sign up to the Council’s Twitter service at: <http://twitter.com/LearningInSoton>