

Old Bexley CE Primary School: Severe Weather Conditions Policy

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| Title | School closure in the event of severe weather conditions - guidelines |
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Introduction

The APAT Board of Trustees recognises its duty in ensuring the smooth operation of the timetable in its schools at all times. It is recognised, however, that on occasion the normal day-to-day running of the schools may be interrupted due to severe weather conditions. In circumstances such as these, the following procedures have been put into place to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all in our school community. These guidelines are provided by APAT but include local guidance as relevant.

1. Pre-notification and information for staff and parents:

As the autumn term progresses and/or the National Weather Centre predict deteriorating weather conditions for our region, parents and staff are reminded of the procedures in case of bad weather. These guidelines are also placed on the school website.

2. Procedures in the event of the enforced closure of the school due to severe weather conditions:

Before a decision is made whether the school should open or not (enforced closure), consideration should be given to:

- the distance staff must travel;
- road/traffic conditions;
- local conditions for staff who travel on foot. In addition, consideration should also be given to the condition of the school site;
- the surrounding area for parents and pupils who travel on foot.

Once all the above have been considered the following procedures should be put into place:

- a) The Principal will consult with Trust Leaders, Premises Manager and/or school leaders

- b) The Principal will decide based on the outcome of the above consultation and local guidance (outlined below) bearing in mind the following options:
- closure for the full day;
 - closure at 12.00 noon and/or the arrangements for school dinners;
 - late opening e.g. 10am to allow time for staff to arrive;
 - opening at 1pm for the afternoon session.
- c) The Principal will instruct the Office Manager to:
- inform parents via ParentMail;
 - contact school transport companies as relevant;
 - contact supply staff recruitment agencies;
 - update OpenCheck.
- d) The Principal will add the information to the school website.
- e) The Principal will inform the SLT, Premises Manager and the Office Team to contact line managed staff to inform staff and communicate Principal's instructions regarding activities for staff and/or ask that time be spent preparing for future lessons/activities where appropriate. Given the accuracy of weather forecasting, it is not unreasonable to expect staff, including administrative staff and learning support staff, to plan for the possibility of not being able to attend should severe weather be predicted.
- f) The Principal will inform the Trust Leaders (CEO, CFOO or DoE) of the final decision. The Academy Trustees will also be informed of closures at their meeting.
- g) The Principal will ensure that should the school open, the provision of staffing in place is in accordance with health and safety legislation, bearing in mind pupil/teacher ratios, job descriptions and correct procedures for staff covering other classes, playtime arrangements, heating and lunchtime provision.

GUIDANCE NOTES: Closure of APAT Schools in adverse weather conditions

1. The responsibility for school closure rests with the Principal in agreement with the SLT. The aim should be to keep schools open if this is at all possible taking full account of the health and safety of staff and pupils.
2. All school staff should make every reasonable effort to reach their school in adverse weather conditions. Consideration will be given to the nature of journeys staff must undertake, road conditions, the physical fitness of the individual and the availability of public transport. Should it be considered that a member of staff has not made every reasonable effort to reach the school, e.g. when roads are open and traffic problems minimal, absence may be counted as unpaid leave.
3. There will be members of staff of some schools who already have health problems and for whom the struggle through adverse weather could be positively harmful. It is reasonable for Principals to ascertain which members of staff may be so affected and to consider authorising them to be absent for the duration of exceptionally severe weather conditions following guidance from Trust HR.
4. Principals should ensure that appropriate plans have been made to cover the possibility that they cannot reach their school after making every reasonable effort. They should instruct, by telephone, the teachers who have managed to reach their school to act on their behalf.
5. Principals and staff who have reached their school should stay there if the physical conditions in the school are satisfactory, even if there are not many children in attendance.

Staff who are not required to teach should use their time in preparatory work/in service training/syllabus revision/administration etc – see section 2 e) above.

6. If the number of staff reaching any school is adequate to cope with the number of pupils who have arrived, and if the school is heated, then the MAT would expect the school to remain open. Individual Principals must decide if the number of staff present is adequate to allow appropriate supervision. These pupils (even if their numbers are small) should be provided with appropriate work and should be kept at the school as long as the physical conditions are satisfactory and staff are available.

If it is impossible to provide school meals, such pupils could be sent home at lunchtime providing appropriate arrangements have been made to ensure an adult can collect them.

7. Principals are responsible for making the necessary arrangements following the decision to close, including the informing of parents and other agencies as appropriate e.g. transport.
8. Principals **MUST** ensure that the APAT Home Learning Policy is followed to provide online learning if closure occurs.

As the weather changes and diverse weather is predicted, Principals will send the letter below to parents/carers to inform them of the procedures the school will take.

Dear Parent/Carer

School Procedures in the Event of Severe Weather

As the weather is now changing there is always the possibility of adverse conditions. Could we please appeal to you to ensure your child comes to school equipped with a coat and hat to accommodate the cold weather and winds that may affect the playgrounds. I would like to take this opportunity to advise parents of the procedures we have in place.

1. Procedures for the start of the day

Every attempt will be made to open the school as normal during adverse weather conditions, but as a number of staff have substantial distances to travel to the school, this may not always be feasible. Where it is impossible to ensure the health and safety of the children, a decision will be made by the Head Teacher to either close or delay the start of the school day. Wherever possible any such decision will be made by 8.15am and parents will be notified by ParentMail. As it is not always viable to meet this deadline, I do ask that parents use their discretion and either keep their children at home or personally bring them to school and wait with them until a firm decision can be made.

2. Procedures for deteriorating weather throughout the day

Should the weather deteriorate as the day progresses and parents are concerned about the health and safety of their children, they should use their discretion and, if appropriate, collect them from the school.

The school does not close but remains open until the last child safely leaves the building. We ask that parents do not telephone the school to check this as the telephone lines may be needed in the event of an emergency.

Details of any school closure will also be added to the school website.

Should you need further clarification of any aspect of the above, please do not hesitate to speak to me at the school. Meanwhile on behalf of the school's Trust, Amadeus, may I take this opportunity to thank you for supporting our policies and procedures, which ensure the health and safety of all in our school community.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Ivil
Head Teacher