

Policy

Roundwood Primary School

Adverse Weather Policy

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Hertfordshire County Council have in place a 'Severe Weather Plan' that would be actioned in the event of a serious disruption to the County as a whole.
- 1.2 Listed below are some issues to be taken into consideration as part of this process. Many points included are merely stating the obvious but none should be overlooked in the interests of promoting safety.
- 1.3 Please refer to section 8.0 regarding the policy on School Closures.

2. **SEVERE WEATHER WARNINGS**

- 2.1 HCC is notified via the Meteorological Office to provide early warning for severe weather in Hertfordshire. Where possible advanced warning, especially of prolonged severe weather, will be given to schools.
- 2.2 National radio and television networks provide a regular update of weather forecasts as well as local radio stations that would be able to provide more localised information.
- 2.3 Severe weather warnings and local forecasts are also available on line at <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/index.html>

3. **GENERAL PRECAUTIONS IN THE EVENT OF STORMY WEATHER**

- 3.1 It is considered that winds forecast in excess of 70 mph or storm force 8 (Beaufort Scale) could represent a potential danger to some buildings, trees or other structures.
- 3.2 Outside activities and movements within the school grounds will cease because of the risk of falling trees, masonry and other debris.

Roundwood Primary has undertaken a "risk assessment" of their site (see factors below), and identified "safe" areas.

3.3 **HIGH RISK AREAS**

- All external areas.
- High walls and play walls. Rooms near to such structures.

- Areas close to trees, telegraph poles, floodlights, signs etc. Trees are obviously more vulnerable when in leaf, with poplars and willows being particularly susceptible to damage. Cedars and other evergreens are also considered to be a high risk.
- In areas of woodland, if "leading" trees have been removed, the newly "exposed" trees in that area are particularly vulnerable. At Roundwood Primary, we are bordered by the Nickey Line where there are a considerable number of trees overhanging our boundary. The Town Council is responsible for the management of these.
- The Infant play area containing the silver birches.
- Panelled fences represent a risk, particularly when located next to pathways.

3.4 **LOW RISK AREAS**

- Inside buildings constructed of brick/stone/concrete.
 - Away from windows/roof lights.
 - Rooms on leeward side of buildings (to be ascertained at time).
 - The library, the dining area.
- 3.5 The site will be checked for potential damage from dead branches/trees or other potential risks. Any loose outdoor items that could be blown into windows and other glazing and break them, to be secured.
- 3.6 Wind direction to be established and all staff and pupils to be advised to keep well away from windows directly exposed to it. Whenever possible, entrances / rooms on the leeward (sheltered) side of the building and ground floor area should be used.
- 3.7 All doors and windows are to be closed, particularly on the windward side. Blinds and curtains should also be closed in case of flying glass.
- 3.8 Where possible walking or sheltering close to buildings and trees is to be avoided, in particular keep away from the sheltered side of boundary walls and fences — if these structures fail, they will collapse on this side.
- 3.9 After the storm, premises are to be checked for any damage.

4. **COLD WEATHER**

- 4.1 The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1996 set a standard of 18°C in teaching areas and 15°C in the hall/gymnasium, corridors, cloakrooms and toilets where the external air temperature is - 1 °c or above.

Workplace Regulations recommends a minimum temperature of 16°C for office areas.

- 4.2 Failure to reach these temperatures is usually a maintenance issue, but where there is a mechanical breakdown which puts the heating system out of action for any length of time, consideration needs to be given to whether it is appropriate for the building to be occupied.
- 4.3 Any plans to provide emergency heating must be the subject of a risk assessment and used in line with the guidance document.
- 4.4 The head teacher will also consider how such weather may affect the operation of the school, e.g. transport difficulties in getting to school and the availability of staff and other services. (See Section 8 for further detail).

5. HEAT WAVES

- 5.1 There are no prescribed maximum temperatures for school premises, however uncomfortably high temperatures can hinder effective teaching and learning and affect health, safety and welfare.
- 5.2 A heat wave will be declared when the temperature is expected to be or has been recorded for the South East as:
 - During the day: 31 degrees centigrade
 - During the night: 16 degrees centigrade
- 5.3 Roundwood Primary will take precautions to ensure that those at risk are protected from the effects of the sun including:
 - Mitigating/minimising exposure
 - Anti glare coating on the windows
 - Providing access to clean drinking water
 - Encouraging the wearing of sun hats/sun screen
 - Sun canopies
 - Communicating this to parents
- 5.4 Cancer Research UK have published guidelines for schools regarding how they can best fulfil their duty of care to protect children from the sun. The [SunSmart schools initiative](#) encourages schools to develop and adopt sun protection policies.

6. FLOOD WARNINGS

- 6.1 It is not considered that Roundwood Primary is at high risk of flooding.
- 6.2 HCC are notified via the Environment Agency to provide early flood warnings in Hertfordshire. CSF will notify schools if a flood warning is likely to affect Hertfordshire Schools.
- 6.3 The Environment Agency website has live updates of flood warning information available on line at www.environment-agency.gov.uk or by calling 0845 988 1188 (Floodline 24hr Information Service)

6.4 The Environment Agency operates a four stage flood warning system for river flooding.

FLOOD WATCH - Flooding of low lying land, roads and agricultural land is expected. Be Aware! Be prepared! Watch Out!

FLOOD WARNING - Flooding of homes, businesses and main roads is expected. Act Now!

SEVERE FLOOD WARNING - Severe flooding expected. There is extreme danger to life and property. Act Now!

ALL CLEAR - There are no flood Watches or Warnings currently in force.

6.5 In a situation of major flooding, (notably if access to the site is not possible) HCC will provide guidance and assistance, in liaison with the Environment Agency, to manage the flood situation and assist the local community. It may be necessary to open a reception centre to house persons whose homes or workplace have been flooded.

General precautions

- The main thing to consider is how to minimise floodwater entry and damage:
 - Use sandbags, plywood or metal sheeting placed on the outside of doors, window frames and airbricks.
 - Seal doors and windows with silicon sealant.
 - Floodwater can enter through drains, toilets and other outlets such as washing machines. Put plugs into sinks and baths and weigh them down with heavy objects. Place sandbags in the toilet bowls.
 - Floodwater can contaminate foodstuffs and chemicals such as paints, garden pesticides and household cleaning products. Store any materials like this high up.
 - Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies at the mains.
 - Disconnect cookers, washing machines, dishwashers, etc. connected by rigid pipes to gas and water supplies. This will prevent damage to the pipes if they move or float during the flood.
 - Unplug all electrical items and store away from the ground floor or high up.
- After flooding:
 - Gas, electricity or water services should NOT be reconnected until systems are checked by an accredited engineer.
 - Appliances affected by floodwater should be allowed to dry out and a qualified electrician, CORGI-registered gas engineer or plumber should be called in to inspect them before use.
 - Contact should be made with the Fire Service if there is significant flooding.
- As a general rule, flooded buildings should not be reoccupied until these three steps have been taken:

- Mud removal
- Cleaning and disinfection
- Drying out

7. DISTRIBUTION OF WATER SUPPLIES

- 7.1 Provided that there is sufficient notice that the supply is to be disconnected, it should be possible to make an informed decision on whether or not to keep the premises open based on:
- the duration of the disruption
 - the capacity of water storage tanks
- 7.2 From time to time disruption happens without warning and the school's emergency plan will help to decide upon and take appropriate action.

8. SCHOOL CLOSURES/SENDING CHILDREN HOME EARLY

- 8.1 All reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that the school remains open as normal and that any impact on working parents will be minimised. If school is forced to close it will re-open as soon as possible (subject to safety considerations).
- 8.2 The final decision as to whether to close or stay open is made by the Headteacher in consultation with the Chair of Governors based upon local conditions and an assessment of risk and safety. This decision is not taken lightly and many factors are to be taken into account, including:

Closing Early

- It may be safer to keep children in certain parts of the school, rather than send them home early (for example in case of storm).
- Communication difficulties associated with contacting a large number of parents in a short period of time, if the adverse weather occurs during a normal school day.
- The risk to staff and to children of remaining on site.
- The ability of parents to collect their children early or make alternative arrangements.

Advanced Closures

- Advice from HCC will be sought.
- A high proportion of our staff do not live locally. Whether enough teachers have been able to get to the school to ensure pupil safety and whether the footpaths have been cleared (see below) are major considerations.
- Roundwood Primary is at the top of a steep hill and advice will be taken from the police about safety of access in snow, ice and storm. This is regarding not only vehicles but pedestrians too, in the case of a bus sliding on the road for example.

- Roundwood Park and Park Hill are generally gritted when ice is forecast but it is not a high priority route and if salt is running low will not get treated.
 - There is no caretaker on our site and therefore footpaths etc. cannot be cleared in the case of snow or ice without parental assistance, (which is welcomed). The footpaths can be treacherous if not cleared and salted and can represent a significant risk of injury. HCC generally do not provide a service for this.
- 8.3 All after school and pre-school clubs will be cancelled in the case of adverse weather. Parents will be informed of this as soon as possible. If your child/children attend an off premises club, such as 'The Club' at St. Nicholas' School, it is vital that you have provided them with a contact number and that you have made suitable arrangements for your child to be collected should the school need to be closed and the staff and children sent home. For your information, the contact number for 'The Club' is 0754 85 93091.
- 8.4 Where possible, advanced warning, especially of prolonged severe weather, will be given. Where this has been issued, we will consult the CSF Severe Weather Plan CSF4514 (that includes HCC Noticeboard).
- 8.5 If the school premises experience damage serious enough to warrant declaring a Critical Incident, the guidance in the Emergency Response Plan will be followed.

9 COMMUNICATION

- 9.1 Staff, pupils/young people, families and other regular visitors will need to be made aware of contingency arrangements. A special assembly could be called, if a suitable "safe" area is available, advising of action being taken, behaviour expected, risks involved and ways in which these can be minimised.
- 9.2 In the case of advance closure parents are to be asked to monitor the school website where information is kept up to date. Please note that a decision will be made as early as possible but that often forecasts are inaccurate and closures may be revised early morning. Contingency plans should be made by parents in the case of adverse weather closures at short notice. The school will also endeavour to communicate with parents by email.
- 9.3 Information will also be available on our local radio station - BBC Three Counties Radio (103.8FM/95.5FM/630MW) and it will also be posted on [HCC Noticeboard](#).
- 9.4 The Education Health and Safety Team to be informed if the school is closed.