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Severe Weather Policy 2016 - 17

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In times of severe weather, the Academy Trust will make every effort to remain open whenever possible. However, should closure be necessary, pupils, parents and staff will be given as much notice as possible.
- 1.2. On rare occasions the weather can be so severe that getting to and from school becomes hazardous. Really bad weather can also be disruptive and can cause anxiety and stress, therefore this document aims to give guidance on when it is considered appropriate to close a school due to bad weather and the steps we take to minimise disruption and anxiety.

2. School closure decisions

- 2.1. The decision to close the school either before or during the school day in severe weather, or when responding to a public emergency, will be taken by the Headteacher in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team and local schools. The school will only be closed if one or more of the following conditions apply:
 - Insufficient staff are able to come in to keep the school running safely;
 - Conditions on site are dangerous;
 - Local conditions in the vicinity of the school are too dangerous;
 - Conditions are considered to be, or are anticipated to later become, too hazardous for travel.
- 2.2. In making the decision to close the school careful consideration will be given to:
 - the health, safety and welfare of both pupils and staff.
 - the effects on the safety of pupils and staff journeys to and from school.
 - whether there are likely to be enough staff for a safe teacher-pupil ratio to operate the school, giving consideration to pupils' specific needs.
- 2.3. The school will make all practical efforts to keep parents informed as to the situation at the school during adverse weather conditions. We are aware that adverse conditions create uncertainty, which places considerable difficulties upon parents. However, parents are expected to check websites and listen to radio broadcasts, not just rely on communication from the school.

- 2.4. To prevent full closure the Headteacher may decide to keep the school open by allowing a 'Late Start Day'. In this event, staff would be notified by email, telephone call or text message. Parents would also be notified by Parentmail. In addition, updated information would be displayed on our school website.
- 2.5. The Business Administrator will ensure that the Senior Leadership Team has an up to date list of contact/mobile phone details for all staff and parents. (Individual calls to parents will only be made in an emergency).

3. Communicating closure before the school day

- 3.1. If the school is to close before the school day commences the Headteacher will be responsible for communicating this to parents and staff by using the methods below;
 - The school will use the Local Authority (LA) Closure Notification System (CNS) to inform the LA and parents of closure. Messages received by this system will be posted on a public facing noticeboard linked from www.hertsdirect.org An email will also be automatically generated and sent to the school's nominated radio station which is BBC Three Counties Radio (103.8 FM / 92.1 FM or 630 MW / 1161 MW)
 - Information will be placed on the **school website** - www.ralphsadleir.herts.sch.uk Using the link 'Severe Weather Notice' on the front page and the 'News' section, parents and staff will be kept informed of weather conditions and decisions being taken by the school. Where possible, information relating to other local schools will also be given.
 - Parents and staff using **Parentmail** will receive an email giving information.
 - Parents using **Parentmail** who have included a mobile telephone number will receive a **text message**.
 - Parents who do not have internet access and therefore do not have access to Parentmail will receive a telephone call from a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
 - Staff will be sent a text message from a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
 - Parents should check Parentmail, the school website and their telephone for a message **before contacting the school office**.
 - Where possible information will be published on the school gate.
 - Bus and taxi companies will be informed where possible.

- 5.5. If the school has to be closed it would be much appreciated if any staff living locally could go into school to help 'man' the phones and supervise any pupils who may arrive at school.
- 5.6. In the event that staff are unable to attend work due to bad weather, but the school remains open as usual, all reasonable effort should be made for an individual to work from home or come to work when conditions improve. In the event of non-attendance by staff, payment is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Alternatively, an individual member of staff may elect to take the absence as unpaid or time in lieu and make up any lost time on days/dates as agreed with their line manager.
- 5.7. Where a decision is made to send staff home before the end of the normal school day no deduction from pay will be made.
- 5.8. Where the Headteacher considers it is not safe/possible for staff to travel to school, or they instruct staff not to attend work, time off with pay will be granted for the duration of the disturbance.
- 5.9. Where an individual responsible for the upbringing of a child has to stay at home unexpectedly because the school or nursery has closed and there is no-one else to look after their child, the individual will be eligible for time off and they will be granted a day's discretionary paid leave. Further time in lieu and authorised unpaid leave of absence may be granted at the discretion of the Headteacher. Staff members must communicate their request through their Line Manager. Staff can also request to bring their children to school in order that they can continue their work duties. Emergency supervision will be arranged.

6. Other actions

- 6.1. Messages to admin@ralphsadleir.herts.sch.uk will be monitored by the Business Manager, Business Administrator and the Administrative Team.
- 6.2. Where the school is officially closed, all pupil absences are counted as authorised absence and are coded to reflect the circumstances.
- 6.3. Parents acting on the assumption that the school would be closed without gaining confirmation, or failing to inform the school of the circumstances that prevents the child coming into school risks their child being registered as an unauthorised absence.

7. Preparation for severe weather

- 7.1. In severe weather the Site Manager should ensure that the heating is left on during 'out of hours' periods for frost protection purposes.
- 7.2. The Headteacher will brief staff in advance to ensure they know what is expected of them (See Appendix A).

- 7.3. The Headteacher will brief the Senior Leadership Team in advance to ensure they know what is expected of them (See Appendix B).
- 7.4. The Headteacher will brief pupils and communicate to parents to ensure they understand how they can get up to date information e.g. Hertsdirect.org, school website, Parentmail, local radio, texts etc. (See Appendix C).
- 7.5. The Business Manager will ensure regular suppliers/contractors are informed of procedures and confirm arrangements are in place for essential services/deliveries i.e. Hertfordshire Business Supplies, Hertfordshire Catering Ltd etc.
- 7.6. Where the school remains open, the Health & Safety Officer will undertake a risk assessment to ensure health & safety of staff, pupils and all site users. This should include local arrangements for clearing and salting when ice or snow appears, as well as any failures to the surfaces.
- 7.7. The Site Manager will ensure that the school has a sufficient supply of salt and they have the responsibility of clearing and salting paths and walkways on the school site.
- 7.8. Where gales or high wind warnings have been issued, the Site Manager will check the site for dead or damaged branches/trees and other potential hazards to people or property.
- 7.9. Where it is not possible for some staff and/or pupils to return home, the Headteacher should ensure there are plans in place to provide warmth and hot refreshments.
- 7.10. In extreme conditions the school has agreed that Hertfordshire County Council may use the school as a rest centre for members of the public.

8. Re-opening of school following closure

- 8.1. When the severe weather has passed the Site Manager and Health & Safety Officer will check the premises before announcing that the school will re-open. The Site Manager should inspect the premises for signs of damage e.g. heating failure, flooding, burst pipes or damaged trees.
- 8.2. If the school site has experienced damage serious enough to warrant declaring a Critical Incident the Headteacher should follow the guidelines in the School Critical Incident Plan.
- 8.3. The Headteacher should use their school contact systems for advising staff and parents of the situation and update the school's status on the Closure Notification System and on the school website.

9. Senior Leadership Responsibility

Under this policy, all Senior Leadership will be expected to:

- 9.1. Treat all staff and pupils fairly and consistently;

- 9.2. Ensure that adequate communication takes place with staff, pupils and parents;
- 9.3. Have regard to the Health & Safety of staff, pupils and visitors, particularly where special conditions apply such as pregnancy or disability.
- 9.4. Support staff who work longer than school hours to maintain services i.e. Site Manager.

10. Hertfordshire County Council Telephone Helpline

- 10.1. Information and updates about any interruptions to the normal business of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) services can be obtained by telephoning the HCC helpline 01992 556616 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).
- 10.2. The helpline is also used to provide information during any other emergencies which may require the school to close.

11. Linked policies

The following policies are linked to the Severe Weather Policy:

- Health & Safety Policy
- Staff Leave of Absence Policy
- School Emergency Response Plan

12. Policy Review

- 12.1. This policy was reviewed and adopted by the Resources & Audit Committee on 9th December 2016.

Governance	Chair Person / Headteacher	Signature	Date
Resources & Audit Committee	Mr D Spong		9 th December 2016

Reviewable annually. Next review will be November 2017.



Appendix A

Severe Weather Procedures – 2016/17 PARENTS

The decision to close the school in severe weather, or when responding to a public emergency, will be taken by the Headteacher based on the following:

- Insufficient staff are able to come in to keep the school running safely;
- Conditions on site are dangerous;
- Local conditions in the vicinity of to the school are too dangerous;
- Conditions are considered to be or are anticipated to later become too hazardous for travel.

In the event of severe weather the following procedures will be followed:

Before School Hours:

- The school will use the Local Authority (LA) Closure Notification System (CNS) to inform the LA and parents of closure. Messages received by this system will be posted on a public facing noticeboard linked from www.hertsdirect.org An email will also be automatically generated and sent to the School's nominated radio station. No information means the school is OPEN.
- Information will be placed on the **school website** - www.ralphsadleir.herts.sch.uk Using the link 'Severe Weather Notice' on the front page and the 'News' section, parents and staff will be kept informed of weather conditions and decisions being taken by the school. Where possible information relating to other local schools will also be given.
- Parents and staff using **Parentmail** will receive an email giving information.
- Parents using **Parentmail** who have included a mobile telephone number will receive a **text message**.
- Parents should check Parentmail, the school website and their telephone for a message **before contacting the school office**.
- If closure only affects Ralph Sadleir School, a message will be placed on the following radio station:
 - BBC Three Counties Radio (103.8 FM / 95.5 FM or 630 MW / 1161 MW)
- Where possible information will be published on the school gate.

- The school is aware that some pupils travel a considerable distance and that conditions local to you may differ from those around Standon and Puckeridge. We will do our best to keep the message on the website and via Parentmail up to date with conditions local to the school. We will 'man' the school office if at all possible but this does rely on staff, themselves, being able to travel into school (very few of the staff live locally).

During School Hours:

- In the event of the school having to close during the day due to worsening weather the above notification procedures will be followed.
- Pupils will only be allowed off the premises if collected by a nominated adult during school hours.
- Pupils will not be released 'on demand' but at lesson changeover to reduce the impact on the whole school:

▪ End of Lesson 1	10.15 am
▪ End of Lesson 2	11.30 am
▪ End of Lesson 3	12.30 pm
▪ End of Lunchtime	1.25 pm
▪ End of Lesson 4	2.25 pm
▪ End of School Day	3.30 pm
- Pupils remaining at school will be supervised by members of the school staff until collected by parents or nominated adult.
- The situation will be continually assessed and necessary actions taken. The safety of pupils and staff will be taken into consideration, staff being released for journeys home according to circumstances, supervision levels of pupils etc.
- Pupils travelling to school on buses and in taxis will be released at the request of the bus/taxi company. Parents will be informed by the school office or the bus/taxi company.

Highways

- Please check www.hertsdirect.org/highways for advice and information relating to highways winter maintenance including salt bins and the priority routes for salting.
- We appreciate that local conditions will vary and that parents will take decisions that ensure the safety of their children and take into consideration local conditions and the advice of the local police. We know that you will do all you can to ensure the attendance of your child(ren). Please keep the school informed by phone or electronically.

School Office Tel No: 01920 821042
 School Office Fax No: 01920 822663
 Email: admin@ralphsadleir.herts.sch.uk

- Should we need to inform parents of any other major incident the same procedures will be followed.