

## Risk Assessment: Snow closure, adverse conditions and early closure

**Whole school site**

**Date: December 2017**

### Possible reasons for closing the school

There are four main reasons to close a school in severe weather conditions. These are:

1. An insufficient number of staff are able to get to school
2. Severe travel restrictions
3. Severe conditions around the school presenting major obstacles or danger. However, risks should be assessed realistically and preventative action such as salting and gritting should be taken into account
4. Heating failure or inability to warm the school to reasonable and acceptable levels

### Specific considerations relating to Kennel Lane School (KLS)

The special educational needs of the learners in school vary but all require additional learning and educational support. Some learners have little communication or language, mobility limitations and physical disabilities and some are vulnerable and at risk for medical reasons. The age range of learners who attend KLS range between 2.5 to 19 years old.

The implications of an early / closure due to adverse weather or snow are more complex and challenging for KLS than for non-special needs schools. The levels of staffing and supervisions to maintain learner safety is high in comparison to other Secondary Schools or Six Form Colleges and the staffing required for Foundation / Nursery and Primary School aged children will be significantly higher.

Staff commute at the same time as learners. During bad weather it cannot be known reliably, the number of staff who will make it in, or at what time they will arrive at school. If weather conditions affect KLS then they will affect other schools in the area. If other schools close then those staff, who are also parents, may need to stay at home for their own children.

If insufficient staff manage to get in then learners may have to be sent home as the supervision levels could be unsafe. Some learners are staffed 1-1 others supported 2 -1. A decision on insufficient staffing would have to be made based on a risk assessed at the time, based on all the relevant facts.

Specific training is required to support learners with emergency medication. Only staffs trained on the individual learners care plans, and signed off by the School Nurse, are safe to administer emergency medication. If insufficient trained staffs are available then a decision on learner safety would have to be made based on a risk assessment at the time, based on all the facts. Individual learners may need to be sent home or there

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may be a wider risk resulting in the school needing to be closed.

When there are changes to expected routines or limitations imposed, some learners behaviours can become unpredictably volatile, challenging or physically aggressive and the risk of injury, to both staff and other learner's, increases. A risk assessment based on all the facts would be required to decide if individual learners need to be sent home or if there is a wider risk and the school needs to be closed.

A small local heating failure would not necessitate the early closure of the school but a wider multi building heating failure or loss of other facilities such as lighting or water may do so. A risk assessment based on all the facts would be required to decide on the wider risk and if the school needs to be closed.

The school site comprises nine separate building all with external access routes, and outside play areas which need to be crossed to reach them. There are disabled ramps to several of the buildings and other footpaths and vehicular access is on a gradient. Frost, snow and ice does not readily clear from many parts of the site, persisting late into the school day. Gritting, historically, has provided little improvement to conditions on the ground as it is never walked into the snow sufficiently. A judgement on whether the grounds are considered appropriately safe for learners and staff will be made by the Site Manager early in the morning, following a risk assessment of the grounds and outside areas at that time. He will also consider the accessibility of transports, pedestrians, emergency muster points and emergency vehicle access, this information will be passed to the Head and will inform a decision on closure.

Most learners come into school, and go home, on Local Authority Home School Transport. A number of learners will commute from outside of the Bracknell Forest area. Home School Transports will not collect a learner in the morning if they cannot guarantee the transport home. Local residential roads in the region have historically lacked preventative gritting or snow clearance and become dangerous and impassable, resulting in transport routes being suspended and cancelled.

Learners require appropriate adult supervision when they leave school to return home and cannot be released from the school site on their own or be sent home where there is no responsible person to receive them. Early closures can, and has, resulted in learners and staff having to remain on the school site long after an early closure has been declared, whilst waiting for Parents and Carers struggling to get to the school site to collect their young person, or to get home to receive them at home. This delay can cause significant distress to the learners when they see everyone else has gone and increase the risks to learners and staff of travelling during deteriorating weather and road conditions.

When an early closure is called Home School Transport will try to assist in getting learners home. There is no guarantee that the drivers, escorts or vehicles are going to be available out of the normal contracted hours, nor that a given route will be considered accessible. However learners will not be allowed on early Home School Transport unless school can confirm a responsible person is at the residence to receive them.

A timely decision to close the school, i.e. before learners leave home, ensures the safety of learners and staff alike and follows the Health and Safety tenet of removing avoidable risk. A closure decision before learners leave home eliminates all the issues identified above and poses

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significantly less risk than having to close the school early.

**Other suggested options**

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**Risk Assessment:**

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Staff unable to get to school	Potential school closure	<p>The DfE says that:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>where teachers are unable to get to work due to poor weather conditions, schools should consider Bringing together groups and classes with teachers and support staff working together</li> <li>Using other school staff or volunteers to provide cover supervision or oversee alternative activities</li> <li>Re-arranging the curriculum</li> <li>It adds that, although infant classes should normally have no more than 30 pupils in them, "having more than 30 in one class due to exceptional</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KLS Classrooms are not equipped to accommodate large numbers. A limited number of learners can join other classes providing the mix of learners and staffing is appropriate. Using communal space for activities such as the hall may work with larger groups for limited periods of time</li> <li>Using other school staff would be of limit use, as they would not be trained in behaviour management or the needs of the learners and strangers can increase negative behaviours.</li> <li>Changing the curriculum does not change the wider risk posed by a lack of staffing. Changes to routine can trigger behaviours and staff from other classes, especially other key stages, will not know the learners well , this will potentially impact behaviours</li> <li>It is the number of staff required to support the learners, of all ages, which limits any combined group size and also the physical space and resources available.</li> </ul>

Completed by: Barbara Ford

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<p><b>Insufficient guidance available to staff</b></p>	<p>Poor decision making or risk management</p>	<p>temporary circumstances is not a reason to close the school".</p> <p>Advice available from other local authorities includes :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a specific snow and ice plan for the premises in place, identifying areas and routes required to be cleared to ensure safe access and operation of the premises</li> <li>• Cordoning off areas and routes to be 'out of bounds' (for example, areas beneath overhanging roof eaves where snow might fall, hazardous walkways, etc.)</li> <li>• Clearing areas for use by pedestrians or vehicle access and reviewing these for any changes in condition</li> <li>• Encouraging staff to wear appropriate flat soled and sturdy footwear and to carry as little as possible when walking in the building's grounds and car park</li> <li>• Having enough salt and grit available to keep a clear path around the school site</li> <li>• Having enough staff to supervise pupils adequately</li> <li>• Having procedures in place for a heating failure</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice is given regularly by BFC in support of emergency procedures and bad weather / closure management</li> <li>• A strategy for dealing with snow and ice on school site is followed by the site team</li> <li>• The size and nature of the site makes physically cordoning off large sections impractical</li> <li>• Clearing walkways and areas of snow does not make them safe, but it implies they are because there is no snow. This can increase the risk of users disregarding the continuing slip hazard as it is no longer obvious, eg ice / black ice.</li> <li>• KLS Staff dress sensibly wearing appropriate footwear. Learners and staff by necessity bring bags into school and they are likely to require more things such as a change of shoes during snowy weather. To presume and direct otherwise is unrealistic and unachievable.</li> <li>• School's salt/grit stocks are regularly checked and additional purchases usually made in the spring /summer term</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gritting operations</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See above for previous comments</li> <li>The schools emergency plan covers loss of utility such as heating</li> <li>On site gritting is carried out as part of the Site Teams processes</li> </ul>

Risk Assessment:

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Role:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Review:</b>		

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Risk Assessment: Staff

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Role:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
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<b>Review:</b>
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Completed by: Barbara Ford

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<b>Review:</b>
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**Risk assessment meeting attended by:**