

## UNAVOIDABLE SCHOOL CLOSURE POLICY (INCLUDING SNOW PLAN)

*'This policy will be implemented in a way which honours the vision that every FCJ school is a community of persons - students, staff, governors - bound together in mutual respect and ready to rely on each other in fulfilling their privileged task as educators in a Catholic school.'*

### 1. Principles

**The Unavoidable School Closure Policy is committed to and guided by the following principles:**

As a result of exceptional and emergency circumstances the school may have to temporarily close on some occasions. This decision is never taken lightly and is made with the health, safety and welfare of the pupils and staff as paramount importance.

All unavoidable school closure decisions are made by the Headmistress in conjunction with the SLT and, if necessary the Local Authority.

### 2. Purpose

**The aims of this Unavoidable School Closure Policy are to ensure:**

Every effort will be made to keep school open at all times, but regard to pupils' and students' safety must take precedence.

Contingency plans will be passed on to staff, parents/carers and students via the school website. It may be necessary to close school for a variety of reasons including:

- Severe weather including snow, flooding or storms or pandemic outbreak.
- Disruption to transport, for example through petrol or diesel shortages.
- Accommodation problems, for example loss of power, heating failures or fire damage.

If an event arises during the day that results in the decision being made to close the school, the following procedure will apply.

### 3. Policy

#### 3.1 Closure due to severe weather

- 3.1.1 The decision to close school will normally rest with the Headmistress or in her absence the next most senior member of staff and will be confirmed with the Chair of Governors or if he/she is unavailable the Vice Chair.
- 3.1.2 A decision (See Appendix Two with regard to adverse weather) will be made as early as possible, either the evening before or first thing in the morning (by 7.00 am), on the basis of information received from the media about weather, supplemented by on the spot observation, either personally or from staff members better placed to make such observations and through appropriate external agencies such as the Met Office as to whether the school should remain open or be closed.
- 3.1.3 Factors involved in reaching the decision to close the school are likely to be:
- ❖ Access to the school or condition of the school site i.e. road conditions (obstructions, snow, ice, flooding, etc.), grounds surfaces, walkways, main entrances.
  - ❖ Breakdown of school essential services (heating, electrical services, water, storm damage, etc.) or likely staffing levels.
- 3.1.4 The Headmistress or delegate will advise staff and the Chair of Governors through cascaded phone calls, and advise parents/carers and students to check the school website and listen to the local radio stations BBC Radio Merseyside (95.8 FM) and Radio City (96.7 FM).
- 3.1.5 On subsequent closure days a decision should be made by 5pm on the closure day.

### **3.2 During school day closure guidance**

On occasions it may be necessary for school to close during the school day i.e. if the weather is deteriorating and there is doubt as to whether children can be returned home later in the day.

Pupils and students will be informed of the need to close the school. Members of senior staff will brief each year group in Years 7 to 11 on the arrangements for the closure and help them make arrangements to get home. Sixth Form will be dismissed from their classes.

Pupils will only be allowed to leave school once they have talked to a parent/carer about arrangements for going home.

After school events: clubs, detention, parents' evenings will be postponed.

Where adverse weather is forecast, students should be suitably clothed, with appropriate footwear.

### **3.3 Staff attendance**

Although it is recognised that severe weather conditions make it difficult for staff to get to and from work, unless advised to the contrary by the Headmistress, then the expectation is that staff will present themselves for work if at all possible. However, staff need to take responsibility for their own safety and should pay attention to local and national weather and travel advice.

### **3.4 Clearance of snow**

Within the school site, the school is responsible for snow clearance and the clearing of approach paths is the specific task of the Estate Manager. When severe weather is forecast, the Estate Team should be tasked to lay salt and grit on arrival.

The clearance of public roads is the responsibility of the Highways Department.

If there is any question of pupils or students' safety being at risk, for instance if they are let out at break time and the grounds area is unsafe, school has a responsibility in inclement weather to keep the pupils and students indoors. This decision needs to be based on regularly updated risk assessments.

### **3.5 In the event of school being closed and on subsequent days**

In the event of closure, messages will be:

- ❖ Sent to parents/carers by text and parentmail.
- ❖ Published on the school website ([www.uptonhallschool.co.uk](http://www.uptonhallschool.co.uk)).
- ❖ Announced on the school answer phone.
- ❖ Published on the school twitter account (@UptonHallFCJ).
- ❖ Broadcast on BBC Radio Merseyside (95.8 FM) and Radio City (96.7 FM).
- ❖ Notices will be placed on school entrances advising visitors, parents/carers and pupils and students that school is closed.

School will be appropriately staffed by teachers/admin and support staff to deal with any pupils or students who arrive at school unescorted until parents/carers or emergency contacts can collect them.

### **3.6 Students taking public examinations**

Even if school buses are not running and school is closed we will make every effort to put on special arrangements for students taking public examinations e.g. AS and A Level examinations, Year 10 and Year 11 GCSE examinations. If at all possible these pupils and students are asked to make private arrangements to come into school to sit the examinations as they cannot be rescheduled.

**3.7** We would advise parents/carers to have an action plan organised in advance if the school were to close part way through the day, in terms of where the pupil/student should go.

## **APPENDIX ONE: SNOW AND ICE POLICY**

### **Policy Aims and Objectives**

Upton Hall School's policy aims to maintain safe access, egress and routes across the school's site as far as reasonably practical within the resources available.

All reasonable efforts will be made to ensure the school remains open as normal and partial closure will always be considered before the decision is made to completely close the school.

### **Management Plan and Procedures**

A management plan has been devised together with a generic risk assessment to describe how the procedures will be implemented and put into practice in order to meet the aims and objectives of the policy.

Due to the expanse of the site it is recognised that it is impossible to immediately clear snow and ice from the many pathways on all sites. The procedures do however, require those responsible to exercise careful judgement in prioritising key access, egress and routes throughout the site as well as outline the responsibilities of all users to exercise their own initiative in ensuring their own and others safety during times of snow and ice in the school grounds.

### **Responsibilities**

#### **Governing Body**

- Responsibility for this policy has been delegated to the Headmistress. The effectiveness of these procedures in minimising the risks from snow and ice will be judged through and in conjunction with the Finance Committee (where Health and Safety is a standing agenda item).

#### **Headmistress**

- Formally review the policy on a tri-annual basis.
- Ensure means of access, egress and routes across the school are safe for employees, pupils, students and visitors and that adequate arrangements are made to ensure that the risks from snow and ice are minimised. In circumstances when safe access, egress and safe routes cannot be achieved and with the agreement of the Chair of Governors, close or partially close the school and communicate the closure/partial closure to all relevant parties.
- Consider how snow and ice may affect the operation of the school e.g. transport difficulties in getting to school and the availability of staff and other services.
- Advise parents and students of the risks during ice and snow and the importance of suitable footwear.

#### **Director of Business**

- Formulate a policy and management plan for approval in the first instance by the Finance Committee (where Health and Safety is a standing agenda item) which will enable the Headmistress to fully discharge her responsibilities as described above.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the policy and management plan and report
- any concerns to the Governors' Buildings Committee.
- Include information regarding the effectiveness of this policy and management plan in the Annual Accident Analysis.
- Amend the procedures as required

## Estate Manager

- Develop procedures and maintain records to include:
- Generic risk assessment for clearance of snow and ice from site and communicate procedures and methods of work to Estate staff.
- Written and recorded 'day specific' risk assessment for clearance of snow and ice from site and communicate procedures and methods of work to Estate staff.
- Site map detailing order of priority for clearing of snow and ice and communicate to Estate staff.
- Proactively monitor the weather forecast and initiate preventative measures to manage risks from snow and ice.
- Proactively monitor current conditions and react to changing priorities, e.g. communicating temporary closure of playgrounds/pathways, amending/ increasing working hours of Estate staff to deal with increased levels of snow and ice.
- Ensure sufficient supply of suitable equipment and salt grit/other materials are available in order to meet demand.

## Estate Staff

- The immediate clearance of snow and ice in designated areas, in line with the procedures and shown on the site map.
- Ensuring equipment provided to clear snow and ice is maintained in a satisfactory condition.
- Temporary closure of designated areas until cleared. Such areas should be clearly marked, e.g. signage, tape etc.
- Maintain records of clearance and temporary closures on the daily caretaking sheets.

## All staff

- Be aware that when areas have had salt grit/other materials applied it is not a guarantee that the paths are completely safe or slip-proof; please travel with caution when moving around site.
- Be aware of the risk assessment in place for snow and ice and take responsibility for following the designated routes when such conditions exist.
- Safeguarding their own, colleagues', pupils' and students' health and safety.
- Ensure appropriate footwear is worn to reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls.
- Report any internal wet areas/external icy patches to the Main Office who will inform the Estate staff to enable them to position wet floor signs/mop up any excess water/re-apply salt grit/other materials.
- Communicate to pupils and students the need to wear appropriate footwear in snow and ice and to exercise caution when moving around site.

## Clearance Procedures

- During severe weather site staff will suspend their other duties and priority will be given to clearing snow and ice.
- All Estate staff will be provided with suitable equipment and Personal Protective Equipment.
- In order of priority shown on the site map, treat paths with salt grit/other materials to maintain safe access, egress and routes across the site.
- Identify any particularly dangerous areas which require extra care and should be checked/treated more frequently e.g. steps, slopes, gullies which may be hidden etc.
- Where snow has fallen, clear a path 1 metre wide in order of priority shown on the site map and treat cleared paths with salt grit/other materials to maintain a clear pathway especially where temperatures remain below freezing.

- Routes will be regularly checked throughout the day to ensure freezing or further snow coverage has not occurred. Additional care should be taken when clearing sloping pathways and steps, it may be necessary for safety reasons to consider the temporary closure of some non-essential areas of the premises (e.g. steep pathways, playgrounds, etc.) to avoid risks to staff, pupils or visitors. An assessment of the situation will be made by the Estate Manager.
- To gain the most economical and environmental solution the minimum amount of salt grit should be used. As a guide a good handful is sufficient to treat 1m<sup>2</sup>.
- There is no advantage in applying grit salt/other materials to deep snow; this should be cleared from the path first.
- When severe weather is forecast site staff will spread salt grit/other materials the night before as well as on arrival at 6.30am or earlier by arrangement.
- In extreme conditions the Estate Manager will investigate the snow clearing services at the local authority.
- The gritting of roads and pavements outside the site are dealt with separately by the Wirral's Highways Department.

### **Site Map and Order of Priority for Application of Salt Grit/Other Materials**

The site will be cleared/gritted in the following order of priority:

Drive way to main car park

Main car park

Both main pathways to reception

Upton Building car park

Driveway from Lodge to Upton Building

Footways behind Hall and Link Corridor

Footways outside Lingdale

Footways outside Gerard Building and Sports Hall

Rear car park by Dining Room and Music Rooms

## RISK ASSESSMENT

1. Hazard	2. People Affected
Snow and ice	Employees, Students and Visitors, Estate Staff
<b>Risks to Employees, Pupils, Students and Visitors</b>	
Risk	Control
Slips, trips and falls	Staff are aware of the Snow and Ice Policy, risk assessment, procedures and routes to be followed and reinforce these to pupils, students and visitors.
	Barrier matting in place at all entrances
<b>Risks to Estate Staff</b>	
Risk	Control
Manual Handling	All staff training in manual handling techniques. Where possible, purpose built push or motorised equipment used, i.e. spreader and snow plough
Exposure due to low external temperature	Protective, warm clothing including hat and gloves worn. Take regular breaks
Slips, trips and falls	Snow and ice over shoe protectors issued. Adopt route which minimises the need to walk over uncleared areas, clearing heavily used paths first.
Injury caused by salt when spreading	Goggles and cut resistant insulated gloves worn.
Exhaustion	Take regular breaks.