



QUANTOCK

EDUCATION TRUST

Adverse Weather Policy

LINKS: Risk Assessment Policy, Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Emergency and Business Continuity Plan

DATE: January 2024

POSTHOLDER RESPONSIBLE: Tracy Lee, Director of Finance & Operations

TRUSTEES/GOVERNORS COMMITTEE: Finance, Operations & Infrastructure

AUDIENCE: Staff, students, all visitors

STATUS: Approved

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1. Aims

- 1.1 The aim of the policy is to ensure that the Quantock Education Trust (QET) prioritises and maintains a continued commitment to the health and safety of all members of the Trust community in the event of adverse weather conditions.

2. Context

- 2.1 In the event of disruption caused by heavy snow, adverse weather or flooding, the prime concern of the Trust and its schools must always be to ensure the safety of our pupils and staff. The decision to close the one or more of our schools will take account of the safety of all our pupils, staff and visitors, some of whom travel a great distance to school each day. QET will always endeavour to open our schools in the event of bad weather, as long as it is safe to do so.

- 2.2 Our schools may be unable to open for a variety of reasons, including:

- breakdown in the heating;
- frozen or burst pipes; or
- inaccessibility of roads and/or the site due to very heavy snowfall or other adverse conditions leading to staff shortages and unsafe conditions for pupils to travel to and from school, thus making it difficult for us to provide adequate supervision for pupils.
- conditions on the school site are too hazardous for staff and students, or if travel routes to and from school are dangerous.
- the forecast indicates a serious deterioration in weather conditions during the day.
- county transport companies make the decision not to operate their coaches/buses.

- 2.3 The decision about whether the school should open should take into account, for example:

- advice from the police and other agencies about travel conditions and conditions around the school;
- advice from the local authority, as appropriate;
- access to the school site for pedestrians, drivers and emergency vehicles and safety of the site;
- availability of staff.

- 2.4 Any decision to close one or all of our Schools will be made by the Headteacher following a full risk assessment, after consultation with the CEO.

3. Statement of Intent

- 3.1 This policy applies all Schools within the Quantock Education Trust.

- 3.2 If the decision is made for the school to open as usual, staff should make all reasonable efforts to get into work. This means assessing the availability of public transport or, if they normally drive to work and are unable to do so, considering the feasibility of walking to work if they live relatively close and are fit and able to do so. There should be no expectation that teachers will walk miles in severe conditions to get to work.

- 3.3 If there are severe weather warnings in the area in which they live and the police and other agencies are advising people not to travel, teachers affected will need to contact their headteacher to discuss the situation.
- 3.4 It may be that the school is open but some pupils and staff are unable to get into school. In this instance, Headteachers will assess the staff-to-pupil ratio to ensure that they are able to operate safely. It may be that they will need to advise that some groups of pupils remain at home rather than enforcing a full school closure.
- 3.5 The Headteacher may reasonably have to make alternative timetabling arrangements without notice in order to accommodate staff shortages or reductions in other staffing and in pupil numbers. This would likely involve the redeployment of staff according to need.
- 3.6 Teachers will, as always, act professionally to do everything they can during lessons to ensure that pupils cover all the work that they need to do and may have missed during the closure.
- 3.7 Note, if you do not receive information from the school to the contrary, please assume that the school will be open as usual.

4. Clothing and Footwear

- 4.1 If the weather is very bad, pupils are permitted to wear suitable footwear (e.g. wellington boots) on the way to and from school but will need to bring their school shoes to change into once in school.
- 4.2 A warm, waterproof outdoor coat should be worn to and from school.

5. Closure before the start of the school day due to severe weather

- 5.1 If it is considered necessary to close before the start of the school day, staff, parents and pupils will be informed in the following ways:
- A text message and/or email will be sent to all parents by, or shortly after, 7.30 am, using the most recent contact details provided via the school's communication system: eg. Arbor/Class Dojo
 - A message *may* be posted on the school's website:
 - www.haygroveschool.co.uk
 - www.sexeyes.somerset.sch.uk
 - www.spaxton-school.co.uk
 - www.stogurseyprimaryschool.co.uk
 - And the school's social media sites:
 - www.twitter.com/haygrove and www.facebook.com/haygroveschool
 - www.twitter.com/SexeysSchool and www.facebook.com/BrutonStateBoardingSchool
 - www.facebook.com/spaxtonprimaryschool and Class Dojo
 - www.facebook.com/stogurseyprimaryschool
 - Broadcasts by the following radio stations:
 - BBC Radio Somerset: 95.5FM or 1566MHz

- Heart FM: 102.6FM
- Midwest Radio: 96.6 FM, 97.4 FM, 105.6 FM or 106.6 FM

5.2 County wide School closure details and school transport cancellations can also be found at: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-and-families/school-closures/>

6. Enforced closure during the school day

- 6.1 The Trust and its Headteachers will monitor weather forecasts and other factors, such as planned cessation of public transport. If severe weather disruption is likely to occur during the day, they should consider closing the school before the normal start time even if the current conditions are acceptable.
- 6.2 If, during the course of the day, weather conditions deteriorate to the point that a closure is required, then the school should use existing arrangements to inform parents of the decision.
- 6.3 Those who cannot be sent home will be supervised until such time as they can be collected. However, the health, safety and welfare of staff is equally important. It is therefore unreasonable to expect all staff to remain on site to supervise pupils and staff should also be enabled to leave the premises as soon as reducing pupil numbers allows.
- 6.4 This will be done on an assessment of relative risk, e.g. to determine who is at greatest risk to safety, such as those with the longest journeys or disabled staff. Staff who will remain to ensure the safety of pupils will be identified before any adverse weather event as part of the planning for adverse weather.
- 6.5 Local conditions can vary widely in adverse weather events and plans are in place to send staff and pupils home during the day if it becomes apparent that risks to safety are increasing at their home location even if conditions around the school are acceptable.
- 6.6 Our priority is to keep all students calm and safe, therefore please follow these instructions so that we can keep the children reassured about their safety.
- 6.7 Parents should not phone or text their child/ren if they are worried about deteriorating weather, as it causes alarm and other children may panic, and they must be discouraged from doing so.
- 6.8 For students who use County transport
- Normally the school buses will arrive early to ensure students are able to get home. This is at the bus company's discretion and as soon as we have had confirmation of when they will arrive, we will notify parents using the methods listed above.
- 6.9 Students will only be allowed to leave school when given permission by a member of staff
- If a child/ren normally walk to school then they should remain in school until permission is given for them to go home.
 - If a child/ren is normally collected from school or school buses are not operating, we will stay open for as long as possible and, although there may not be enough teachers to teach lessons, the school will provide supervised activities until school closing time.

After this time students who need to wait in school will be supervised until they can be collected. This is to allow parents the comfort of knowing their child/ren are safe and supervised.

- If a child/ren is collected from school, please make sure they are signed out at Reception. Parents/carers will need to wait in the Main Reception while staff locate the child/ren; parents/carers will need to be patient so that staff can co-ordinate this process as quickly as possible.
- The School's intention always is to ensure all students are safe and everything reasonably possible will be done to ensure the children do not come to any harm as a result of poor weather conditions.

7. Procedure for Staff during closure

Reference in this section to "staff" applies to both teaching and support staff.

- 7.1 As a fundamental principle every effort will be made to keep the school open even if only limited numbers can attend, **except when to do so would endanger students and staff, or alternatively when a decision has been made to close all establishments.**
- 7.2 Decisions relating to closure will be made based on information on conditions in the immediate vicinity of the school and the surrounding region. The final decision to close will be made by the Headteacher, in conjunction with the CEO. As soon as the decision to close has been taken staff will be notified by email and/or text message (if available). In the event of the MIS not functioning or being inaccessible, each school should have their own staff 'Emergency Contact List Telephone Tree' or an electronic equivalent, in place where possible to allow notification to staff in a timely manner.
- 7.3 If possible, a message will also be posted on the school's website.
- 7.4 Staff will be expected to check emails and/or text messages (if available) to establish whether the school is open. If the school is to be closed due to adverse weather the news will be communicated as early as possible via:
- Email to all staff email address by, or shortly after, 7.30 am
 - Radio broadcasts. BBC Somerset (95.5 FM or 1566MHz), Heart FM (102.6 FM) and 96.6 FM, 97.4 FM, 105.6 FM or 106.6 FM.
 - School website
 - Recorded message on school telephone system.
 - SMS text message to all staff and parents who have registered a mobile telephone number by, or shortly after, 7.30 am.
 - <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-and-families/school-closures/>
- 7.5 During a school closure, all members of staff, both teaching and support staff, are expected to stay at home for the duration of the closure.
- 7.6 In the event that the school remains open but you do not attend work due to weather conditions, the Headteacher will take account of prevailing conditions when deciding whether the period of absence is to be treated as being with or without pay.
- 7.7 It is understood that conditions can vary considerably and regardless of a decision to remain open please do not attempt to travel to school if you judge the journey would be unsafe.

- 7.8 Please contact the school at the earliest opportunity if you are likely to be delayed or unable to get in. If the school is open but you cannot safely attend, you should inform staff absence in accordance with your school's staff absence policy as early as possible that this is the case. If conditions improve later and you decide to try to reach school please inform staff absence of your intentions. In this way early decisions on school can also be informed by staff unable to attend.
- 7.9 If conditions seriously deteriorate during the school day, and the decision to close is taken during school hours, safety is the first consideration. The coach companies may decide to take their passengers home early and parents who live in remote areas may collect their children. Before any students are released, it is our duty to ensure that they can be received safely at home, and every effort will be made to keep students on site until this is confirmed. Once student arrangements for transport home are in place, then staff will be dismissed by the Headteacher.

8. Met Office Warnings

- 8.1 When a Weather Warning or named storm by the Met office is issued nationally, it becomes a potential risk to life.
- 8.2 The Met office may issue a 'Yellow', 'Amber' or 'Red' weather warning. Further details and Storm Safety Guidance can be found at Appendix D of this policy.
- 8.3 Red warnings are issued by the Met Office where exceptionally severe weather is forecast and a danger to life exists. Where a red warning is issued, it will be difficult to justify opening a school.
- 8.4 Staff and pupils should also not be expected to travel through a red warning area to reach a school outside the red warning without a thorough risk assessment being made.

9. Further Information and Resources

- [Somerset County Council Guidance for Managing Critical Incidents In Schools](#)
- [A guide to Schools: Procedures for School Closures \(in emergency events and extreme weather i.e. snow and floods\)](#)
- [Somerset County Council Severe Weather FAQs and Severe Weather Closure Checklist](#)
- <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-and-families/school-closures/>

Appendix A – Adverse Weather Checklist

Before School Starts

	ACTION	Done
1	Headteacher and Caretaker, after discussion with the CEO make an early assessment of the situation and make the decision whether to open or close the school.	
2	Chair / Vice Chair of Governors are notified of the decision.	
3	As soon as it becomes apparent that opening of the school presents a risk to staff, pupils and parents, a text message/email will be sent to all parents and staff.	
4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Headteacher to update school website 2. Headteacher to update SLP emergency closures. 3. School secretary/Office Manager to inform; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School transport • Fruit delivery/School Meal Provider • Expected visitors • Music teachers 	
5	CEO also notifies Board of Trustees via Whatsapp/email	

During School Hours

	ACTION	Done
1	Head teacher to assess situation in vicinity of school with relation to school surfaces and roads. Take account of weather forecast.	
2	Consult with CEO. Decision made and then Chairs informed.	
3	As soon as it becomes apparent that remaining open presents a risk to Staff and pupils, and that access will be restricted by the end of the school day, the closure procedure is to be implemented. Text message/emails will be sent out to staff.	
4	Class teachers to be informed, teaching to continue in a safe manner until all children are collected.	
5	All parents/carers to be contacted via text messaging service and/or phone call. They are to be told the following: <i>“The weather situation at the school is deteriorating and it is anticipated that access to the school will be severely restricted, if not closed, by the end of the day. For the safety of your child the decision has been taken to close the school. Could you please come and collect your child as soon as possible whilst the roads around the school are still accessible so they can return home safely. If your child uses school transport, they will depart school once their bus is ready to leave the school”.</i>	
6	Head teacher to inform the following that the school will be closing because of adverse weather: 1. Somerset LA	

	2. Update school website	
7	School transport co-ordinator will be informed of the situation & to see if buses/taxis can collect early. (check parents will be at home)	

Appendix B - Sample Email to Parents & Carers

(To be adapted to suit individual school circumstances)

DATE

RE: Adverse Weather and School Closure

Dear Parents & Carers,

In the event of severe weather conditions, we will always try to remain open and a decision to close will only be made if it is absolutely necessary to do so. Such a situation could arise, for example if:

- Conditions on the school site are too hazardous for staff and students, or if travel routes to and from school are dangerous.
- Insufficient numbers of staff are able to make their way to school, thus making it difficult for us to provide adequate supervision for students.
- The forecast indicates a serious deterioration in weather conditions during the day.

If the weather is very bad, children are encouraged to wear suitable footwear (e.g. wellington boots) on the way to and from school but will need to bring their school shoes to change into once in school.

If you do not receive information from the school to the contrary, please assume that the school will be open as usual. The following information and procedures will apply in the case of school closure:

A) Closure before the start of the school day due to severe weather

If it is considered necessary to close before the start of the school day, we will inform you in the following ways:

- An email will be sent to all parents/carers using the most recent contact details provided.
- A message will be posted on the school's website and on our Facebook/social media pages.
- Broadcasts by the following radio stations:
 - **BBC – Somerset Sound**. 95.5 FM, 1566 MHz www.bbc.co.uk/somerset
 - **Heart FM**. 102.6 FM 96.5 FM (Taunton Area) www.heartsomerset.co.uk
 - **Breeze FM**. 100.8 FM, 102.4 FM, or 107.4 FM Tel. 0117 966 6107
 - **Tone FM** 107.8 FM (Taunton & surrounding areas)
- [Somerset County Council School's Closures page](#)

We will make a decision by 7am and aim to complete the above by 7.30am. Please be aware that sometimes decision making can be complicated and several factors need taking into account.

B) Closure during the school day

Our priority is to keep all students calm and safe, therefore please follow these instructions so that we can keep the children reassured about their safety. We do need to do things in an orderly and safe fashion, as I know you will appreciate. If adverse weather forces us to close during the school day, we will inform you in the following ways:

- An email will be sent to all parents using the most recent contact details provided. This message will instruct you on the action that the school wishes you to take.

C) Pupils will only be allowed to leave school when given permission by a member of staff

If your child/ren normally walks to school then they should remain in school until permission is given for them to go home. If you normally collect your child from school, we will stay open for as long as we possibly can and, although there may not be enough teachers to teach lessons, we will provide supervised activities until normal school closing time.

After this time students who need to wait in school will be supervised until they can be collected. This is to allow parents the comfort of knowing their children are safe and supervised. If you collect your child/ren from school, please make sure you sign them out in the office.

Our intention always is to ensure all students are safe and everything reasonably possible will be done to ensure that your child/ren does not come to any harm as a result of poor weather conditions.

Thank you for your support with this.

If you have any further concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Headteacher

Appendix C - Sample e-mail to Staff

(To be adapted to suit individual school circumstances)

DATE

Dear Colleagues

Following the announcement of possible adverse weather/ snow, I have decided to remind staff about our guidance for staff regarding attendance at school in the case of adverse weather conditions.

The school will only be closed if one or more of the following conditions apply:

1. Insufficient staff are able to come in to keep the school running safely
2. Conditions on site are dangerous
3. Conditions are considered to be or are anticipated to later become too hazardous for travel

I enclose a copy of the revised procedure.

The Head will make the decision as to whether the school will close for both students and staff as early as possible on each morning. Senior members of staff/site managers will monitor conditions in and around the school area.

Staff are asked to check the school website / their email account / Arbor or listen to BBC Somerset Radio for further information. It is possible that conditions may allow the school to remain partially open and it is therefore important that provided you live within a reasonable distance from the school and are "physically able to make the journey" that you attend for work.

It is intended that where we hold staff mobile numbers a text message will be sent to inform you if the school is closed. The web-site will also clearly state whether the school is closed for staff as well as students. However, it is important that we have up to date contact numbers for all staff and in this respect could you urgently let HR know if you have changed your contact details since completing the staff data collection sheet.

1. A message would appear on the school's website, by or shortly after 7.30am each day and we would update the website with information, as far as possible, during the day.
2. Broadcasts by the following Radio Stations:
 - BBC Somerset 95.5FM and 1566MHz
 - Heart FM 102.6FM, 96.5 (Taunton area)
 - Midwest Radio 96.6 FM, 97.4 FM, 105.6 FM or 106.6 FM

Further school closure details can be found on the Somerset County Council's website: [Somerset County Council School's Closures page](#)

Emergency Contact numbers

Headteacher:

Deputy Head:

Site Manager:

Staff Absence email:

Appendix D – Storm Safety Guidance

When a Weather Warning or named storm by the meteorological office is issued nationally, it becomes a potential risk to life.

Yellow Warning: Yellow warnings can be issued for a range of weather situations. Many are issued when it is likely that the weather will cause some low-level impacts, including some disruption to travel in a few places. Many people may be able to continue with their daily routine, but there will be some that will be directly impacted and so it is important to assess if you could be affected. Other yellow warnings are issued when the weather could bring much more severe impacts to the majority of people but the certainty of those impacts occurring is much lower. It is important to read the content of yellow warnings to determine which weather situation is being covered by the yellow warning.

Amber Warning: There is an increased likelihood of impacts from severe weather, which could potentially disrupt your plans. This means there is the possibility of travel delays, road and rail closures, power cuts and the potential risk to life and property. You should think about changing your plans and taking action to protect yourself and your property. You may want to consider the impact of the weather on your family and your community and whether there is anything you need to do ahead of the severe weather to minimize the impact.

Red Warning: Dangerous weather is expected and, if you have not already done so, you should act now to keep yourself and others safe from the impact of the severe weather. It is highly likely that there will be a risk to life, with substantial disruption to travel, energy supplies and widespread damage to property and infrastructure. You should avoid travelling, where possible, and follow the advice of the emergency services and local authorities.

Gales and high winds are the most common cause of damage and disruption in the UK. Between 1962 and 1995 there were 184 deaths attributed to building failures attributed to high winds. Rainfall is one of the other major components of storms, and there is a discernible trend showing that over the years the weather has become wetter. It is likely that climate change may have a considerable influence on UK weather going forward. This risk guidance covers some of the issues concerning storms and gives advice on sensible control measures to improve safety. Note: The guidance is for Storms followed by Yellow or Amber weather warnings of winds exceeding 45MPH.

Please note: No school should make the decision to close without consultation with the CEO, or DFO in CEO absence.

The following measures should be taken when given notice on closing the school:

- Inform Staff of pending closure
- Inform Parents of pending closure
- Secure all doors on leaving the building, all fire doors internally should be closed
- Secure all windows

- Remove all loose items from the playground and open areas

Risks

- Damage to Buildings, Roof tiles,
- Damage to trees and branches
- Loose items become flying debris and can cause injury or fatalities
- Power outage
- Flooding
- Fire

Pre Storm-Measures to mitigate risk:

The pre storm warning given via weather or news stations should be brought to the Head teachers attention for further action. The following measures are a guide.

- Secure loose objects, particularly those with the potential to be blown into windows and become flying objects that may cause injury.
- Close and secure doors and windows, particularly those on the windward side of buildings.
- When parking up vehicles try and keep them clear of buildings, trees, walls, and fences
- Notify staff of any changes to the usual school routines, e.g., Outdoor play routines, use of doors/windows etc.

After Storm Measures to be taken at school level:

- Do not touch any electrical/telephone wires that have been blown down or are still visibly damaged. Report all faults to the Premises Manager for further action.
- Do not walk too close to walls, buildings, and trees as they may have been weakened. Your Premises Manager and Site Team should be making post storm checks of the site.
- Arrangement of repairs should go through normal protocols unless the issue is considered a threat to the health or safety to school users. In such cases take advice from the Trust Central Team.

A complete safety check of the site should be completed, checking the following:

- Fencing and security gates
- Electric power (including Phone connections)
- Water system
- Foreign objects within the school grounds (blown from other premises)
- Visual damage report roof tiles

Following all the above checks the Trust Estates Lead should be informed of the school's status.

Tel: 07496 412930

Email: pwilkinson@gauntokedtrust.co.uk