

## OA-North View Severe Weather Guidelines

Document control table	
Title	School closure in the event of severe weather conditions – guidelines
Date approved Reviewed	February 2026
Approved by	OA central
Date of next review	February 2027
Updates/revisions included:	<p>The following updates have been made to ensure full compliance with the <b>Independent School Standards Regulations (ISSR) Part 3 – Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Risk Assessment Requirements Added:</b> A new section now requires a <b>written and dynamic risk assessment</b> to be completed and recorded whenever severe weather poses potential risks to pupil or staff safety, in line with ISSR paragraph 11.</li> <li>• <b>Fire Safety Procedures Strengthened:</b> The policy now includes a requirement to ensure that <b>fire exits, emergency routes, and assembly points remain safe and unobstructed</b>, and that alternative evacuation arrangements are communicated where usual routes are unsafe due to weather conditions, in accordance with ISSR paragraph 12.</li> <li>• <b>Additional Safeguarding Clarification (Optional Enhancement):</b> The safeguarding section has been strengthened to clarify expectations for supporting <b>vulnerable pupils</b> during severe weather and ensuring continued adherence to safeguarding and reporting procedures.</li> </ul>
<p>These are OAIS guidelines to be adopted by all schools, but with local contacts and amendments included as relevant. Please return the localised version to OA central for filing and uploading on school websites.</p>	

## **Introduction**

The Olive Academies Independent Schools Board (OAISB) recognises its duty to ensure the smooth operation of the timetable in its academies. However, on occasion the normal day-to-day running of the academies may be interrupted due to severe weather conditions.

In circumstances such as these, the following procedures have been put into place to ensure the health, safety and well-being of all in our school community. These guidelines are provided by the trust but include local guidance as relevant.

## **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding remains paramount during severe weather. Remote learning arrangements will be activated where possible. Staff must maintain contact with vulnerable pupils and follow safeguarding reporting procedures.

## **Vulnerable Pupils**

During periods of severe weather, the Head of School will ensure that pupils identified as vulnerable, including those with safeguarding, medical, or SEND needs, are monitored and supported. Where remote learning is in place, staff must check on the welfare and engagement of these pupils and follow safeguarding reporting procedures if concerns arise.

## **Risk Assessment**

In accordance with the Independent School Standards Regulations (ISSR) Part 3, the Head of School will ensure that a written risk assessment is completed and recorded when severe weather conditions have the potential to affect pupil welfare, site safety, travel arrangements or staffing levels. This risk assessment will be dynamic and reviewed throughout the day as conditions change. All decisions relating to opening, partial opening, or closure will be based on the outcomes of this assessment and will be documented for audit and compliance purposes. The risk assessment template will be provided by the Facilities and Infrastructure Manger.

## **Pre-notification and information for staff and parents**

As the autumn term progresses and/or the National Weather Centre predict deteriorating weather conditions for our region, parents and staff are reminded of school procedures in case of bad weather. These guidelines are also placed on the school website.

## **Procedures in the event of the enforced closure of the school due to severe weather conditions**

Before a decision is made whether the school (or one of its sites, where there are more than one) should open or not (enforced closure), consideration should be given to:

- the distance staff must travel
- road/traffic conditions and
- local conditions for staff who travel on foot.

In addition, consideration should also be given to:

- the condition of the school site and
- surrounding area for parents and pupils who may have to travel on foot.

## **Fire Safety During Severe Weather**

The Head of School must ensure that all fire exits, emergency routes, assembly points and access

paths remain safe and unobstructed during severe weather. Snow, ice, or debris must be cleared before pupils are admitted to the site. Heating and alarm systems must be checked to ensure they are functioning correctly. Where usual evacuation routes or assembly areas are unsafe due to weather conditions, an alternative temporary fire evacuation plan must be communicated to staff before pupils arrive on site.

Once all the above have been considered the following procedures should be put into place:

- a. The head of school and executive headteacher will consult with the director of education, facilities manager or business manager as relevant, and deputy headteacher
- b. The head of school and others will consider what temporary measures can be put in place to try and keep the school open if some staff cannot make it into work, e.g. combining classes or rearranging the curriculum
- c. The head of school and facilities staff will also consider steps that are needed to make the school site safe, e.g. encouraging pupils to bring coats, hats and gloves when it is cold or snowing; ensuring paths are gritted around the school site; having snacks available in case catering facilities are at risk of being interrupted.
- d. Based on the outcome of the consultation with leaders and following LA guidance, the head of school will decide next steps. They will bear in mind the following options:
  - Closure for the full day
  - Closure at 12.00 noon and/or the arrangements for school dinners
  - Late opening e.g. 10am to allow time for staff to arrive
  - Opening at 1pm for the afternoon session
- e. In consultation with the Executive Headteacher the Head of School will ensure emergency communications are activated as below:

<b>Head of School</b>	
<b>Office Manager</b>	<b>Assistant Headteacher</b>
All admin and site staff Parents Website Supply Agencies	All teaching staff All teaching support staff All offsite providers

- f. All staff will be informed of the Head of School’s instructions regarding INSET activities for staff and/or ask that time be spent preparing for future lessons/activities where appropriate. Given the accuracy of weather forecasting, it is not unreasonable to expect staff, including administrative staff and learning support staff, to plan for the possibility of not being able to attend should severe weather be predicted.
- g. The OASB will also be formally informed of closures at their next meeting.
- h. The Head of School will ensure that should the school open, the provision of staffing in place is in accordance with health and safety legislation, bearing in mind pupil/teacher ratios, job descriptions and correct procedures for staff covering other classes, playtime arrangements, heating and lunchtime provision.

## **GUIDANCE NOTES:**

### **Closure of OA Independent Schools in adverse weather conditions**

1. The responsibility for school closure rests with the head of school in agreement with the executive headteacher and the Interim Director of Standards – with final agreement by the CEO. The aim should be to keep the school open if this is at all possible taking full account of the health and safety of staff and pupils.
2. All staff should make every reasonable effort to reach their school in adverse weather conditions. Consideration will be given to the nature of journeys staff must undertake, road conditions, the physical fitness of the individual and the availability of public transport. Should it be considered that a member of staff has not made every reasonable effort to reach the school, e.g. when roads are open and traffic problems minimal, absence may be counted as unpaid leave.
3. There will be members of staff who already have health problems and for whom the struggle through adverse weather could be positively harmful. It is reasonable for the head of school to ascertain which members of staff may be so affected and to consider authorising them to be absent for the duration of exceptionally severe weather conditions.
4. The head of school should ensure that appropriate plans have been made to cover the possibility that they cannot reach their school after making every reasonable effort. They should instruct, by telephone, the teachers who have managed to reach the school to act on their behalf.
5. The head of school and staff who have reached their school should stay there if the physical conditions in the school are satisfactory even if there are not many children in attendance. Staff who are not required to teach should use their time in preparatory work/in service training/syllabus revision/administration etc.
6. If the number of staff reaching any school is adequate to cope with the number of pupils who have arrived, and if the school is heated, then the trust would expect the school to remain open. The head of school must decide if the number of staff present is adequate to allow appropriate supervision. Pupils, (even if their numbers are small) should be provided with appropriate work and should be kept at the school as long as the physical conditions are satisfactory and staff are available.

If it is impossible to provide school meals such pupils could be sent home at lunchtime providing appropriate arrangements have been made to ensure an adult is at home to receive them.

7. The head of school is responsible for ensuring that the necessary arrangements following the decision to close, including the informing of parents and other agencies as appropriate e.g. transport.

## **Sample school newsletter: bad weather procedures**

Dear parents,

### **School procedures in the event of severe weather**

As the weather is now changing there is always the possibility of bad weather. Could we please appeal to you to ensure your child comes to school equipped with a coat and hat to accommodate the cold weather and winds. I would like to take this opportunity to advise parents of the procedures we have in place.

#### **Procedures for the start of the day**

Every attempt will be made to open the school as normal during adverse weather conditions, but as a number of staff have substantial distances to travel, this may not always be feasible. Where it is impossible to ensure the health and safety of the children a decision will be made by the head of school to either close or delay the start of the school day. Wherever possible any such decision will be made by 8.45am and parents will be notified by the usual texting system. As it is not always viable to meet this deadline, I do ask that parents use their discretion and either keep their children at home or personally bring them to the school and wait with them until a firm decision can be made.

#### **Procedures for deteriorating weather throughout the day**

Should the weather deteriorate as the day progresses and parents are concerned about the health & safety of their children, they should use their discretion and if appropriate, collect them from the school. The school will remain open until the last child safely leaves the building.

We ask that parents avoid calling the school solely to enquire about possible closure, as phone lines need to remain available for urgent or emergency matters. Closure information will be shared via our usual communication channels

Details of school closure will also be added to the school website.

Should you need further clarification of any aspect of the above, please do not hesitate to speak to me at the school. Meanwhile on behalf of OA, may I take this opportunity to thank you for supporting our policies and procedures, which ensure the health & safety of all in our school community.

Yours sincerely,

Kerry Geary  
Head of School