



## OA – Suffolk Severe Weather Guidance

Document control table	
Title	Academy closure in the event of severe weather conditions - guidelines
Date approved	November 2025
Reviewed	November 2025
Approved by	OA central
Date of next review	November 2027
Updates/revisions included:	
<b>These are OA central guidelines to be adopted by all academies, but with local contacts and amendments included as relevant. Please return the localised version to OA central for filing and uploading on academy websites.</b>	
<b>Where headteacher is referred to this term includes head of school or academy, and executive headteacher.</b>	

### Introduction

The Olive Academies (OA) Board of Trustees recognises its duty in always ensuring 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 academy 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.

### Pre-notification and information for staff and parents/carers:

As the autumn term progresses and/or the National Weather Centre predict deteriorating weather

conditions for our region, parents/carers and staff are reminded of academy procedures in case of bad weather. These guidelines are also placed on the academy website.

**Procedures in the event of the enforced closure of the academy due to severe weather conditions:**

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

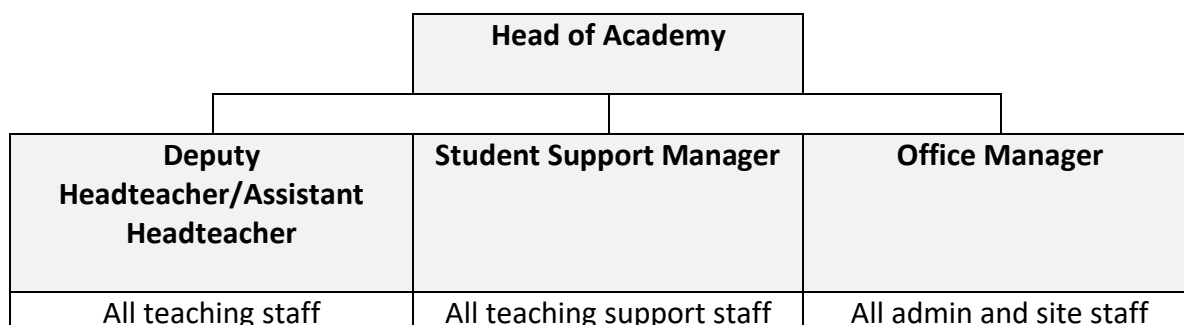
- the distance staff must travel
- road/traffic conditions and
- local conditions for staff who travel on foot.

In addition, consideration should also be given to:

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

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

- a) The headteacher and executive headteacher will consult with the director of academies, facilities manager or business manager as relevant, and deputy headteacher
- b) The headteacher 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 headteacher 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 headteacher 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) The headteacher will start the emergency pyramid as below:



- f) All staff will be informed of the headteacher'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 Academy Advisory Board (AAB) will also be informed of closures at their meeting.
- h) The headteacher will ensure that should the academy 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 academies in adverse weather conditions**

1. The responsibility for academy closure rests with the headteacher in agreement with the executive headteacher and the Director of Education – with final agreement by the CEO. The aim should be to keep academies open if this is at all possible taking full account of the health and safety of staff and pupils.
2. All academy staff should make every reasonable effort to reach their academies 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 academy, e.g. when roads are open and traffic problems minimal, absence may be counted as unpaid leave.
3. There will be members of staff of some academies who already have health problems and for whom the struggle through adverse weather could be positively harmful. It is reasonable for headteachers 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. Headteachers should ensure that appropriate plans have been made to cover the possibility that they cannot reach their academies after making every reasonable effort. They should instruct, by telephone, the teachers who have managed to reach their academies to act on their behalf.
5. Headteachers and staff who have reached their academies should stay there if the physical conditions in the academies 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 – see above.

6. If the number of staff reaching any academy is adequate to cope with the number of pupils who have arrived, and if the academy is heated, then the trust would expect the academy to remain open. Individual headteachers must decide if the number of staff present is adequate to allow appropriate supervision. These pupils (even if their numbers are small) should be provided with appropriate work and should be kept at the academy 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. Headteachers are responsible for making the necessary arrangements following the decision to close including the informing of parents/carers and other agencies as appropriate e.g. transport.

## Sample academy newsletter: bad weather procedures

Dear parents/carers,

### Academy 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 academy equipped with a coat and hat to accommodate the cold weather and winds that may affect our playground. I would like to take this opportunity to advise parents/carers of the procedures we have in place.

#### a) Procedures for the start of the day

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

#### b) Procedures for deteriorating weather throughout the day

Should the weather deteriorate as the day progresses and parents/carers are concerned about the health & safety of their children, they should use their discretion and if appropriate, collect them from the academy.

The academy does not close, it remains open until the last child safely leaves the building.

We ask that parents/carers do not telephone the academy to check this as the telephone lines may be needed in the event of an emergency.

Details of academy closure will also be added to the [academy website](#) – It will also be available on [Suffolk LAs website](#).

Should you need further clarification of any aspect of the above, please do not hesitate to speak to me at the academy. 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 academy community.

Yours sincerely,

Kelly Emms, Head of Academy OA-Sf