



WEST BUCKLAND  
PRIMARY SCHOOL  
AND NURSERY

# **West Buckland Primary School and Nursery**

## **Adverse Weather Policy**

## **Statement of intent**

It is the aim of West Buckland Primary School and Nursery to ensure that it remains open during adverse weather conditions, when practically possible, providing that this can be done in a safe manner.

West Buckland intends to, wherever possible, make the decision to close the school before the teaching day commences, rather than defer the decision and delay the opening of the school.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Make the appropriate procedures clear, in relation to operating the school during adverse weather conditions.
- Make clear the grounds for a school closure due to adverse weather conditions.
- Advise and inform staff and parents of the systems and procedures in place in the event of a school closure due to adverse weather conditions.

## **1. School policies and procedures**

1.1. This policy will be implemented in accordance with the following school policies and procedures:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Critical Incident Policy

## **2. Decision to close**

2.1. The decision to close the school will be made by the Head Teacher with approval then sought from the Chair of Governors or in their absence the Vice Chair.

2.2. The caretaker/site manager or a nominated staff member that lives locally to the school may be delegated the responsibility of making an early site assessment and consulting with the Head Teacher and the chair of governors when making a decision about school closure.

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

- Conditions on site are considered to be unsafe and are likely to present danger to users of the site.
- Staff numbers are insufficient for the school to be operated safely.

2.4. In the event of school closure:

- The Head Teacher will inform staff and parents via MCAS.
- The Head Teacher or Administration Officer will post an update on the school website and social media site(s).
- The caretaker will display 'closure' signs on the school's entrance gates.
- The Head Teacher will log in to the Somerset Learning Platform (SLP) <https://slp.somerset.org.uk/SitePages/Home.aspx> and post notification of closure or disruption stating whether the school will remain open, closed or will have the facility to partially open the school site. If the SLP does not work, schools should telephone the County contact or email [PressOffice@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:PressOffice@somerset.gov.uk) with details of the closure.

- The following radio stations will pick up school closures from the SLP for broadcast/publication on their website:
    - BBC – Somerset Sound. 95.5 FM, 1566 MHz
    - Heart FM. 96.5 FM (Taunton Area)
    - Breeze FM. 100.8 FM, 102.4 FM, or 107.4 FM
    - Tone FM 107.8 FM (Taunton & surrounding areas)
- 2.5. In the event of the school having to close during the day, parents will be contacted via text message or telephone, using the number provided on the emergency contacts list, and asked to collect their child from the school.
  - 2.6. A closure of the school during the day and an early release of staff will only be considered in extreme circumstances.
  - 2.7. If school meals are not required as a result of closure, the Head Teacher will notify the contractor. The situation should be reviewed on a daily basis with any further cancellations being telephoned through to the contractor as soon as possible.
  - 2.8. Schools should contact all visitors who may have appointments at the school.

### **3. Remaining open in adverse weather conditions**

- 3.1. When deciding whether the school will remain open, risks will be assessed in line with the appropriate risk assessments.
- 3.2. If the school remains open when there has been snowfall or the site is icy, access to the site for pedestrians will be restricted to the pedestrian gates only.
- 3.3. The caretaker/site manager will place health and safety caution signs to warn users of the increased hazards on site.
- 3.4. All pathways, wherever practically possible, will have been cleared and gritted.
- 3.5. A notice will be erected to inform that vehicles and pedestrians entering the school grounds do so at their own risk.
- 3.6. At the Head Teacher's discretion, during periods of adverse weather conditions, the playgrounds may be out-of-bounds to pupils and parents.
- 3.7. All persons entering the school buildings are asked to ensure they wipe their feet thoroughly, in order to reduce slip hazards.
- 3.8. Schools are advised not to clear roads outside of their site as this is managed by Highways. If a school did clear a road outside their site and an accident occurred, the school would be responsible.
- 3.9. If schools clear their own site of ice and snow, they are responsible for ensuring that cleared areas remain clear of ice and snow to reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls. Schools are NOT to seek voluntary support to clear a school site; instead, they can accept offers from volunteers and ensure that a risk assessment is completed for snow clearance.

### **4. Health and safety**

- 4.1. The school has a duty of care to anyone accessing the site and surrounding grounds.
- 4.2. The school will be liable if it is found that the school has been negligent in its responsibilities and has not taken all reasonable measures, given the circumstances, to ensure the health and safety of pupils, staff, visitors and parents entering the school site.
- 4.3. The Head Teacher is responsible for ensuring safety on the school site, in accordance with the school's Health and Safety Policy.
- 4.4. Staff, visitors and parents have the personal responsibility to express caution and take responsibility for their own health and safety whilst on the school grounds.
- 4.5. Individuals must take responsibility for the health and safety of any children under their supervision.
- 4.6. If anyone believes that the site is unsafe after a risk assessment of the site has been completed, it is advised that they do not enter the school grounds and inform either the Head Teacher or caretaker so the safety can be reassessed.
- 4.7. In the event of adverse weather conditions, the caretaker/site manager will assess the school site and inform the Head Teacher at as early as possible of the state of site.
- 4.8. A 'slips, trips and falls' risk assessment (along with any other relevant risk assessments connected to the school environment during the winter or periods of severe weather) will be conducted in order to assess any potential hazards due to the weather conditions.
- 4.9. Closing the school is a reasonable decision if pupils or staff are at risk of serious injury due to the weather conditions.
- 4.10. When roads are impassable, the health and safety issue is overridden by the practical issue of access.

## **5. Limited staff numbers**

- 5.1. During periods of adverse weather conditions, staff members are expected to make all reasonable efforts to attend work, whether this means they will be late or not.
- 5.2. Staff members are expected to assess the availability of all public transport and consider the feasibility of walking to work, if they live relatively close and are fit and able to do so, in order to attend work.
- 5.3. The school understands that, whilst staff members are expected to make all reasonable efforts to attend work, it is essential to minimise personal risk.
- 5.4. In line with 4.3, it is therefore at the discretion of staff members as to whether they are able to attend work in adverse weather conditions.
- 5.5. Staff members are required to consider local weather conditions, distance, availability of public transport, and fitness to walk when making their decision.
- 5.6. Staff members are required to liaise with the Head Teacher to discuss options of attending work. Normal absence reporting procedures apply.
- 5.7. In order to comply with health and safety regulations, different age groups may be brought together to be taught under the supervision of the available teachers and support staff:

- No maximum class size limits are set out.
- A limit of 30 pupils per class will apply if the majority of children will reach the age of five, six or seven in that school year.

5.8. The school will continue to strive to provide high-quality education in the given circumstances.

## **6. Attendance statistics**

6.1. Where the school is officially closed, all absence is registered as authorised.

6.2. When a pupil cannot attend the school due to adverse weather conditions, the pupil will be marked in the register as having an authorised absence and will, therefore, not affect the school's attendance statistics.

6.3. If the Head Teacher believes the pupil could have safely made it to school but did not attend, the pupil will be marked in the register as having an unauthorised absence.

6.4. Parents acting on the assumption that the school would be closed, without gaining confirmation, or failing to inform the school of the circumstances that prevent the child coming into school, risk their child's absence being registered as an unauthorised absence.

## **7. Emergency plan**

7.1. In the case of an emergency relating to adverse weather, the school will follow their planned emergency procedure, in accordance with the Critical Incident Policy.

7.2. All nominated staff will be trained to:

- Contact and liaise with emergency services.
- Provide first aid.
- Move pupils to a safe place.
- Calm and comfort children.
- Contact parents.
- Deal with any media interest.

7.3. Paper copies of the plan will be kept at nominated staff members' homes in case of out-of-hours emergencies.