

# Emergency Academy Closure Protocol

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**CONTENTS**

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Context</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Closure Before the Start of the Academy Day</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Late Opening and Partial Closure</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5. During the Academy Day Closure Guidance</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6. Staff Attendance</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7. Staff Responsibilities</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8. Clearance of Snow</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9. Public Examinations</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>10. In the Event of the Academy Being Closed</b>	<b>8</b>

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**APPENDICES**

<b>Appendix 1: Making the Site Safe</b>	<b>10</b>
- Clearance of the Site	
- Order of Priority for Clearance	
<b>Appendix 2: Academy Site Map – Snow Clearance Plan</b>	<b>11</b>

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

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- 1.1 It is accepted that it may be necessary to close the Academy during extreme weather conditions or for a variety of other reasons including:
- Severe weather including snow, ice, flooding or storms;
  - Disruption to transport, for example through petrol or diesel shortages;
  - Accommodation and utility problems, for example loss of power supply, heating failures or fire damage.
- 1.2 The Academy will, however, endeavour to remain open where possible. Academy Contingency Plans will be passed on to staff, parents/carers and students when appropriate.
- 1.3 In rarer circumstances (e.g. during a national pandemic, civil unrest, major industrial action etc), a specific Closure Contingency Plan will be prepared and published based on National, Government or Local Authority guidelines issued at the time.

## **2. CONTEXT**

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- 2.1 The main building of Attleborough Academy Norfolk (previously Attleborough High School) was built to accommodate 250 students. The Academy roll is now approaching 900 students and this expansion has only resulted in two other buildings of any significance being erected. The Maths/Computing Block and the David Bartram Building are, in themselves, 'stand-alone' buildings which do not physically connect to the main building. The other buildings are either small independent buildings or 'temporary' mobile classrooms which together mean that there are fourteen 'buildings' which require safe access for staff and students.

Many of these independent buildings have their own heating and lighting sources. In severe weather conditions, particularly when ice is on the ground, there is thus a considerable management problem and safety risk to run a secondary school timetable as students and staff will move every hour around the site. Clearly, this is a different situation to the Attleborough Infants and Junior schools where students, once they are in the school building, normally remain with their class teacher for the rest of the day without being expected to have to move around the site. There may well be occasions therefore where the Academy has to close whereas the Infants and Juniors can stay open due to the different operational needs.

## **3. CLOSURE BEFORE THE START OF THE ACADEMY DAY**

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- 3.1 The decision to close the Academy will normally rest with the Principal or in their absence, the Deputy Principal in consultation with the Site Team and will be confirmed with the Chair of the Local Governing Body or, if they are unavailable, the Vice Chair of the Local Governing Body.

The decision shall be made where possible before 07.00 and on the basis of information received from:

- The media about the weather, condition of the roads and paths and public transport.
- On the spot observation, either personally or from staff members (e.g. the Site Team) better placed to make such observations.
- Through appropriate external agencies such as the Met Office.

3.2 Factors involved in reaching the decision to close the Academy are likely to be:

- Safety of the site (significant hazards, ice, snow, flooding etc).
- Access to the Academy i.e. road conditions (obstructions, snow, ice, flooding etc).
- Breakdown of the Academy essential services (heating, electrical services, water, storm damage etc).
- Specific advice received from the Local Authority, Police etc.

3.3 The Principal will advise staff and the Local Governing Body through the GroupCall system and the Academy email. The Principal will also send a GroupCall message to parents and carers.

3.4 Parents, carers and students are also recommended to check the Academy website [www.aan.norfolk.sch.uk](http://www.aan.norfolk.sch.uk) where further information specific to the Academy will be made available. The Norfolk County Council School Closure website [www.schoolclosures.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.schoolclosures.norfolk.gov.uk) also publishes a list of school closures. Parents, carers and students can also listen to the local radio stations listed below:

- BBC Radio Norfolk 95.1 – 95.6 MHz
- Heart Radio 102.4 MHz
- Radio Norwich 99.9 MHz

#### **4. LATE OPENING AND PARTIAL CLOSURE**

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

##### **Late Opening**

In cases where safe travel to the Academy or site clearance are the main difficulties, consideration will be given to the late opening of the Academy. Whilst it is understood that this may cause initial difficulties for parents/carers, a late opening option aligns with our aim to make all reasonable efforts to keep the Academy opening.

The two scenarios for late opening are:

**Late Opening 1:** The start of the day will be collapsed, form time will not take place and Period 1 will not be taught. The Academy day will thus start at 10.00. Students should aim to be in the Academy at 09.55 and as they arrive, they should make their way to the following buildings where they will be supervised until their Period 2 teaching staff arrive:

Year 7, 8 and 9: collect in the Sports Hall  
Year 10: collect in the Gym  
Year 11: collect in the Main Hall  
Sixth Form: collect in the Dining Hall

**Late Opening 2:** The start of the day will be collapsed, Form time will not happen and Period 1 and Period 2 will not be taught. The Academy day will thus start at 11.30 and as students arrive, they should make their way to same buildings as 'Late Opening 1' (above) where they will be supervised until their Period 3 teaching staff arrive

The Academy will not open any later than 11.30. Students who travel by bus will be dependent on whether the bus companies can accommodate the times of late opening

### **Partial Closure**

In cases where it is likely that there will not be enough teaching staff present to effectively provide a full curriculum to all year groups, curriculum delivery will be prioritised to examination year groups and we will endeavour to stay open for year groups in the priority of:

- a) **Year 11 and Year 13**
- b) **Year 10 and Year 12**
- c) **Year 9**
- d) **Year 8**
- e) **Year 7**

In this case, it may be necessary to partially close the Academy to specific year groups. Students who travel by bus will be dependent on whether the bus companies are running. The decision and communication process will be as described in Section 3 above.

## **5. DURING THE ACADEMY DAY CLOSURE GUIDANCE**

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- 5.1 On occasions, it may be necessary for the Academy to close during the Academy day i.e. if the weather is deteriorating and there is doubt as to whether students and staff can return home safely.

In such cases, the Academy will ensure that:

- The Academy uses the GroupCall service to parents and carers, advises local radio and uses the Academy website to inform of early closure and the time of the closure.
- Bus companies are contacted and where possible, students use their usual bus service to take them home.
- Students who cannot contact their parents or carers remain at the Academy and are supervised until either collected or until parents or carers contact the Academy with alternative arrangements.

## **6. STAFF ATTENDANCE**

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- 6.1 Although it is recognised that severe weather conditions make it difficult for some staff to get to and from work, the expectation is that staff will present themselves for work unless advised to the contrary by the Principal.
- 6.2 In the case of the Academy's closure for severe weather conditions, staff will be expected to get to the Academy for 10.00 unless otherwise directed by the Principal. This will normally be by the Academy closure message specifically stating that the Academy is closed to students **and** staff.
- 6.3 The Principal, with the Leadership Team, will assess whether there are sufficient staff present in the Academy for:
- The Academy to be opened/remain open safely
  - Curriculum delivery to priority groups (in order of priority Year 11 and Year 13, Year 10 and Year 12, Year 9, Year 8, Year 7).

## **7. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES**

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- 7.1 It is reasonable to assume that snow and ice are hazards that staff have met before and are capable of dealing with, even more so if the Academy is open to staff only.
- 7.2 Responsibilities of all staff when open in inclement weather:
- To 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.
  - To 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' 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 Academy Office who will inform the site staff to enable them to position wet floor signs/mop up any excess water/re-apply salt grit/other materials.
  - Communicate to students the need to wear appropriate footwear in snow and ice and to exercise caution when moving around site.

## **8. CLEARANCE OF SNOW**

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- 8.1 Within the Academy site, the Academy is responsible for snow clearance and the clearing of approach paths is the specific task of the Site Team. When severe weather is forecast, the Site Team will 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 students' safety being at risk, for instance if they are let out at break time and the playground area is unsafe, the Academy has a responsibility in inclement weather to keep the students indoors.

## **9. PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS**

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- 9.1 In the event that there is an Academy closure due to extreme weather during a Public Examination period, the exam session will go ahead if there are sufficient members of staff/invigilators present in the Academy so that the exam conditions comply with the regulations of the examination boards. If the Academy has suffered power or heating failure and/or the conditions are such that to attempt to get into the Academy would be dangerous for both students and staff, the exam session will not go ahead and the Academy will contact the appropriate examination board.
- 9.2 It must be recognised that holding a Public Examination is normally of less risk due to the fact that candidates are housed in one hall for the length of the examination and then dismissed to go home. Candidates do not traverse the site and thus, as long as they are able to get to the Academy safely, the examination hall is not affected and there is enough supervision, examinations can go ahead.
- 9.3 The Academy will endeavour to contact all affected students in the event of cancellation of a Public Examination. The Academy website will be maintained with emergency closure details and any alternative examination arrangements.
- 9.4 Any students who are unable to attend an exam session due to adverse weather conditions must contact the Academy at the earliest opportunity to inform them of the absence.

## **10. IN THE EVENT OF THE ACADEMY BEING CLOSED**

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- 10.1 If the Academy is closed, it is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure that the following events happen:
- The decision is ratified with the Chair or Vice Chair of the Local Governing Body;
  - The Norfolk County Council school closure system is updated;
  - The Academy website is updated;
  - The GroupCall message system is activated;
  - The information is passed to relevant media agencies as soon as possible;
  - The Site Team endeavour to clear the site or remedy the cause of the closure;
  - The Principal is kept updated during the day of the condition of the site and the likely consequences for the next Academy day.

10.2 These tasks do not all have to be completed by the Principal although the Principal has overall responsibility for ensuring each has been carried out.

10.3 The decision for the Academy to remain closed will be reviewed by the Principal on a daily basis and agreed and communicated as in Section 3.

## **APPENDIX 1: MAKING THE SITE SAFE**

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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 Academy grounds.

### **Clearance of the Site**

- During severe weather, site staff will suspend their other duties and priority will be given to clearing snow and ice.
- All 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 site (e.g. steep pathways, playgrounds, etc.) to avoid risks to staff, students or visitors. An assessment of the situation will be made by the Site Team.
- 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 06.00 or earlier by arrangement.
- In extreme conditions, the Site Team will investigate the snow clearing services of local contractors.
- The gritting of roads and pavements outside the site are dealt with separately by the Highways Department.

### **Order of Priority for Site Clearance**

The site will be cleared/gritted in the order of priority shown on Appendix 2.

# APPENDIX 2: ACADEMY SITE MAP – SNOW CLEARANCE PLAN

