

## Extreme Weather Policy

**Date reviewed by the Safeguarding Committee: October 2017**

**Date of next review: October 2020**

At Handcross School, every child is special

### **Aims for the School**

- To make all children and staff feel safe, happy, respected, cared for and have a sense of belonging. To create a trusting atmosphere in which the spiritual life and personal qualities of the children will flourish and their growing confidence and independence nurtured.
- For there to be high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge **every** child to learn in every aspect of a broad curriculum. For the children to learn how to think independently, develop their imaginations and have fun. For every day to be used to the full.
- To have good working relationships between all who work in the school and a strong partnership with the parents, other schools and the community.
- To create an in/outdoor environment which is attractive, lively, stimulating, informative and which supports the children's learning.
- For the learning to be based on our knowledge of *how* children learn, the preferences and interests expressed by the children themselves and from stimuli within the locality.
- For exciting and memorable lessons to be well planned and resourced, with plenty of rich, satisfying, enjoyable, multi-sensory experiences, and for lessons to be suitably differentiated to meet every individual need.
- For the good and relevant use of IT to be fully exploited.
- To set short, medium and long-term goals which challenge and stretch each individual, and for progress to be carefully tracked.
- For teachers to accurately assess individuals at every stage of the learning so that the resulting interventions have a *direct impact on the children's learning*.
- For the children to be able to talk about their progress towards their targets, and for their achievements to be celebrated.
- For the children to be prepared to lead a life within a diverse and constantly changing society, in which they will respect British values, adopt a healthy lifestyle, achieve economic well-being, and make a positive contribution.

September 2017

**This policy provides guidance to parents and staff on the procedure and action the school will take in the case of extreme weather conditions.**

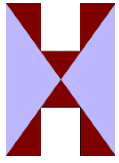
### **Cold Weather Plan**

**We will always do everything we can to remain open during snowy weather.** The safety and well being of our children and staff are of utmost importance to us and any decision to close the school will be taken after we have considered the following:

Are there enough staff members to be able to provide a safe educational environment? Does the school have heating to the legally required temperature, lighting and hot water across the whole site? We will also take account of local and national weather forecasts and may base our decision to close (or to remain closed during a prolonged snowy spell) on these.

### **Snowfall overnight**

If there is a heavy snowfall overnight, we will need to decide whether it is safe to open the school. We will do everything possible to make our decision as early as possible. If we decide not to open, we will immediately contact our parents using the Teachers2Parents text messaging service. The Headteacher will make the decision based on telephone information from Class Teachers and liaise with other NEARS Headteachers. The Headteacher will then instruct the Office staff to notify the Local Authority who will confirm this information on the WSCC Website [www.westsussex.gov.uk](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk) We will also put a message on the school website [www.handcross.w-sussex.sch.uk](http://www.handcross.w-sussex.sch.uk) . However, if snow is affecting the whole of the UK and many other schools are closed this can cause a delay on the internet network.



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## **Snowfall during the school day**

If there is heavy snowfall during the school day and it is necessary to close the school early we will contact parents by text and email to request that they collect their children. Older pupils will not be allowed to walk home on their own unless we have received permission from parents and confirmation that somebody will be at home to receive them.

## **Grounds safety in snow**

In the event of heavy snowfall, we will try to ensure a clear pathway into the school. We understand the enjoyment that snow brings and believe that children should have the opportunity to play outside during snowy conditions as long as safety guidelines are followed. A decision will be made once a risk assessment of the playground has been made. Please ensure that children are dressed warmly with wellington boots, gloves, hats and scarves.

We will endeavour to make cleared pathways from the gate by the layby to the school entrance with the use of grit/salt. On icy, snowy days, the Headteacher and Senior Management team will continually risk assess the use of the site until the hazard has gone, e.g. use of playground.

## **Heatwave Plan**

### **Met Office Heat-Health Watch**

The Met Office, in association with the Department of Health operates a Heat-Health Watch system in England and Wales from 1st June to 15th September each year.

There are four alert levels:

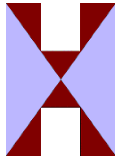
- Level 1 - Summer preparedness and long-term planning  
This is the minimum state of vigilance during the summer.
- Level 2 - Alert and readiness  
Triggered as soon as threshold temperatures are forecast for at least two to three days ahead or forecast that there is a 60 per cent chance of temperatures being high enough (31°C daytime and 16°C at night for the south east) on at least two consecutive days to have significant effects on health. This is an important stage at which to act and reduce harm from a potential heatwave.
- Level 3 - Heatwave action  
Triggered when the Met Office confirms threshold temperatures have been reached for one day and the following night. The forecast will include the likely duration and temperatures of the heatwave.
- Level 4 - Emergency  
Reached when a heatwave is so severe and/or prolonged that its effects extend outside the health and social care system. At this level, illness and death may occur among the fit and healthy, and not just in high-risk groups.

### **Notification**

WSCC will notify schools by email when the Met Office issues a Level 2 Alert.

### **Impact**

High temperatures affect people of all age groups and climate change is likely to lead to an increase in heatwaves throughout the UK. Temperatures both outdoors and indoors may rise to such an extent that precautions to prevent children suffering from heat stress or heat exhaustion may need to be taken.



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Higher temperatures can also affect children's ability to learn. In hotter temperatures, we will see:

- Adverse effects on reading and maths skills
- Reduced reading speeds
- Reduced performance on complex tests

## **Which children are likely to be most affected by high temperatures?**

Children's susceptibility to high temperatures varies; those who are overweight or who are taking medication may be at increased risk of adverse effects. Children under four years of age are also at increased risk.

Some children with disabilities or complex health needs may be more susceptible to temperature extremes. Contact the school nurse, community health practitioner, family health visitor or the child's specialist health professional for advice on the particular needs of the individual child. Schools need to provide for children's individual needs. Support staff should be made aware of the risks and how to manage them.

## **Actions to take if heat stress or heat exhaustion is suspected**

Teachers, teaching assistants and school office should look out for signs of heat stress and heat exhaustion.

### **Heat stress**

Children suffering from heat stress will show general signs of discomfort (including those listed below for heat exhaustion). These signs will worsen with physical activity or if left untreated and can lead to heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

### **Heat exhaustion**

Signs of heat exhaustion include the following.

- Irritability
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Nausea
- Hot, red and dry skin.

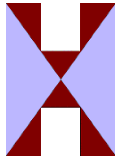
### **Heatstroke**

Sweating is an essential means of cooling and once this stops a child is at serious risk of developing heatstroke. Heatstroke can develop if heat exhaustion or heat stress is left untreated, but it can also occur suddenly and without warning.

The following steps to reduce body temperature should be taken at once.

- Move the child to as cool a room as possible.
- Sponge the child with cool, (not cold) water and, if available, place cold packs around the neck and in the armpits.
- Place the child near a fan.

If a child shows signs of confusion, follow the steps above. If a child loses consciousness, place the child in the recovery position and follow the steps above. In both cases, call 999 or 112 for emergency medical assistance.



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## **Response actions**

If sensible precautions are taken children are unlikely to be adversely affected by hot conditions.

## **Communication and provision of information**

During a heatwave the school will communicate with staff, students, parents / carers via the Parentmail system.

## **Outdoors**

- On very hot days (i.e. where temperatures are in excess of 30°C) children should not take part in vigorous physical activity.
- Children playing outdoors should be encouraged to stay in the shade as much as possible.
- Loose, light-coloured clothing should be worn to help children keep cool and hats of a closed construction with wide brims should be worn to avoid sunburn.
- Thin clothing or sun cream should be used to protect skin if children are playing or taking lessons outdoors for more than 20 minutes.
- Children must be provided with plenty of cool water (the temperature of water supplied from the cold tap is adequate) and encouraged to drink more than usual when conditions are hot.

## **Indoors**

Measures to avoid the temperature of the classrooms and other teaching spaces becoming unnecessarily hot are as follows.

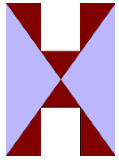
- Windows and other ventilation openings should be opened during the cool of early morning or preferably overnight to allow stored heat to escape from the building. It is important to check insurance conditions and the need for security if windows are to be left open overnight.
- Windows and other ventilation openings should not be closed, but their openings reduced when the outdoor air becomes warmer than the air indoors. This should help keep rooms cool whilst allowing adequate ventilation.
- Use indoor blinds, but do not let solar shading devices block ventilation openings or windows.
- Keep the use of electric lighting to a minimum during heatwaves.
- All electrical equipment, including computers, monitors and printers should be switched off when not in use and should not be left in 'standby mode'. Electrical equipment, when left on, or in 'standby' mode generates heat.
- Air conditioned rooms can be regulated.

## **Maintaining children's health during hot weather conditions**

- Encourage children to eat normally.
- Encourage children to drink plenty of cool water on hot days.

*Other actions that can be taken include the following:*

- If possible, rearrange school start and finish times to avoid teaching during very hot conditions.
- Use classrooms or other spaces which are less likely to overheat in preference to others, and adjust the layout of teaching spaces to avoid direct sunlight on children.
- Oscillating mechanical fans can be used to increase air movement if necessary.



# H A N D C R O S S P R I M A R Y S C H O O L

## **Appendix 1: Closing your school due to extreme weather**

This section describes the policy and associated arrangements related to closing the school due to extreme weather conditions, both before the start of the school day and during the school day.

Schools are expected to remain open in all but the most extreme circumstances. Closing at short notice may cause difficulties for families if they need to make arrangements for children to be cared for during the school day. Any children at the school should remain there until the head teacher is satisfied that appropriate alternative arrangements have been made.

Head teachers are best able to judge the severity of the journeys faced by both children and staff but should always consider safety in arriving at a decision. When to take the decision to close the school is important; it must balance the benefits of an early decision (avoiding unnecessary journeys and providing parents with enough time to arrange childcare) against the drawbacks (finding that the situation is not as bad as initially feared).

Monitoring information about travelling conditions from the emergency services and weather warnings from the Met Office

The Headteacher and Office Staff will keep up to date with any adverse weather conditions by checking the BBC weather website and also the Met Office website.

### **Keeping the school open with fewer staff present than usual**

In the event of a closure, staff with the furthest distance to travel home will leave in the first instance. A senior member of staff will stay present at school until all the children and staff have left the building and are on their way home.

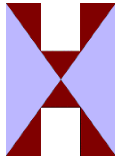
### **Resources available to prevent the school closure, mitigate the effects of the weather or reduce risk**

Grit supplies are monitored by the Business Manager and Office Staff and are topped up as required. Fuel supplies are also monitored by Office Staff and any top up is ordered well in advance.

Publicising the school closure to relevant parties

In the event of a decision being taken to close a school because of deteriorating weather, the school will contact:

- The media (e.g. local radio)
- West Sussex County Council Contact Centre on 0845 075 1007  
(Note: WSCC will alert schools of the Emergency School Closure Dedicated Telephone Number, and when to use it, should one be set up at any time)
- Office staff will notify Parents / guardians / staff via the Teachers 2 Parents text/email system.



## **H A N D C R O S S   P R I M A R Y   S C H O O L**

The school will also arrange for a recorded message on the school telephone giving information on the closure for parents/guardians

### **Emergency arrangements in case children / staff are stranded at the school**

The Headteacher or Senior member of staff will stay at the school until all other children and staff have left the building

The lead teacher will decide whether the school can remain open with the reduced number of staff. If it remains open, staff will be deployed across the classes as appropriate.