

Our Ref: PM/2022-11-05 Severe Weather Contacts
Date: November 2022
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TO: ALL HEADTEACHERS

Dear Colleagues

Advice for Schools on Coping with Severe Weather

I am sure that you have already been considering your school procedures in relation to severe weather and the impact it may have on the school. We can never be sure what the winter weather may have in store for us so please read this letter carefully and if you do need to close your school due to severe weather you will know how to contact us and when.

The main thrust of advice is that schools should plan to remain open in all but the most exceptional circumstances. However, if it is necessary to close or partially close your school the following process should be followed.

We made some changes last year using an online form for schools to complete to communicate information to us about school closures. We hope that this worked well and intend to continue using this. Any feedback is always appreciated on how we might improve this process.

Headteachers are in the best position to consider local circumstances and specific issues relating to the school, it is the decision of the headteacher whether to close the school, colleagues at Suffolk County Council are not able to advise on this.

As soon as the decision has been made, please complete the online form linked [here](#). The form will feed through to our team of contacts who will pick this up and add the information provided to the school closures website (<http://schoolclosures.suffolk.gov.uk>)

We would advise that the decision is made on the day, but we are aware that a decision the previous evening can assist with early messaging to parents and the setting up of remote learning if appropriate. However, if the online form is completed in the evening following that decision, the information will not be added to the closure website until the following morning.

We ask that you complete a new form for each day of closure and also submit a form if circumstances change throughout each day.

Local press and radio stations will then use the website to broadcast information to the public. Schools are asked not to contact radio stations directly as this can block telephone lines and causes confusion.

Staff and parents should be advised to listen to local radio stations and consult the website for updated information. However, it is important to remember that these procedures may not provide communication to all and that you should develop a local system of communicating information to staff and to parents who arrive at school despite these announcements. I know that several of you already do this very effectively.

For information, the website lists schools alphabetically by school phase, not area, unless a specific town is selected on the front page.

Enclosed with this advice are contact details that can be used if you need to advise us directly due to issues with the online form. These replace the previous geographical based contacts list so please update your information and only use these contacts on the morning of the school closure.

These procedures have been designed to deal with situations where we have a significant number of schools to close and phone lines may get busy in that peak period so please be patient while we deal with all enquiries and information passed to us.

General Procedures for Emergency School Closures

- Make an early decision – suggested between 6.00am and 7.00am.
- Complete the online [form](#) to provide the relevant information to us.
- Contact one of the named colleagues below if you have any problems with the form. They will expect your calls from 6.00am.
- Use local arrangements to back up these procedures with parents and carers.

Please note that these arrangements are only in regard to severe weather, for 'one off' closures due to property and maintenance issues please liaise with your relevant property contacts and inform the radio stations directly.

Yours faithfully



Pete Mumford
Head of Schools Infrastructure
Directorate for Children and Young People's Services

Contact details if you are having issues with the online form or need to update us about something further.

Pete Mumford	07872 415 274
Kelly Smith	07713 093 133
Gavin Turner	07912 999 288

Please ensure that you have a copy of these contacts available in school and at home so that you can refer to them as necessary.