Chuckery Primary School

Winter Weather Guidance Policy
2019 – 2020
(Updated September 2017)
Are you ready for winter?

Walsall Council Risk and Insurance Services key recommendations highlight the ways in which property managers can minimise the risk of damage occurring to their property through simple and practical steps such as carrying out regular inspections and ensuring heating systems are kept warm to avoid freezing.

Specific recommended precautions include:

Heating systems, particularly boilers, should be inspected and maintained under a full maintenance contract.

- Frost thermostats should be fitted to ensure that boilers and heating systems automatically come on in cold periods.

- Heating systems should be left on to ensure the ambient temperature of the building is high enough to prevent the possibility of water pipes freezing.

- Inspections should be made to ensure that pipes and water tanks are adequately lagged. Particular attention should be given to roof spaces and areas where pipe work could be exposed to low temperatures.

- Roof spaces should be inspected to ensure insulation materials are in good condition and correctly installed.

- All water pipes, tanks and heating systems in unoccupied buildings should be drained and water supplies disconnected. Regular inspections should also be made to ensure the buildings are in good order.

- Any external water taps should be protected with insulation to protect them from frost.

- Ensure plans of the building, which highlight the location of stopcocks, are available so water can be quickly turned off in an emergency.

- Implement maintenance contracts to ensure that gutters are cleared of fallen leaves and debris. This will reduce the risk of blockages and subsequent overflowing of water into the building.

- Roofs, ridge tiles and chimneys should be inspected to ensure they are in a good state of repair to withstand the rain, snow and high winds of winter.

Many claims relating to property damage caused by the weather can be prevented. For property managers, following simple risk management procedures is a far more cost effective way of dealing with a problem than paying for claims.

While freezing weather is almost certain to be the cause of some major losses this winter, in most cases only minor damage will occur. However these minor damages interrupt the running of businesses/schools costing the council time and money. Risk and Insurance Services latest
risk management advice will mean that many of these unnecessary claims and inconveniences can be avoided.

**Freezing and Bursting Water Pipes**

Premises are most at risk of loss during weekends or holiday shut downs. Sustained cold weather and lack of heating over night may be sufficient for pipes to freeze. We recommend you take the following precautions:

Make sure you know the location of your main water stopcock. Ensure that it is easily accessible and that you can turn it off.

- Check the condition of water pipes. If any appear corroded or fixings are damaged, engage a competent plumber to effect repairs.
- Repair any dripping taps or any other minor leaks.
- Check overflow pipes are not dripping. Also ensure they are not obstructed and discharge into an area where they will not cause damage (not onto floor).
- Fully lag all pipes and tanks in the loft space or other areas which could be liable to freezing. Whilst the top and sides of tanks should be covered with insulation the underside should not be lagged.
- Check lofts for the presence of pipes as these can be concealed in roof spaces.
- Maintain adequate heating in buildings. Premises should be heated 24 hours a day or the heating should be operated on a frost stat to maintain a minimum temperature of 5 degrees C.
- If heating cannot be provided turn off the water at the main stopcock. Also ensure that processes requiring water are also shut down.
- Avoid installing equipment or storing stock that is susceptible to water damage below tanks or pipes.
- Wherever possible keep stock at least 15cm off the floor.
- Turn off the water supply to machines supplied by flexible hoses.
- Should cold weather occur, make regular checks on the premises over weekends or holidays.
- If a water pipe should freeze use a hair dryer, hot water jacket or similar to thaw (NOT A BLOW LAMP OR HEAT GUN)
- Open the tap closest to the frozen part of the pipe. Begin thawing by working from the tap side of the frozen area, working back towards the header tank.
If a pipe should burst

- Turn off the water at the main stopcock.
- Switch off the heating or any other water heating installations to avoid further damage or even an explosion.
- Open all taps to drain down the system.
- Contact Risk and Insurance Services (01922 653791) to deal with any claim and provide professional service provider information.
- Call in the Clerk of Works to assist in dealing with repairs.

STORM – Building Maintenance

- Check the roof condition and have damaged tiles, slates, ridge tiles or other claddings replaced.
- Check the condition of flat roofs.
- Check roof lights for cracks and breakages.
- Check the condition of brickwork and cement pointing, particularly to chimneys and lintels.
- Clean gutters and valley gutters.
- Check that down pipes are clear.
- Check drains are not blocked.

Holidays and Weekends

- Ensure heating is operating on a frost stat or water systems are turned off if cold weather is forecast.
- If extreme cold weather occurs make regular checks on the premises
- In the event of damage occurring advise Risk and Insurance Services immediately.
- Carry out temporary repairs necessary to prevent further damage.

Winter Weather – Gritting, Claims & Liability

As the temperatures plummet many people will be reminded of the widespread snow and ice that has been a feature of UK winters in recent years. News stories about transport disruptions and school closures at this time of year are nothing new but in recent years they have been accompanied by articles examining local authorities’ gritting policies and the potential liabilities associated with slips, trips and skids on icy surfaces.

Highways

S.41(1A) of the Highways Act requires Highways Authorities to ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow and ice. What is reasonably practicable will depend on circumstances – it is not expected that every road will be gritted – but Authorities should put in place a Winter Maintenance Plan compliant with the UK Roads Liaison Group’s Well Maintained Highways: Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management. Implementing an appropriate plan and executing it should allow our Authority to successfully defend any claims made against it.
Schools, Paths, Car Parks and Open Spaces
Under the Occupiers Liability Acts of 1957 and 1984 occupiers must take reasonable steps to ensure that visitors and trespassers are reasonably safe when on the premises. In respect of winter maintenance, the premises in question will usually be external spaces such as paths, car parks and open spaces. Complying with the duty of care imposed by the Acts may require gritting but other actions may be appropriate such as clearing snow, erecting signs warning of ice or even fencing off areas that are deemed to be hazardous. Local authorities cannot grit all of their car parks at the same time, therefore which ones are gritted first needs to be guided by risk assessments. Risk assessments should be carried out to determine the correct approach and these will take account of factors such as:

• The conditions present – how treacherous are the premises?
• Expected footfall/use of the premises – how many people will be exposed to the risk?
• Who will be exposed to the risk – is an icy path likely to be used by vulnerable people such as children or the elderly?
• How crucial is access to the premises – would it be better to close off and deny access to an icy car park?

Adverse Weather Procedures
• In rare cases of extreme weather conditions the Head teacher, in consultation with the Chair of Governors, may decide to close the school to the children
• Local radio stations will be asked to broadcast this information
• Staff and parents will receive a text message from the school text messaging service informing them of the closure. For this reason it is essential that any changes in mobile phone numbers are given to the office staff
• Notices will be published on twitter (@chuckeryprimary), Facebook (Chuckery Primary School Official) and on the school website

Caretaker Instructions from school
If the pathways are going to be snow covered then both caretakers should come into school for the early shift (6.30am) and proceed to clear the main pathways using the equipment provided – these are: all of the entrance points that lead in to school, canteen and extended school buildings. The caretaker’s shift patterns will then be adjusted accordingly to ensure appropriate resting time. If the caretakers cannot get in to school for 6.30am then they will contact the Head teacher no later than 6.30am. The Head teacher will make a decision as to whether school will be closed or whether a later opening time can be agreed.

If ice is forecast then the afternoon caretaker should grit the pathways accordingly before the end of the day and the morning caretaker should grit as soon as arriving on site if necessary.

Before the Snow and Ice Comes:
• You know your area, you know the danger spots. Go around before the bad weather hits.
• Check for piles of leaves on slopes or paths. Clear them before the frost and snow arrive. Leaves can be as slippery as snow and ice all by themselves.
• Check that all machinery and equipment is fully serviced and working correctly
• Ensure that there is a good supply of grit/ice melt in stock and that it is easily accessible from all parts of the school grounds
• Check that you have the correct suitable clothing, footwear and PPE in school.
Staff Instructions from school
The decision to close the school either before or during the school day will be made by the Head Teacher.

The school will only be closed if one or more of the following conditions apply:
- A sufficient number of staff are unable to come in to keep the school running safely.
- Conditions on site are dangerous
- Conditions are considered to be or are anticipated to later become too hazardous for travel.

If staff cannot get in to school for their normal start time then they will contact the Head teacher no later than 7.30am.

Before the Snow and Ice Comes:
- You know your area, you know the danger spots.
- Check that you have the correct suitable clothing, footwear and PPE in school.
- Allow extra time for your journey to school.

Parents instructions from school
It is the policy of the school to make every effort to remain open whenever possible as long as it is safe to do so.

The decision to close the school either before or during the school day will be made by the Head Teacher.

The school will only be closed if one or more of the following conditions apply:
- A sufficient number of staff are unable to come in to keep the school running safely.
- Conditions on site are dangerous
- Conditions are considered to be or are anticipated to later become too hazardous for travel.

If the school is to close, we will let parents know the school is closed by 8am at the latest. This will be done by:
- Sending a text message to all parents (please make sure the office have your current mobile phone number!)
- Posting a message on the school website http://www.chuckeryprimary.com
- Posting a message on our official Facebook page - Chuckery Primary School Official.
- Posting a tweet on our official school Twitter page - @chuckeryprimary
- Announcing it on Free Radio and posting it on their website.

Please note – if there is no announcement then school is open, please do not ring the school.

If you require any further advice on issues raised in this document please do not hesitate to contact Neil Skeldon in Risk and Insurance Services on 01922 653791 or via email skeldonn@walsall.gov.uk or in writing to Walsall Council Risk and Insurance Services PO Box 23 The Council House WALSALL WS1 1TW.
Signed

Print: Mr James Pearce
Date: 8th July 2019
Headteacher

Print: Mr. Neil Ravenscroft
Date: 8th July 2019
Chair of Governors

Document control number: CPS063-04