

St Luke's CE Academy

Winter Weather/Snow Clearance Procedure

This document details the Academy's procedure for dealing with ice, snow and other adverse and/or prolonged winter weather conditions.

AIM OF THIS PROCEDURE

The aim of any procedure is to provide, as far as is reasonably practicable, safe access for staff, pupils/students, members of the public and vehicles (including emergency vehicles).

Procedures may involve gritting, snow clearing and the closure of some access routes. All reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that the Academy remains open as normal.

The Metrological Office has a warning system that issues alerts if adverse weather is likely, such as cold weather alerts. Operational Office Manager and Site Technician monitor local weather forecasts and communicates this to Headteacher to ensure that gritting/closure can be appropriately planned.

Government advice on extreme cold

Cold weather plan (CWP) for England is available from Public Health England:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/cold-weather-plan-for-england>

It includes the following documents:

Cold weather plan (CWP) for England
Cold weather plan: action cards for cold weather alert service
'Keep Warm Keep Well' leaflet

During the winter period the following procedures will apply to minimise the risks associated with adverse weather conditions such as snow and ice.

PLANS FOR CLEARANCE OF SNOW AND ICE

Gritting will be carried out by our Site Technician when frost, ice or snow is forecast or when walkways are likely to be damp or wet and the ground temperatures are at, or below freezing. Site Technician will follow safe systems of work for gritting, by adhering to relevant risk assessments.

Rock salt or grit will be **applied as soon as practicable**. For gritting requirements of a weekday morning, Site Technician open the academy as soon as possible and therefore salt and gritting works will be provided shortly after this time. Gritting bins are placed on the car park for ease of gritting pathways.

Salt can stop ice forming and cause existing ice or snow to melt. It is most effective when it is ground down, however this will take longer on pedestrian areas than on roads. Gritting should be carried out when frost, ice or snow is forecast or when walkways are likely to be damp or wet and the ground temperatures are at, or below freezing.

The best times are early in evening before the frost settles and/or early in the morning before employees and pupils/students arrive. Please note that salt doesn't work instantly; it needs sufficient time to dissolve into the moisture on the floor, therefore users of access routes to the premises should exercise plenty of care and ensure they are wearing suitable footwear for walking across surfaces which are possibly icy.

If a thaw is expected, clearance work will be done only in key areas such as steps and heavily used traffic areas. Salt/grit will be re-applied if it is expected to refreeze.

Priority areas for snow clearance or gritting will be site specific, but important elements may include:

- Clearing a path 1 metre wide from the site pedestrian entrance to the main building entrance.
- Pathways leading from car parks to the building.
- Treating cleared paths with salt/grit to maintain a clear pathway especially where temperatures remain below freezing.
- Slopes and steps should be regarded as a priority.
- Site vehicle entrances should be cleared and gritted as required.
- As time permits, other pathways to entrances and between buildings should be cleared and gritted.
- Car parks may be considered for clearing or gritting dependent upon site specific risk assessment.
- Where grounds contain accessible bodies of water that may become frozen, the management of this will form part of a risk assessment.

PATHS, DOORS AND ACCESS ROUTES

The priority will remain to clear pedestrian entrances and pathways, with a particular focus on steps and sloping areas. Pathways will be cleared to a width of at least one metre - rock salt and/or grit will be applied. As time permits, other pathways to entrances buildings will be cleared and gritted.

CAR PARKS

Car parks **will not be totally cleared**, however; a path will be cleared and treated with salt/grit for vehicles to gain access to the car park. Pathways leading from car parks to building entrances will be cleared and treated with salt/grit to maintain a clear pathway.

Vehicle-only entrances and roads will be the lowest priority for clearance unless they have steep slopes where cars are at risk of sliding or getting stuck.

OUTSIDE AREAS – BREAK TIMES

Where outside areas remain excessively slippery due to compacted snow and ice, it may be necessary for the areas to remain out of bounds. A decision will be made by Headteacher and communicated to all staff and students/pupils.

Where there are concerns over the safety of certain external pathways, circulation routes, playgrounds etc., it may be appropriate for affected areas to be taken out of use, to carry out snow clearance, increase gritting etc. If there is a requirement to prevent access to paths, slopes, steps or other areas then this must be marked clearly using signs/cones/tape to ensure everyone is made aware. (If academy playgrounds remain in use, supervision levels may need to be increased/dynamic risk assessments undertaken).

COMMUNICATION

Winter weather procedures, including local site plans for gritting, snow clearance and other winter weather issues should be communicated to **all staff**. This must include staff who will take responsibility for carrying out procedures such as gritting, snow clearance (etc.) and all other staff who may be affected by the winter weather conditions. We communicate our winter weather procedure in the weekly staff meeting in the autumn term.

LONG TERM SEVERE WEATHER

In the event of prolonged periods of severe weather and stocks of grit/rock salt diminishing, the above areas listed will be reviewed in order to ensure stocks levels are maintained for high risk areas. The winter weather procedure may be reviewed accordingly for periods of extended adverse weather conditions.

The Academy's grounds maintenance provider may be called upon to support with the clearance of snow and gritting icy areas in the event of high levels of snow and ice preventing access to the premises.

The grounds maintenance team will be contacted by the Site Technician where there are requirements for gritting and/or snow clearance.

ACADEMY CLOSURE

In the event of Academy closure, staff will communicate the closure by text (School Comms) which will be sent out by the Operational Office Manager, as soon as possible on the day of the closure.

In the event that the Academy is closed for more than one day, the Operational Office Manager will again communicate this information to staff via text on each day of academy closure, as early as possible, and by 7.00am.

Arrangements must also be made to communicate closures with lettings/catering staff/cleaning staff/wraparound provision/nursery. Communication with these parties will be made by Operational Office Manager.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS AND/OR CARERS

Operational Office Manager will send text messages to parents/carers to provide notification in the event of Academy closure. Operational Office Manager will be responsible for updating the website with this information.

In the event that the Academy is closed for more than one day, Operational Office Manager will send text messages to parents/carers using SchoolComms on each day that the Academy is closed, and the website will be updated accordingly.

Communication will be made with parents/carers once it is reasonably safe to access the premises again, and a decision has been made to re-open the building. Communication will be made by text message to parents via SchoolComms. Staff will receive the message via the School Comms also.

LETTINGS AND COMMUNITY USE OF THE PREMISES

Where premises are used by organisations outside normal working hours (e.g. letting of buildings/community use) Operational Office Manager must ensure that they have provided information about snow and ice procedures and any relevant risk assessments to those using the premises.

RISK ASSESSMENTS – ADVISORY INFORMATION

Where a risk assessment is considered necessary it should consider the working arrangements which should be put in place to minimise any risks identified. Risks may be present for staff, pupils/students and members of the public.

Risk assessments for premises during winter weather should include identification of the hazards and the areas used by pedestrians or vehicles coming to the building that are most likely to be affected by ice or snow, for example: building entrances, car parks, pedestrian walkways, playgrounds, shortcuts, sloped areas and areas constantly in the shade or wet. Where premises or grounds contain accessible bodies of water that may become frozen, this should form part of the risk assessment.

A risk assessment would also identify those staff who have tasks to carry out should winter weather be forecast or occur and refer to written procedures that are in place to prevent icy surfaces forming, keep pedestrians away from slippery surfaces and treat ice.

Managers of staff who work outside during adverse weather should undertake a risk assessment of the hazards and have a plan in place to ensure that the risks are reduced as far as reasonably practicable.

In winter weather hazards may include slips, trips and falls, reduced visibility and increased difficulty associated with operation of vehicles in winter weather conditions.

Control measures during cold weather may include journey planning before travel, the provision of facilities for taking breaks in a warm environment e.g. a vehicle. Managers may develop plans to reduce the requirement for travel.

Risk assessments may identify a need to provide suitable control measures which may include Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as Hi Visibility items, winter weather clothing and suitable footwear. Academies should ensure that any equipment required as part of risk control measures is available and used.

Academies must also consider the type of work undertaken during winter weather, and the suitability of conditions for certain activities and use of some equipment.

Staff should be clear about their responsibilities during winter weather to ensure that gritting, snow clearing and, in extreme cases, closure of certain routes is carried out to the plan as necessary. It may be necessary for staff to start work earlier on a particular day to commence a gritting plan and this should be included in the communication and planning process with staff.

Fallen leaves that become wet or have started to decay can increase the risk of slipping in two ways, they hide any hazard that may be on the path or they themselves are slippery. A plan should be in place for removing leaves at regular intervals where there is a slipping hazard.

Risk management structures may include the following:

- School gritting plan in place
- Grit stocks in place
- Main entrance, slopes and steps prioritised for snow clearance and gritting
- Unsafe circulatory routes are coned off
- Additional matting in place to dry flooring in entrance areas and corridors