St. Peter's Pre-school

Severe Weather Plan

School Name: St. Peter's Pre-School		
Date of Plan: 10/02/2014	**Review of Plan/updated:** 08/10/2017, 07/10/2018, 04/11/2021, 07/09/2023, 22/06/2026	**Plan created by:** Tina Collins

Introduction:

In 2009 and 2010, schools in West Berkshire were significantly affected by severe winter weather. This severe weather plan for St. Peter's Pre-School provides guidance to minimise disruption and outlines the procedures to follow in the event of a temporary closure. Schools are expected to remain open whenever possible; however, in extreme circumstances this may not be feasible. Factors such as safe access to the site, the ability to maintain the premises, staff travel distances, unpredictable weather conditions, and general health and safety considerations will all be taken into account.

Where possible, an early decision will be made regarding any closure so that parents have sufficient time to arrange childcare and avoid unnecessary travel. If weather forecasts indicate that the pre-school is unlikely to open the following day, a decision will be made the previous evening. We recognise that closing at short notice can cause difficulties for families, and we will always aim to provide information as early as possible.

Prevention is key

As the winter and summer seasons approach, we will regularly monitor local weather forecasts. Whenever freezing temperatures or extreme heat is predicted, we will prepare accordingly. A **risk assessment** will be carried out to identify any hazards associated with snow, ice and heat on the pre-school site, and the procedures required to manage them. This assessment will be reviewed and updated regularly. Due to the pre-school's semi-rural location, the country roads used by pupils and staff may become hazardous during severe winter weather. These routes may not be treated with salt or grit, and this will be taken into consideration. If parents or staff feel they cannot travel safely, they should not attempt the journey.

Following the completion of the risk assessment, and after a discussion between the supervisor and chairman, a decision will be made regarding whether a temporary closure of the pre-school is necessary. The completed assessment will be filed, and a copy will be submitted to West Berkshire Council as evidence should justification be required for the closure.

The minimum temperature in an indoor workplace should normally be at least: 16°C

As the pre-school operates on the St. Peter's Church site, we rely on the Church Wardens to ensure that the following preparations are in place before any severe weather arrives:

- **Thermostat settings -** maintained at a minimum of ten degrees to prevent pipes from freezing
- **Heating system checks -** monitored regularly to ensure it is functioning effectively, especially when the building is unoccupied
- **Air-conditioning system checks -** monitored to ensure it is working correctly
- **Plumbing and shut-off valve testing -** carried out to prevent seizing
- **Adequate insulation -** particularly around external pipes
- **Safe access routes -** pathways and entrances maintained to meet health and safety requirements
- **Windows and doors maintained -** including the use of curtains or blinds for shade

Legislation requires that pre-schools maintain sufficient staffing levels to safely meet the needs of the children. If there is a shortfall in adult supervision, DBS-checked committee members may be asked to support staff absences. In rare circumstances, staff may need to bring their own children into pre-school in order to attend work. Situations such as these will be supported by a risk assessment, which will be attached to the severe winter weather risk assessment.

Aims:

Our aim is to keep the pre-school open and operating for as long as we are able, and for as long as it is safe to do so. We are committed to meeting all Ofsted requirements and statutory expectations set out in the EYFS, particularly in relation to staffing levels and the required adult-to-child ratios.

Our overriding principle is therefore to remain open to the greatest extent possible, provided that this is consistent with **health and safety requirements** and the wellbeing of children, families, and staff.

Consequences:

We recognise that closing the pre-school at short notice may cause difficulties for families, pupils, and staff. We understand that this can create childcare challenges, lead to loss of earnings, and have a particular impact on vulnerable pupils.

Whenever possible, a decision will be made as early as we can so that families have time to arrange childcare and avoid unnecessary travel. The decision to close the pre-school will never be taken lightly and will depend on the safety of the site, local travelling conditions, and whether appropriate staffing levels can be maintained to ensure safe supervision of the children.

Please note that we cannot direct a member of staff to drive or work in conditions they believe to be unsafe.

Triggers:

The supervisor will action this plan when a severe weather warning is issued or when freezing temperatures, snow, or extreme heat are forecast by the Met Office. It may also be activated if the supervisor believes conditions pose a health and safety risk.

The supervisor will assess conditions at the pre-school and consider the impact on staff and families, particularly those travelling from outside the immediate area. The likelihood of severe weather developing during the day will also be taken into account. A decision will be made by 8:00am on the affected day, or the evening before, if possible, on whether to activate the Severe Weather Plan, which may result in closure.

Parents should check our social media pages for the most up-to-date information. All families will also receive an email from the parent representative once a decision has been made.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Supervisor - Tina Collins** Responsible for deciding when to action the Severe Weather Plan and for informing the Chairman of the reasons for the decision.
- **Deputy - Laura Lane or Charlotte Smith** Acts on behalf of the Supervisor in their absence, with guidance from the Chairman.
- **Chairman - Alicia Cassidy** Responsible for notifying West Berkshire Council and Ofsted of any closure, restricted opening hours, or reopening arrangements for St. Peter's Pre-School.
- **Church Warden - Andrew Waters** (Joanna Etherington) Responsible for maintaining the site, including heating, entrances, and pathways, to ensure compliance with health and safety regulations. They must report any issues that could compromise safety or breach policy to the Supervisor, or to the Chairperson if the Supervisor is unavailable.

Additional Information:

Contact WBC on **01635 551111** should you have any queries or require assistance

School Closure Email Address earlyyearsservice@westberks.gov.uk

Pre-school Email Address teachers@stpeterspreschool.org.uk

Communication:

1. Supervisor contacts staff to ascertain their situation regarding travelling to the setting.

2. Supervisor contacts chairperson to report any staffing issues and agree on a decision to open, close or partially close the setting.

3. Supervisor contacts the parent rep with the decision and posts a notice on social media.

4. Parent Rep emails all parents about the decision to close or open, requesting a response to having receipt of the information.

5. Chairperson contacts West Berks and Ofsted to report a closure.

If the heating or air-conditioning system fails, the Church Warden will inform the Supervisor, and communication procedures will begin from point 2 of the plan.

Public Health guidance recommends maintaining indoor temperatures of at least 16°C, as temperatures below this increase risks for vulnerable individuals. There is no maximum indoor temperature; however, the environment must remain safe, and temperatures must be properly controlled. Excessive heat is considered a hazard and carries the same legal obligations as any other health and safety risk.

Hot Weather Protocol Policy

Joint Union Heatwave Protocol

This is a collaborative guideline developed by various education unions to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of staff and students during extreme heat events.

The protocol aims to prepare for future heatwaves, minimizing disruption to learning while protecting the well-

being of everyone in educational settings. It incorporates guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), Acas, and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) to ensure compliance wit h health and safety legislation and to address the challenges posed by climate change.

Key Recommendations

- **Weather Monitoring**: The protocol calls for schools to review weather forecasts and receive updates for weather warnings to plan accordingly. St. Peter's are signed up to the West Berkshire Council Heat Health Alert system.

- **Communication**: At times when children or staff are outdoors, ensure they have appropriate clothing and sun protection for the weather. Sun cream should ideally be applied before children get to school, which should be communicated with parents, allowing them to top it up during the school day, in line with our admission contract.

- **Reduce Heat Generation**: Limit activities that generate heat, excertion and turn off equipment when not in use to minimise heat output.

- **Access to Water**: Access to drinking water is essential in hot weather as dehydration is even more likely. Make sure to drink plenty throughout the day and remind pupils to do the same.

- **Flexible Scheduling**: Being flexible with the school day is important when it's hot. Certain events, particularly outdoor play and sports day, may not be possible as high physical exertion should be avoided to prevent heat stroke or dehydration. For events, prepare parents for the possibility of these being postponed due to weather and have contingency plans in place as well as clear communication.

- **Ventilation and Cooling**: It is important to recognise any parts of the school building that may be unusable in extreme heat and ensure these are not used if it is not possible to keep them cool. In the worst affected areas, the protocol recommends using fans or portable air conditioning units as a last resort, recognising that environmentally these are not ideal but may be necessary in some cases. Open classroom windows during cooler periods to maximise ventilation and relocate classes to cooler rooms where possible.

Conclusion

The Joint Union Heatwave Protocol serves as a vital resource for educational institutions to effectively manage the impact of heatwaves, ensuring a safe and conducive learning environment for all. By following these guidelines, schools can better prepare for extreme weather conditions and protect the health of their communities.

This document was adopted at a meeting of the Pre-school held on..... (Date)

Signed on behalf of the Pre-school: …… (Chairperson)