TOWERS SCHOOL

AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

CLOSURE DUE TO BAD WEATHER POLICY

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SLT Responsibility: R Gaygan
Approved By: Principal

THE TOWERS SCHOOL & SIXTH FORM CENTRE

Closure due to Bad Weather Policy – changes from previous versions

Audit Log		
Section of policy	**Update**	**Date**
All	Re-write	Dec 25

THE TOWERS SCHOOL & SIXTH FORM CENTRE

CLOSURE DUE TO BAD WEATHER POLICY

1. Policy Statement & Core Principle

The Towers School & Sixth Form Centre is committed to providing uninterrupted education while ensuring the **health and safety** of all students, staff, and visitors.

The school's policy is to **remain open** during periods of bad weather (typically snow or ice) unless we are forced to close because the weather presents a demonstrable and significant risk to the safety of staff and students on site or during transit.

2. Decision-Making Process

The final decision regarding school closure rests with the **Principal**.

A. Severe Weather Overnight (Before School Hours)

- **Decision Time:** The Principal will make the closure decision as early as possible, typically **before 6:30 AM**, to allow parents and staff sufficient time to prepare before commencing travel.
- **Consultation:** The Principal will consult with key personnel to assess risk, including:
    - **Premises Manager/Staff:** To assess the safety and accessibility of the school site (pathways, heating, etc.).
    - **Vice Principals/Senior Leadership Team (SLT):** To assess staffing levels and operational capacity.
- **Communication of Closure:** If the school is to close:
    - Information will be immediately **posted on the official school website** at **www.towers.kent.sch.uk**.
    - The school will notify the **local radio stations** for inclusion in their school closure broadcasts.
- **Communication to Staff:**
    - Staff will be notified of the closure directly via **phone and/or text message** from their designated line manager.
- **Default Status: Unless a closure is explicitly announced** on the school website or by local radio, the school is open, and staff and students should attend as usual.

B. Weather Deterioration During the School Day

Should the weather worsen significantly while school is in session, potentially compromising the safety of the site or the ability for students to travel home safely, the following procedure will be activated:

- **Communication to Parents/Carers:**
    - Parents/Carers will be immediately notified of the decision to close via **school official email and text message**.

    - A notice confirming the closure will be placed on the **official school website**.
    - *Note: Parents/Carers must ensure their contact details (email and mobile number) are current with the school office.*
- **Student Dismissal and Coordination:**
    - Students will be dismissed **immediately** following the decision.
    - Any student unable to safely make their way home (e.g., due to bus cancellations, remote location, or a requirement to be collected) must proceed directly to the **Large Dining Hall**.
    - Members of the **Senior Leadership Team (SLT)** will be present in the Large Dining Hall to coordinate the safe departure and supervision of these students.
- **Parental Responsibility:**
    - Parents/Carers are responsible for regularly checking the school's official communication channels for updates.
    - Parents/Carers must communicate clear, predetermined expectations with their child(ren) about **where they should go** and **who to contact** in the event of an emergency early closure.

C. Transport & Bus Services

- More than 50% of students rely on public or contracted transport.
- If bus companies decide to stop or restrict services due to weather, the school will **liaise closely** with them to determine the safest possible course of action for all students.
- The school's closure decision will prioritise the safety of all students, especially those using transport.

3. Risk Management and Site Preparedness (For Staff)

The Principal's decision is informed by an ongoing **Risk Assessment**, which is reviewed daily during periods of bad weather. Staff should be aware of the key factors considered:

A. Preparing for Snow and Ice

The school will take proactive measures to prepare for winter weather, including:

- **Salt/Grit Stocks:** Ensuring enough salt/grit/sand are available.
- **Key Area Identification:** Pre-identifying priority outdoor areas for clearing and gritting. This includes **building entrances, main pathways, sloped areas, steps/ramps**, and areas constantly in the shade or wet.
- **Facilities Maintenance:** Regular checks and maintenance of water, boiler, and heating systems, including appropriate lagging of pipes.
- **Movement Restriction:** Plans may be put in place to restrict the movement of pupils and staff around the school grounds to safer areas.

B. Key Assessment Questions (Staff Operational Guidance)

The Principal uses these questions to determine the viability of opening, adopting an approach that is grounded in common sense and proportionality:

Risk Factor	Assessment Questions
Site Accessibility	Is the school building and its immediate pedestrian routes accessible? Are key routes clearable using available salt/grit? Can slopes, steps, or ramps be made safe or restricted from use?
Staffing & Safety	Can the Principal secure enough **teaching and/or supervisory staff** to operate safely and maintain statutory supervision ratios?
Building Function	Is the school appropriately heated? Are all essential water systems working? Are there adequate fuel/resources for the day?
Operational Flexibility	If safe to do so, could the school operate as a partial opening (e.g., for specific year groups) or with restricted movement (e.g., limiting recreation time to limit ice compaction)?

4. Car Parks (Health & Safety for Staff)

- The Premises Team will make every reasonable effort to clear and grit the staff car park and bus zones to ensure safe access for **school buses** and staff.
- Staff must exercise **extreme caution** when driving or walking in the car park during bad weather.
- If staff or the public enter the car park *before* it has been officially cleared and gritted (e.g., before the altered school opening time), **they do so at their own risk**, acknowledging the inherent hazards of snow and ice.
- If snow falls during the school day, efforts will be made to grit between parked cars to facilitate safer departure by the end of teaching hours.

5. Official Communication Channels & Preventing Misinformation

The Towers School & Sixth Form Centre will ONLY use the following methods for official closure announcements:

1. **Official School Website - www.towers.kent.sch.uk**
2. **School Text Message (SMS)**
3. **School Official Email**
4. **Local Radio Broadcasts**

Crucially, the school will NOT use any social media platforms (e.g., Twitter/ X, Facebook) for closure announcements. This centralised approach ensures that all information is accurate, timely, and controlled by the school. Relying exclusively on these four official methods prevents the spread of rumours, conflicting information, and confusion that can often arise on public social media channels.

Appendix 1 : Checklists for use by staff

Premises Team Checklist (The Tower School & Sixth Form Centre)

Objective: To ensure the school site is as safe and accessible as possible for staff, students, and essential transport.

Stage	Action Required	Status	Notes / Policy Reference
Preparation (Pre-Winter)	Check and replenish stocks of salt/grit/sand.		Sufficient for foreseeable weather. (3.A)
	Pre-identify and list priority routes for clearing.		Include entrances, main pathways, slopes, steps, ramps. (3.A)
	Confirm maintenance of heating, boiler, and water systems.		Check pipe lagging is appropriate. (3.A)
Overnight Assessment (Before 6:00 AM)	Assess current weather conditions and site safety (e.g., ice on routes).		Report findings immediately to the Principal. (2.A)
	Prioritize clearing and gritting of **bus zones** and **main access routes** onto the site.		Crucial for transport safety. (4)
	Clear and grit essential pedestrian routes (entrances, steps).		Can priority areas (slopes, ramps) be restricted if unsafe? (3.B)

Ongoing Action (During Operation)	Monitor conditions and re-apply grit/salt as needed throughout the day.		Pay special attention to areas under constant shade or moisture.
	Clear and grit the **staff car park** before end-of-day teaching hours.		Ensure safe exit for staff and arrival of buses. (4)
	If closure is announced, secure all external doors and systems.		Ensure building integrity for overnight closure.

SLT / Principal Checklist (Decision & Communication)

Objective: To make a timely, risk-assessed decision and communicate clearly via official channels.

Stage	Action Required	Status	Notes / Policy Reference
Morning Decision (Before 6:30 AM)	Consult with Premises Team regarding site accessibility and safety.		(2.A)
	Consult with Vice Principals/SLT regarding anticipated staffing levels.		Can we gain enough supervisory staff to operate safely? (3.B)
	Review Key Assessment Questions (Site, Staffing, Building Function).		Determine if closure is required. (3.B)

If CLOSURE is decided:	Post official closure announcement **immediately** on the **School Website**.		(2.A / 5)
	Notify **Local Radio Stations** for broadcast.		(2.A / 5)
	SLT/Line Managers: Notify all staff via **phone/text message**.		(2.A)
	Optional: If a partial opening is possible, define which year groups/functions are permitted.		(3.B)
If Weather Deteriorates (During School Hours)	Liaise with Bus Companies regarding possible early service cessation/restrictions.		Prioritize safe travel home. (2.C)
	If EARLY CLOSURE is decided: Send immediate notification via **School Official Email** and **Text Message** to parents/carers.		(2.B / 5)
	Update the **School Website** with the early closure announcement.		(2.B / 5)
	SLT Deployment: Ensure staff are ready to supervise students in the **Large Dining Hall** who cannot travel home safely.		Coordinate safe departure. (2.B)

Appendix 2 : Letter to parents and carers (template)

Dear Parents and Carers,

With the onset of winter weather, we wish to remind all families of the official procedure for school closures due to severe conditions (usually snow or widespread ice). Our priority is the safety of all students and staff.

Our Core Principle

The school remains open unless the weather poses a significant and demonstrable risk to the health and safety of individuals traveling to or being present on the school site.

1. Official Communication Channels – NO Social Media

To ensure that all families receive accurate, timely, and consistent information, The Towers School & Sixth Form Centre relies **exclusively** on the following four official communication methods for all closure announcements:

1. **The Official School Website: www.towers.kent.sch.uk** (Our primary, most reliable source.)
2. **School Text Message (SMS)**
3. **School Official Email**
4. **Local Radio Broadcasts**

Please Note: The school will NOT use social media platforms (such as Twitter or Facebook) for official closure announcements. This decision allows us to centralize and control the information, preventing the spread of rumours, conflicting dates, or outdated advice that can often occur on public channels.

2. When the Decision is Made

A. Overnight Decision (Before School)

- The decision to close will be made by the Principal as early as possible, typically **before 6:30 AM**.
- Please check our **school website** and **local radio** first thing in the morning.
- **If a closure is not announced, the school is open as usual.**

B. Deterioration During the School Day

- If conditions require an early closure, you will be notified immediately via **text message and email**.
- We urge you to ensure your child knows their plan for getting home safely or where to go if they cannot travel home (they will be directed to the **Large Dining Hall** for SLT supervision).

Action Required by Parents:

- **Check Contacts:** Please ensure your most current mobile phone number and email address are registered with the school office.
- **Bookmark:** Save the school website address for quick access.

- **Pre-Plan:** Discuss and agree on an emergency closure plan with your child (e.g., where they should wait, who they should call).

Thank you for your cooperation in ensuring our communication is effective and that all students remain safe during periods of challenging weather.

Yours sincerely,

The Towers School & Sixth Form Centre