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**The Albany PRU**

**Head Teacher:** Jane Reason

*Believe, Engage, Achieve*  
Thumbs up to a new beginning!

# COPING WITH SEVERE WEATHER POLICY AND PROCEDURES

## Approved

Signature of Head of School:	
Date:	
Signature of Chair of Governors:	
Date:	
Agreed at the SEMH LGB on:	22 <sup>nd</sup> January 2020
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# Coping with Severe Weather Policy and Procedures

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## Policy and procedures for closure due to severe weather conditions and other unforeseen emergencies

### General:

In the event of severe weather conditions, the decision to close The Albany is **the sole responsibility of the Headteacher** as they are best placed to consider local circumstances and particular conditions relevant to the school and to liaise with other agencies. The advice from the local authority is that schools should plan to remain open in all but the most exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher will assume responsibility for seeking the advice of and informing the Chair of the SEMH LGB and the local authority through its Severe Weather Contact (SWC).

This plan will also be followed in the event of other unforeseen emergencies, as far as is practicable, and the same principles will apply throughout.

The policy applies equally to all staff, irrespective of the role or location in which they are working on the day in question. The position of staff working in off-site provision is dealt with below.

### Underlying principle to provide students with an education:

If schools close for whatever reason it can be disruptive of students' education and make life difficult for working parents. **Therefore The Albany will carry out its planning on the basis that the Headteacher intends the school to remain open during severe weather.** Other Suffolk schools and Pupil Referral Units will also operate to this principle.

### Making a decision to close The Albany:

As soon as a decision to close the school has been made, the Headteacher will contact the local authority through the SWC. The local authority will update its **school closure website** <http://schoolclosures.suffolk.gov.uk> and local press and radio stations will then use this website to broadcast information to the public. The decision to close will be made as early as possible to ensure that information can be transmitted in good time to staff, parents, partner schools and transport companies. This decision will be made between 6:00am and 7:00am.

Staff should not normally contact the Headteacher to ask if the school will be closed. They should assume it will remain open unless they hear otherwise.

### Altering the timings of the school day at The Albany:

Consideration will be given to starting the school day later and ending it earlier. This could provide advantages, especially where a decision can be made the night before. It can also allow decisions to be made once weather conditions have improved. Any such decision must be made in consultation with the Chair of the SEMH LGB.

However, at The Albany we rely heavily on public transport and taxi companies to provide transport for students living what can be a considerable distance from school. The complexities inherent in this situation mean that:

- It is unlikely such arrangements can be made safely and practically;
- Taxi companies may not have vehicles available; and
- Decisions could not be communicated easily or effectively to parents/carers.

The vulnerability of many of our students means that clarity of communications must be paramount. The contact plan allows for staff, parents and transport companies to be contacted individually to ensure there is no confusion and to minimise the risk of unnecessary and potentially dangerous journeys.

**The “Contact Plan”:**

Parents and staff are advised to **listen to local radio stations and consult the local authority website**, as they will broadcast regular updates, (Radio Suffolk at 10 past and 20 to the hour, Heart Suffolk Radio immediately after the news on the hour and half-hour).

Staff and parents will be contacted in the first instance, via their mobile phones, using the Text to Parents service. This will give a brief update on the current status. The Headteacher will contact key staff by telephone as soon as a decision to close the school has been taken. Using the “cascade” model detailed on the attached matrix (Appendix A), those colleagues contacted will each contact others to inform them of the decision.

Staff should ensure they **have a copy of the emergency procedures and contact numbers to hand at all times**, so they can refer to them immediately in an emergency situation. Consideration will need to be given to the **safe storage of confidential contact details**. For the plan to work promptly and efficiently, it is important for all staff to play their part in the information dissemination process, on the principle that a chain is only as strong as its links.

**The evening before:** If conditions are very severe, it may be possible to make a decision that we will close the centre the following day. Any staff present in the school at the time will be informed verbally. Other staff will be contacted by telephone. This information will also be communicated to the SWC for broadcast on local radio stations on:

- HEART SUFFOLK RADIO (97.1 FM)**
- RADIO SUFFOLK (103.9FM)**
- HEART COLCHESTER RADIO (96.1FM)**
- RADIO ESSEX (103.5FM)**

Information will also be appearing on the following websites:

- [www.bbc.co.uk/suffolk](http://www.bbc.co.uk/suffolk)
- [www.heart.co.uk/suffolk](http://www.heart.co.uk/suffolk)
- [www.heart.co.uk/colchester](http://www.heart.co.uk/colchester)
- [www.suffolkcc.gov.uk](http://www.suffolkcc.gov.uk)

If severe weather is expected, local radio will broadcast standby announcements, warning of the possibility of a school closure.

**In the early morning:** A decision will hopefully be made before 7.00 am. Again, the decision will be broadcast on local radio. The contact cascade plan will also be activated. As explained above, this is an additional security measure.

**During the school day:** If it is necessary to close the school, our first duty is to do our best to make arrangements to **get all our students home**. We will need to have regard to the pressure on taxi companies to re-arrange their schedules, the availability of public transport and the ability of parents to return home to receive their children. As the safety of students and staff will always be our priority, such a decision will be taken, in consultation with senior colleagues, **at the earliest opportunity**. We will do our best to inform all parents/carers of our decision, so they can make the necessary supervision arrangements. They will be asked to keep us informed, in advance, of up-to-date contact numbers and emergency arrangements for a neighbour or relative to look after their child. If the school is closed early, we will arrange for the information to be broadcast on local radio.

**The school should be regarded as open until you hear** from the appropriate colleague on the contact plan that the Headteacher (or their proxy) has made the decision to close. This will be accompanied by an announcement on local radio.

**School closure and attendance:**

The DfE have changed the regulations about unauthorised absences so that they should not inhibit a school when making a decision to stay open. It will be possible to mark pupil absences as authorised if they relate to severe weather conditions that prevent them getting to school.

**Police advice about making only “essential journeys”:**

There has been confusion in the past about how best to respond to police advice that people should not go out unless their journey is essential and whether this means workers should stay at home.

The DfE and the local police have confirmed that getting to work and school are within the overall definition of essential – in other words, this statement is not in itself reason why school staff should not consider making the journey to work.

**The responsibilities of the Headteacher towards staff in these situations:**

Staff members are individually responsible for getting to work. Each person must ultimately make their own assessment of the individual day’s weather conditions and the risks that they may pose, within the context of the “essential journey” definition given above. This guidance does not compel staff to take risks; it encourages everyone to make good plans in advance of bad weather.

All staff have a responsibility for ensuring that they make every effort to reach school if it is open, bearing in mind that they are not expected to put themselves at risk by travelling in dangerous weather conditions. However, even if a decision is made not to travel at the start of the day, the obligation continues during the course of the day if weather or travel conditions improve. Despite closure, staff still have a duty to attend their school if they possibly can and a declaration of closure should not itself prevent staff from reporting to work, as long as they are not putting themselves at risk by travelling.

The Headteacher does not have a duty of care towards staff which extends to include the journey to and from school.

All staff have a duty to report for work if at all possible. At the same time, they may properly decide not to attempt the journey if they have reasonable cause to be concerned for their own safety. It is recognised that in certain circumstances staff will not be able to get to work and normal staff absence mechanisms will operate. **Staff who decide that they could not travel to work safely, must inform the Headteacher at home immediately they have made their decision.** Staff may telephone the Headteacher from 6:00am, bearing in mind that any decision to close the school must be made before 7:00am. Staff absence will have an impact on colleagues who are able to travel to work and is a factor in any decision to close the school. Failure to inform the Headteacher as soon as possible could result in others being put at un-necessary risk.

#### **Clearing the school site:**

This is covered in a separate yet related policy, "Snow and Ice Policy", which is issued to staff. Standing instructions are reviewed annually issued to the caretaker, each year when bad weather is anticipated.

#### **Risk assessment process:**

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team will conduct risk assessments related to all aspects of the Coping with Severe Weather Policy and the Snow and Ice Policy and these will be reviewed annually or following any incident.

#### **Severe weather and Ofsted inspections:**

In the event that there is disruption to the school because of severe weather (either that The Albany has to operate with reduced staffing or that the school has to close) staff should be aware that advice to Ofsted inspectors is that they should still go ahead and do as much as they can. Ultimately, the decision to proceed will depend on whether the inspection team consider that they have obtained sufficient evidence already and can complete tasks without students present. The Headteacher will seek to discuss this with the inspectors, but will assume the inspection will continue. Inspections will only be postponed in the most exceptional circumstances.

#### **Procedures in other circumstances:**

**If you should arrive at school despite the arrangements outlined above:** You will be able to obtain information from the caretaker, whose contact details are on the cascade plan and who will be available to answer your questions. The caretaker may be able to open the site, if staff require access, and to close it securely when they leave if he is already in attendance. He should not be asked to attend so that staff can collect possessions in these circumstances except with the express agreement of the Headteacher.

In the absence of members of the Leadership Team, staff should take their work home, so that the caretaker can secure the site as soon as possible. **You should not contact the caretaker to open the site for you in any other circumstances.**

**In the event of bad weather persisting for several days:** The Headteacher will ensure that staff are informed if a decision is made to keep the school closed for several days. Staff will be contacted through the emergency contact plan outlined above, using the same cascade model. Details will also be available through local radio stations and the usual websites.

**In the event of staff and pupils arriving at The Albany when Senior Staff have been prevented from arriving by adverse conditions:**

It is possible, although unlikely, that staff could arrive at The Albany and find that all senior colleagues and/or teachers have been delayed on their own journeys by unexpected circumstances such as quickly deteriorating weather, localised bad weather, a serious accident or incident. In such circumstances **all staff have a duty** to act responsibly to ensure the safety and welfare of the students who have arrived at school.

Where a senior colleague(s) who is not the Headteacher or Assistant Head is available in school they will take responsibility for the safety of the pupils, staff and site. We would expect decisions to be discussed with the Headteacher or Assistant Head by telephone. The other members of SLT and teachers are senior colleagues.

Where no senior staff member is present, colleagues who have been able to attend should act as follows:

- Try to obtain as much information about the absence of senior staff as possible. To this end it will be necessary for one staff member to take control of the telephone and to stay in the main office;
- Gather students together in the social space and provide them with breakfast, a hot drink and games to play with the highest possible level of supervision. **Any staff normally working in off-site provision must make themselves available to support this activity.**
- It is essential that students are occupied and kept calm. The best way to ensure this is to arrange as high a level of staff supervision as possible in the circumstances. **It is clear that other responsibilities must be set aside until senior staff arrive, or all students have been sent home appropriately. All staff present should participate in this work.** It may be helpful to keep the class groups in separate rooms;
- **If it is absolutely clear that a senior member of staff will be on the premises within an hour**, staff should continue to work positively with students, ensuring their safety and wellbeing, as described above;
- Where it is not clear that a senior staff member will be on the premises within an hour and the Assistant Head SENDCo is not present, **the senior member of staff present on site must arrange for all students to go home;**
- This will be time-consuming and needs to be carried out meticulously to ensure all students are received by a responsible adult. **No students should be sent home without school staff first having informed their parents/carers;**
- Contact details for all students are in the “Emergency Contact” details file in the main office and on Arbor. The details of taxi companies or their public transport arrangements are also in the emergency contact file. Both these sets of information are also on the cascade contact plan;
- Most taxi companies will be able to provide transport, although there will, inevitably, be a time delay. Public transport may also be similarly delayed. In other cases parents will need to fetch their children. In some cases it will be necessary for staff to accompany students home. Where none of these alternatives is possible, staff have authority to call a taxi and to ask the company to invoice the school.

- Staff arranging to send students home in these circumstances should be sure to state clearly to parents/carers that The Albany is **not able to ensure students' safety because of inadequate staffing levels.**

#### **The position for staff working off-site when The Albany is closed:**

Where The Albany is closed due to adverse weather conditions it is possible that other centres will be open and working as normal. Staff working off-site may be able to provide planned work to their usual setting in these circumstances.

It is important for staff to liaise with the Headteacher before setting out to any off-site provision to ensure students are aware that their education will continue to be provided even though The Albany itself is closed.

However, it is important for all staff to remember the guiding principle that, although they have a duty to report for work if at all possible, at the same time, they may properly decide not to attempt the journey if they have reasonable cause to be concerned for their safety.

#### **Accessing the school site when a closure has been announced:**

If our school is closed, staff will be unable to go onto our premises to collect materials and should not contact the caretaker for this purpose. Therefore, if bad weather is forecast, staff working off-site should ensure they have taken appropriate materials home "just in case". Our duty to provide an education to our students off-site should not be compromised by potential lack of materials and worksheets etc.

#### **Following a closure event:**

The Senior Leadership Team will establish and convene an incident management team to review the practice and the policy in the light of experience.

#### **Associated policies and procedures:**

- Snow and Ice Policy
- Business Continuity and Incident Management Policy

#### **Amended / Updated January 2020**

Jane Reason  
Headteacher

Appended:

Appendix A: Severe weather contact plan (cascade)

Appendix B: Confidential list of all staff names and telephone numbers (issued to staff only)  
Confidential list of pupil names and contact numbers (issued to staff only)

Appendix C: Planning Checklist

Appendix D: "Common Sense Common Safety"

Appendix E: Letter to parents

Policy instigated: January 2012

To be reviewed annually

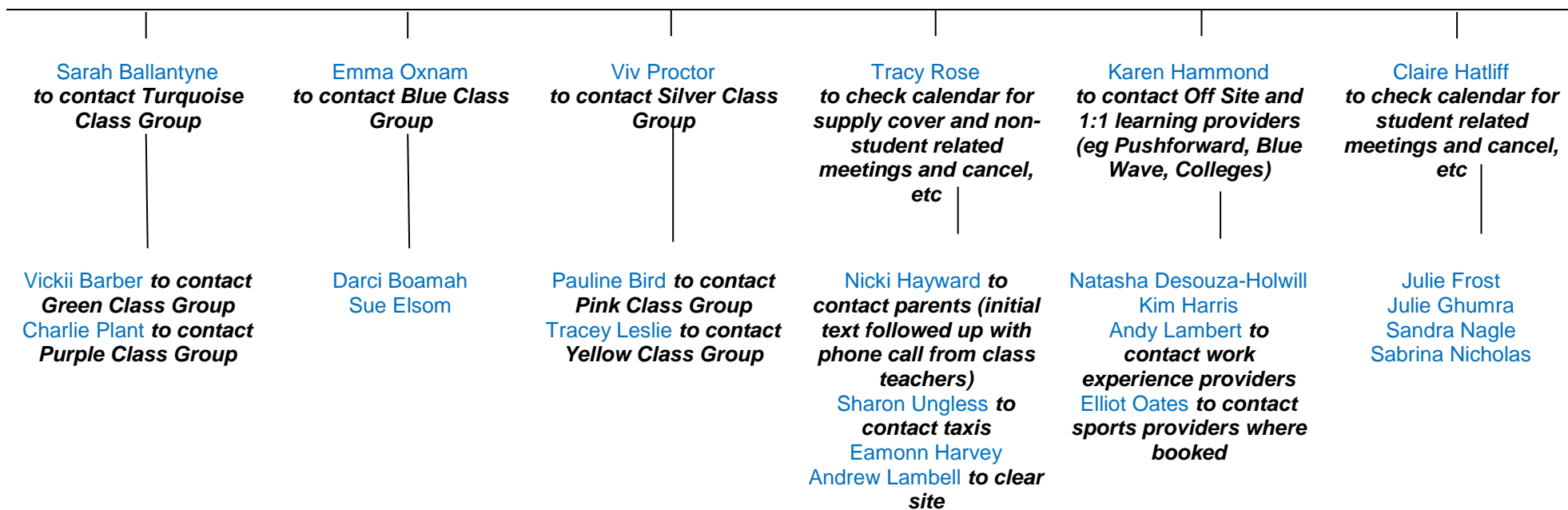


THE ALBANY

Severe Weather and Emergency Contact Plan

Jane Reason

(to make decision to close / late start and contact Severe Weather Contact)



Where this contact plan is put in operation on a day when a staff member is not due to work, alternative arrangements for contacting their Class Group, etc will be put in place

THE ALBANY

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**Staff Names and Telephone Numbers**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**Student Names and Telephone Numbers**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**Student Names and Telephone Numbers cont**

## THE ALBANY

## Checklist for Planning for Severe Weather

<b>Before severe weather occurs</b>	
Ensure the school has an incident management team for severe weather	
Consult the Chair of the SEMH LGB	
Order grit/salt bins for the school	
Make arrangements as required for staff to clear the site of ice and snow	
Acquire protective clothing, shovels etc for those clearing ice and snow	
Set up arrangements for communicating directly with parents if the closure of the school seems a real possibility	
Confirm contacts	
Undertake risk assessments of the site	
<b>When severe weather is forecast</b>	
See <a href="http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk.ee.ee_forecast_weather.html">http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk.ee.ee_forecast_weather.html</a> for forecast	
Remind staff of the school's plans and the expectation that the school will remain open	
Ensure that someone can get into school to answer the telephone and inform parents who may be unaware of the closure	
Ensure parents are reminded of the process for receiving information about school opening hours and the arrangements for severe weather	
Contact school transport drivers	
<b>On the day/s of severe weather</b>	
Make decisions by 7:00 am to stay open, open for limited hours, or close, etc.	
Consult the Chair of the SEMH LGB	
Notify Local Authority Severe Weather Contact	
Notify staff, parents/carers and taxis by telephone	
NB – Schools should not contact the radio stations directly as this blocks the phone lines and causes confusion	
Undertake risk assessments as appropriate	
<b>Afterwards</b>	
Review and plan for next year	
Update arrangements for calling together the incident management team in the light of any staff changes	
Update emergency contact plans every term	

**Extract from the Lord Young Report on Health and Safety**

“One of the great misconceptions, often perpetuated by the media, is that we can be liable for the consequences of any voluntary acts on our part. During winter 2009/2010, advice was given on television and radio to householders not to clear the snow in the front of their properties in case any passerby would fall and then sue. This is another manifestation of the fear of litigation. In fact there is no liability in the normal way, and the Lord Chief Justice himself is reported as saying that he had never come across a case where someone was sued in these circumstances.

Yet this belief is particularly pernicious, as it may deter people from engaging in organised voluntary activities in the mistaken belief that they can be sued should anything go wrong. People who seek to do good in our society should not fear litigation as a result of their actions.

Popular perception is that it could be dangerous to volunteer, largely because in the USA good Samaritans are often liable (and in fact doctors and other medical professionals are instructed by their insurance companies not to stop at an accident). It is important to have clarity around this issue and at some point in the future we should legislate to achieve this if we cannot ensure by other means that people are aware of their legal position when undertaking such acts.

There is no liability in such cases unless negligence can be proved.”

Extract from Lord Young report on Health and safety (Common Sense, Common Safety – [http://www.number10.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/402906\\_Common\\_Sense\\_acc.pdf](http://www.number10.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/402906_Common_Sense_acc.pdf)) concerning the question of liability for acts of good citizenship in relation to snow/ice clearance

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**IMPORTANT INFORMATION – PLEASE KEEP FOR FUTURE REFERENCE**

January 2020

Dear Parents & Carers

**Severe weather conditions and the closure of schools**

I am writing to inform you about arrangements for closing The Albany and its off-site provision in the event of severe weather. The same procedure will apply if we have to close (completely or partially) in exceptional circumstances. I need to be confident that you have received this information and, therefore, I am asking you to ensure that you return the reply slip at the end of this letter **immediately**, please.

**Severe weather and the closure of The Albany**

Please keep this information in a safe place. You will need to refer to it again if the weather becomes severe.

**The evening before:**

If conditions are very severe, it may be possible to make a decision to close The Albany the following day. This information will be broadcast on Heart Suffolk Radio (97.1FM), Heart Colchester Radio (96.1FM) and Radio Suffolk (103.9FM). We will also do our best to inform parents personally by telephone and we will send a letter home with your child if possible. You may also like to look on the following websites:

[www.bbc.co.uk/suffolk](http://www.bbc.co.uk/suffolk)

[www.heart.co.uk/suffolk](http://www.heart.co.uk/suffolk)

[www.heart.co.uk/colchester](http://www.heart.co.uk/colchester)

[www.suffolkcc.gov.uk](http://www.suffolkcc.gov.uk)

<http://schoolclosures.suffolk.gov.uk> or our own website [www.albanypru.co.uk](http://www.albanypru.co.uk)

If severe weather is expected, Heart Radio (Suffolk) and Radio Suffolk will broadcast “standby announcements”, warning parents and staff of the possibility of school closure.

**In the early morning:**

A decision about closure will be made as early as possible, hopefully by 7:00am. We will ask Heart Radio (Suffolk) and Radio Suffolk to announce that The Albany will be closed. We will also do our best to inform parents personally, by telephone. As we cannot guarantee to be able to contact you, we urge you to listen to one of the radio stations listed above or to look on one of the websites.

**During the school day:**

If a decision is made to close The Albany before the normal end of the school day, we will do our best to inform you by telephone and we will make arrangements to get all the students home as soon as possible.

In the event that we cannot contact you in these circumstances you will need to have in place, in advance, emergency arrangements for a relative or neighbour to look after your child.

**General points:**

The Albany should be regarded as open until you hear that it is closed.

Parents/carers have a duty to ensure that their children attend school if at all possible. At the same time, parents may properly decide not to send their children to school if they have reasonable cause to be concerned for their safety.

Please remember that early decisions can only be made if the Headteacher can maintain contact with the Local Authority. We ask that you wait for us to contact you or for an announcement on the local radio, other than in the most exceptional circumstances.

Yours sincerely

**Jane Reason  
Headteacher**