



School / Setting Business Continuity - Issues for Consideration

**Briefing note (including
guidance on managing the
impact of severe weather on
service provision) -**

November 2023 (v2.1)

Business Continuity – Issues for Consideration: Schools & settings

1. Purpose of Briefing Note

- 1.1. Emergencies, significant incidents and /or extreme weather conditions (such as freezing temperatures, snowfall, heavy rainfall/flooding, etc.) can have an impact on the ability of a school or setting to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of its students and staff. Whilst it is expected that Heads will do everything possible to keep their school or setting open following a significant incident or during extreme weather, there will be occasions when closure or part closure is a consideration.
- 1.2. This briefing note provides advice and guidance to Hackney schools & settings when maintaining a full service may be difficult. It also aims to support schools & settings to plan and mitigate against risks of extreme weather and the potential need to close the site.
- 1.3. Any decision regarding closure should be supported by the school or setting's **Emergency Management Plan**. This sets out actions required to identify and respond to emergencies and/or any events that may interrupt service delivery – including extreme weather conditions. Schools & settings should ensure that this plan is reviewed and updated, where required, on a regular basis. Hackney Education's Services for School website provides documents to support and inform business continuity planning within your school or setting, including a critical incidents framework and model school emergency plan – go to <https://www.hackneyservicesforschools.co.uk/extranet/business-continuity>. Please note that we are currently in the process of reviewing these documents, so changes may be made in the future.

2. Preparing for Bad Weather

- 2.1. Whilst we have experienced incidents of flooding resulting in school or setting closure, the majority of closures reported in Hackney due to extreme weather have been as a result of freezing temperatures and/or snowfall occurring during December, January or February.
- 2.2. Given this, it is recommended that throughout the year (and especially during the Autumn Term), schools & settings start to plan for potential extreme weather conditions over the winter months. Examples of advance preparation include (but are not limited to)
 - Ensuring supplies of road salt are purchased in preparation for any snowfall
 - Keeping guttering clear of autumn leaf fall
 - Undertaking a full service of the school or setting boiler
 - Confirming what access you have to additional heaters
 - Confirming how you will manage staff cover if there is travel disruption?
 - Having a plan in place to manage all communications in and out of the school or setting regarding any potential closure
 - Having additional protection measures (e.g., sandbags) readily available for parts of the building which may be vulnerable to flooding – e.g., server rooms, high value equipment, etc.
 - Contacting the Property Team (on 020-8820-7024) if you have particular concerns regarding a likely failure of any element of your building (mechanical, electrical or building fabric).
- 2.3. Weather forecasts up to 30 days are available from the Met Office site – <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/forecast/gcpvj0dup> . This site also has a cold weather alert page which operates between 1 November and 31 March each year – go to <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/cold-weather-alert/> . Please note, however, that information from these sites will only provide a forecast (using up to date information regarding potential scenarios) that will give you time to assess risk and to plan accordingly.

3. Epidemics and Pandemics

- 3.1. The population now has much stronger protection against Covid-19 than at any other point

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in the pandemic. This means we can begin to manage the virus like other respiratory infections, thanks to the success of the vaccination programme and access to antivirals, alongside natural immunity and increased scientific and public understanding about how to manage risk

- 3.2. It is, however, important that schools & settings continue to implement measures and promote messages to reduce the risk of transmission of infection from one person to another whilst on site. It is also important that you have measures in place ready to respond to low staffing levels should infection start to rise again.
- 3.3. For more information about how to manage confirmed or suspected Covid-19 cases as well as increasing incidence of cases, please see [Hackney Education's Services for Schools Covid-19 webpage](#) as well as [City & Hackney's Covid-19 advice & guidance for educational settings](#) for more information.
- 3.4. Alongside this, as winter approaches, pupils and staff in school & settings continue to be particularly susceptible to other infections which increase over the winter months, such as seasonal influenza (flu) and stomach infections (such as norovirus). These can be very infectious and cause outbreaks in schools & settings due to the close contact amongst pupils and staff. Many of the mitigations in place to reduce the transmission of Covid-19 will also be relevant to reduce the spread of other winter viruses. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) have published [winter readiness information for London Schools & Nurseries](#) to help schools & settings review and plan for important health considerations over the winter.

4. Making a Decision to Close a School or Setting

- 4.1. During severe weather conditions, the Department for Education (DfE) expects headteachers to keep schools & settings open for as many pupils as possible whenever it is reasonable for them to do so. Hackney Education (HEd) expects the same approach to apply following a significant incident which may impact on service delivery. In line with this, HEd expects schools & settings to have contingency plans in place to keep the school or setting open. Where, however, health & safety of the staff and students cannot be guaranteed, the headteacher or setting manager should make a decision about school or setting closure as quickly as possible, and providing as much advance notice as possible (ideally by 3pm the preceding day).
- 4.2. **Hackney Community Schools & Hackney Education Settings** – We ask that headteachers speak to either the Director of Education, the Assistant Director or, as appropriate, the Head of Primary, Secondary or Early Years & Early Help prior to making any final decision to close your school.

Title	Name	Email	Phone
Director of Education	Paul Senior (Interim)	paul.senior@hackney.gov.uk	020-8820-7631
AD School Performance & Improvement	Jason Marantz	jason.marantz@hackney.gov.uk	020-8820-7039
Senior Primary Leadership and Management Adviser	Laleh Laverick	laleh.laverick@hackney.gov.uk	07881 854658
Principal Secondary Adviser	Anton Francic	anton.francic@hackney.gov.uk	020-8820-7063
Assistant Director Early Years, Early Help & Wellbeing	Donna Thomas	donna.thomas@hackney.gov.uk	020-8820-7594

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Out of hours (only) emergency contact	Duty Emergency Planning Officer	020 8356 2366
	Main Monitoring Room (24/7 availability)	020 8356 2323

- 4.3. **Voluntary Aided Schools & Academies and PVI early years settings** – decisions to close voluntary aided schools & academies and PVI early years settings are made locally. However, to support service planning and enable us to respond to queries received, we ask that schools & settings inform HEd as soon as a decision is made (see contact details in 3.2 above)

5. Communications regarding school or setting closures

- 5.1. Decisions regarding school or setting closures need to be communicated to staff, parents/carers and students as quickly as possible using a variety of methods – telephone, email, website, digital media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook if used by the school or setting). It is the school or setting’s responsibility to inform those affected.
- 5.2. Messages should be agreed by school or setting senior management and should be consistent. They should be publicised in a central point (such as the school or setting’s website) which should also be regularly updated to reflect the current position. Ideally, from a parent’s perspective, we would urge all schools & settings to clarify the position regarding whether or not the school or setting is open the next day by 3pm at the latest, and earlier where that is possible.
- 5.3. During severe weather, HEd will assume that your school or setting is open unless closure is formally confirmed with us. Likewise, if informed that the school or setting is closed, we will publicise this until told otherwise.
- 5.4. The Business Implementation team in Outcomes, Business Intelligence & Strategy (OBIS) (providing support to HEd) will use the website, education.hackney.gov.uk, and Twitter feed, to post as much information as possible regarding Hackney school & setting closures. We will update this information morning and late afternoon but depend on schools & settings providing regular information to inform these updates.
- 5.5. The Business Implementation team can be contacted as follows:

Title	Name	Email	Phone
Business Implementation Lead	Connor Donnelly	connor.donnelly@hackney.gov.uk	020-8356-3836
Strategy & Governance Manager	Chevaun Walsh	chevaun.walsh@hackney.gov.uk	020-8356-5907

- 5.6. In the event of closure, we also ask that you inform other key services providing a service to the school / setting or individual students (e.g., SEND Travel Assistance Service to rearrange pick up times from school / setting and/or to cancel collection from home). This should also be done providing as much advance warning as possible. HEd will communicate to HEd staff generally, however for services such as SEND Travel Assistance, the setting should liaise directly with the service to ensure continuity of service or planning alternative arrangements.
- 5.7. Where bad weather is forecasted over the weekend, impacting on the ability to open the school or setting on Monday morning, publicising a closure can be more challenging. School or setting processes should be developed to ensure any decision made over the weekend is publicised quickly and efficiently. In the event that staff responsible for updating

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your website and other social media applications cannot get into the school or setting, you should plan to ensure that they have access to do this remotely from home/another location.

6. Emergency & Out of Hours Contacts – Hackney

- 6.1. Hackney Council Emergency Planning Team ensures that a coordinated response to all notified emergencies is in place. They work with Council teams and external organisations (such as the Police and Health) to put appropriate support and responses in place across the borough – e.g., targeted street cleaning, targeting gritting, managing traffic, setting up diversions, etc. If you have an emergency or major incident occur out of hours, the Duty Emergency Planning Officer can contact Hackney Education officers if additional support is required.
- 6.2. HEd will inform Hackney’s Emergency Planning Team, where appropriate, of all school & setting closures and the reasons for closures so that any required support can be provided.
- 6.3. In addition, LBH’s Facilities Management team can also provide support and advice in response to property related issues such as burst water pipes, etc. Please contact:

Title	Name	Email	Phone
Facilities & Support Services Manager	Tracy Spallin	tracy.spallin@hackney.gov.uk	020 8356 5378 07768 557819
Out of hours (only) emergency contact	Duty Emergency Planning Officer		020 8356 2366
	Main Monitoring Room (24/7 availability)		020 8356 2323

7. Emergency Contacts – Hackney Maintained Schools & Settings

- 7.1. So that HEd can contact maintained schools & settings in the event of an emergency during the school / setting day or out of hours, HEd asks that all Hackney Schools provide 2 or more emergency contacts. We recommend the main contacts to be the Headteacher and the school caretaker / premises officer. It is also helpful for us to have out of hours contact details for the Deputy Headteacher and School Bursar.
- 7.2. HEd will undertake an annual exercise to review and update emergency contact details directly with schools. Contact details provided will be held securely by HEd and will only be accessible to those senior managers with emergency and/or business continuity responsibilities.
- 7.3. Schools are asked to ensure that these details are reviewed and updated on a regular basis, especially if there are any changes to staffing and/or roles & responsibilities midyear. Where changes are made, OBIS Management Information, Systems & Analysis (MISA) Team should be notified as soon as possible so that our records can be updated. In this instance, please email ben.brennan@hackney.gov.uk or phone on 020-8820-7181.

8. Other considerations

8.1. Insurance & security/fire arrangements

- 8.1.1. In the event of a significant incident that may require an insurance claim, we recommend that you contact your insurer (and their loss adjuster as appropriate) as soon as possible. For Hackney Community schools & settings or any school that has chosen to remain in the Hackney Insurance Scheme, this should be done through the LBH Insurance Manager (contact details below)
- 8.1.2. In the event of an incident that affects your security/fire arrangements, you must notify your school or setting’s insurer as soon as possible, setting out any reasonable steps you have taken to cover and control any potentially increased security/fire threats to the premises

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covering the life of the incident.

- 8.1.3. An example of such an incident may be where, following a power failure, a school or setting's intruder and fire alarms have become disabled. As a result, depending on the insurance policy in place at the time, the school or setting may not be covered for any loss. Reasonable steps to secure the building may be to provide security staff to cover the premises overnight, at weekends and/or during holiday periods. This should, however, be discussed with your insurer to confirm if this is sufficient mitigation and if costs can be reclaimed.
- 8.1.4. If it is appropriate to provide security staff, this can be booked via LBH security contract with CIS Security. In this case, contact the 24/7 security number (0208 356 5511) or Tracy Spallin (see contact details below). The school or setting will be charged for any security costs incurred in this instance
- 8.2. For maintained provision, contact details are:

Title	Name	Email	Phone
LBH Insurance Manager	Michael Pegram	Michael.pegram@hackney.gov.uk	020-8356-2667
CIS 24/7 security contact number			0208 356 5511
Out of hours (only) emergency contact	Tracy Spallin, Facilities & Support Services Manager		07768-557819
	Duty Emergency Planning Officer		020 8356 2366
	Main Monitoring Room (24/7 availability)		020 8356 2323
	LBH Insurance Manager (Michael Pegram)		07971-836469

9. Further Advice & Information

- 9.1. The Gov.uk website provides further advice regarding how educational and childcare settings should plan for and deal with emergencies, including significant public health incidents and severe weather. Go to – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings>

