

Ice and Snow Clearance at School Premises

To ensure the safety of staff, visitors and pupils at school premises, and to satisfy legal requirements for the provision of a safe working environment, this advice note offers practical guidance to schools on a common sense approach to the gritting of premises and the clearance of snow and ice during periods of bad weather.

School management and governors have a duty to take 'reasonable' steps to keep premises free from danger, such requirements are also placed on all staff (not just school management) to consider their own as well as their colleague's health, safety and wellbeing at all times.

Schools should consider formally defining, documenting and allocating the following responsibilities:

Head teachers or Site Manager or Bursar/Business Manager:

- Responsible for ensuring (before the winter term) that all sites under their control are fully equipped with appropriate snow clearing and personal protective equipment, and adequate stocks of rock salt and sand/grit etc.
- Responsible for rearranging Caretaker/Building Supervisor duties to ensure snow and ice clearance is given priority and continued as appropriate throughout the school day should those usually responsible for the task be absent from work.
- A formal snow clearance/gritting policy and risk assessment should be carried out in advance of bad weather, your Health & Safety Consultant can help you with this. Your risk assessment must include reference to manual handling issues, personal protective equipment for staff and how the school will communicate with staff, parents & visitors the appropriate access routes to use during bad weather.

Building Supervisors/Caretakers:

- Responsible for the immediate clearance of snow and ice in designated areas, in line with school policy & gritting plan. Where there is no Building Supervisor/Caretaker employed, the school's Senior Management Team (SMT) may need to nominate another appropriate & suitable member of staff for this task.

- Responsible for ensuring that equipment provided to clear snow and ice is adequate for the purpose and maintained in a satisfactory condition, supplies of rock salt and sand/grit mix should be monitored throughout the winter period and replenished promptly.
- Responsible for temporary closing access areas around the school in line with school policy/gritting plan that are not to be cleared or are lower down the gritting schedule, such areas should be clearly marked (e.g. signage, tape etc). Records of clearance and access route closures should be kept.

Governing Body/SMT:

- Responsible for drafting and periodically reviewing the schools winter clearance policy & gritting plan to ensure its adequacy and suitability.
- Should agree the exact routes and areas of the school to be cleared; this information should be communicated to all members of staff & parents well in advance of any bad weather. However this guidance note offers suggested clearance routes / criteria for school consideration:

Paths – should be made as clear as possible. A risk assessment should be undertaken to determine the paths that should be cleared immediately and the ones that may be left until later (you can use your clearance/gritting plan as part of your priority assessment by colour coding clearance routes). With this in mind it may be necessary for some entrances/areas to be temporarily closed; this could be achieved by taping off areas that continue to be a slip hazard as long as management have given consideration to emergency escape routes. This information should be communicated to staff, students & parents as soon as possible.

Other Areas – In addition to pathways/agreed access areas, in all cases access pathways should be cleared from parking spaces provided for the disabled, adjacent to premises entrances.

Please Note: It is not appropriate for school staff to clear or grit areas falling outside the school site boundary, e.g. pavements/public footpaths, roads forming part of the public highway, etc, if these areas are considered dangerous the school should contact their local council highways department.

All Staff

- Responsible for reporting to the Site Manager/ Head Teacher any situation where the recommended action contained within the school winter clearance policy/gritting plan has not been carried out
- Responsible for safeguarding own and colleagues' health & safety in bad weather. Staff should also wear footwear/clothing appropriate to the conditions.

Method of Clearance: A pathway of at least one meter wide should be cleared; this will allow suitable access for pedestrians and pushchairs/wheelchairs. Snow and ice should be completely removed using a snow scraper or shovel, snow and ice should NOT be brushed, or dissolved using hot water, as this will make surfaces more hazardous. Once the path has been cleared rock salt should be used to assist in providing extra grip. Paths should be regularly checked (e.g. every 2 hours depending on severity of weather) throughout the day to ensure re-freezing or further snow coverage has not occurred.

Additional care should be taken when clearing sloping pathways and steps, it may be necessary for safety reasons to consider the temporary closure of some non essential areas of the school (e.g. steep pathways, car parks, etc) to avoid risks to staff, pupils or visitors. An assessment of the situation should be made by site staff in conjunction with the Site Manager/Head Teacher/Bursar.

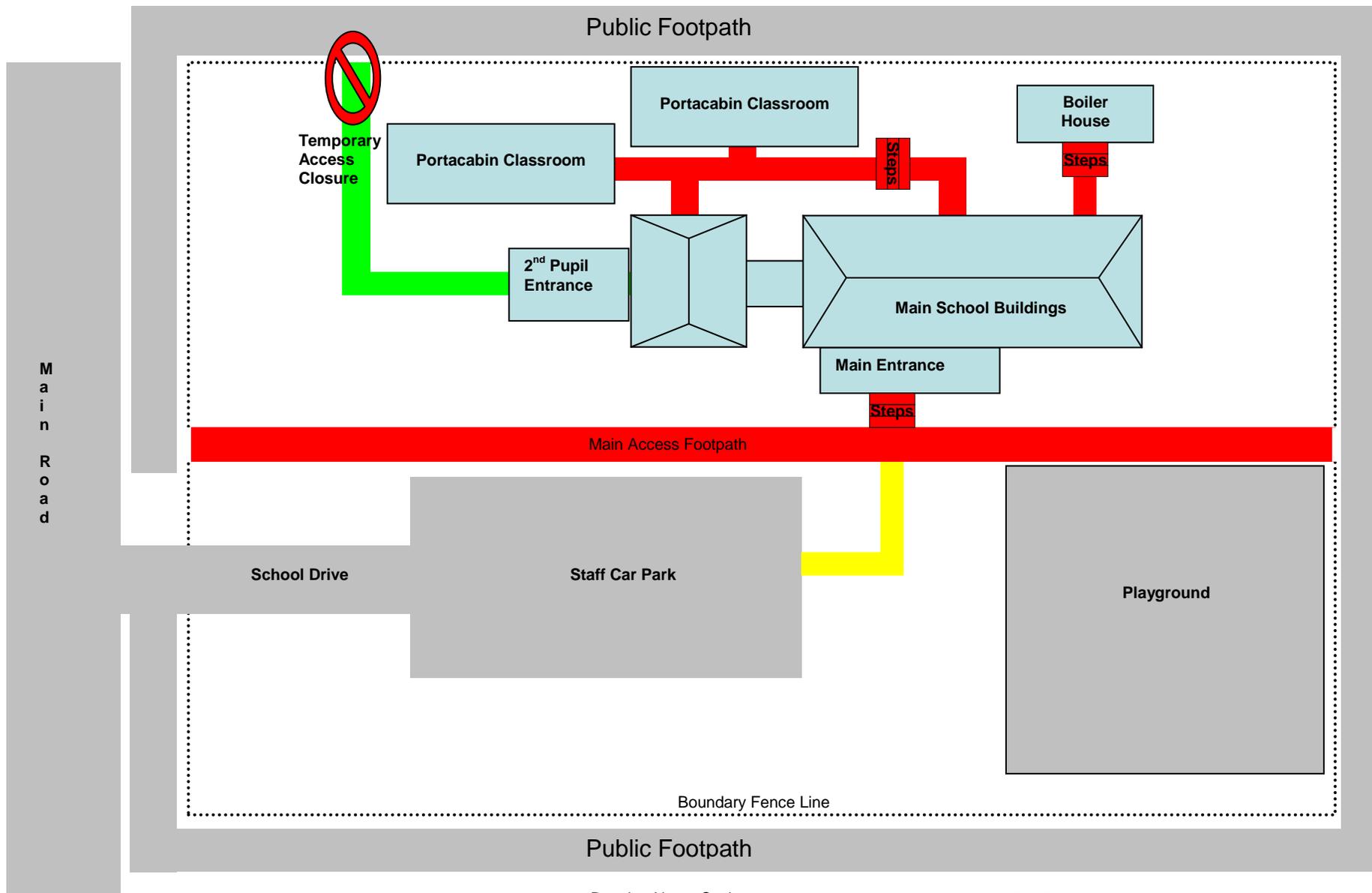
Pathways across car parks may be cleared if resources permit, but generally it is suggested that attempts are not made to clear car parking areas/spaces themselves, unless snow is so heavy that essential vehicles (e.g. emergency vehicles, delivery lorries etc) are unable to gain access to the site. It may be necessary to close car parks if they present a risk rather than trying to clear them.

All persons clearing snow should be provided with suitable snow scrapers, shovels, rock salt, protective gloves, footwear and clothing (i.e. high visibility vests), and staff should take regular breaks from the task.

School Management and Site staff also need to pay attention to internal traffic routes (entrance ways/corridors etc) during periods of wintery weather, melting snow trod through school could cause an additional slipping hazard, such risks can be minimised by providing additional barrier matting to soak up water, putting out wet floor signage and regularly dry mopping affected areas. The risks and controls in place to manage them should be included within your schools slips/trips and falls risk assessment.

This note is for guidance and to ensure current best practice is followed. Use in conjunction with appropriate risk assessments and the schools clearance & gritting plan (suggested draft priority plan attached). Reference should also be made to the School Premises & Facilities Manual.

Sample School Snow & Ice Gritting Priority Plan (RAN 9)



Drawing Not to Scale

1 = Highest Priority 2= Essential Priority 3= Desirable Priority 4= No Priority

