HM Government

Assess and manage flood risk in schools

Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and children's services systems sets out the departments role in all aspects of sustainability.

Flood risk is one of the three highest priority risk areas identified in the Climate Change Committee's independent assessment of UK climate risk.

Our partners in the Environment Agency have developed the following prompts which will help you prepare for flooding from rivers, the sea, the rain and reservoirs in your school, in the same way that you would plan and prepare for other emergencies.

Section 1 – Develop locational awareness and assess flood risk to your school

Checklist

- Use your school postcode to check your long-term flood risk
- Sign up for flood warnings if they are available for your school location
- Sign up for Met Office weather warnings
- Check your insurance to ensure it gives you adequate cover
- Annotate a map / plan of your setting or list what could be at risk, for example:
  - Locations which may be at risk from flooding, either because they've flooded before, or because risk information shows they may be at risk in the future.
  - Key assets, such as important buildings, property and equipment. Think about support services, such as kitchens, food storage areas and access. Consider main entrances to the setting and individual buildings. List first aid or medical facilities, technical equipment, electrical items, IT resources and important school records and data. Also note where keys are located.
  - Infrastructure, such as roads, car parks, playgrounds, sports fields, footpaths, pedestrian access, foot or road bridges, culverts and drainage ditches, water courses or bodies, surface water hotspots. Note access routes.
  - Think about 'safe' places that could be used before, during or after a flood incident, for example, alternative classrooms, or as alternative parking if the main car park is flooded. Designated safe areas would need to be located away from any likely flood risk.
  - Hazardous materials, for example from science labs or cleaning materials, swimming pool chemicals, these could be impacted by flooding or potentially cause a pollution incident during a flood.

- When mapping assets consider priority and impacts to help identify and manage these issues – which of the assets or infrastructure are most important, how would you manage and reduce risks?
  - Keep a plan of all utility isolation points so they can easily be shut down or shared with flood response organisations in the event of an emergency
- Consider investigating and installing relevant [property flood resilience measures](#), sustainable drainage systems, or [nature based solutions](#) to reduce flooding impacts
- Share locational awareness and risk information with others who use school facilities out of hours (before / after school clubs, catering and delivery companies)

Section 2 – Add flood risk into your emergency plans (in advance of any predicted flooding)

Now that you have taken action to understand your flood risk, you can include flood risk in your existing emergency plans.

Checklist

- Check for information on [preparing for flooding](#) – you'll already have seen some of this under Section 1
- What maintenance contracts, routine checks or volunteer rosters are in place, for example for site maintenance. These people could be critical in spotting problems as they arise or help with checks when a flood is imminent.
- Understand what resources are available, for example: What buildings, equipment or vehicles would be useful during an incident,
- Are there alternative buildings or equipment that could be used if others become inaccessible.
- Define or allocate roles and responsibilities, for example:
  - Consider what roles and tasks may need to be allocated and who to, ensuring that they have appropriate seniority and accountability. Consider leadership and operational roles as well those for communicators, administrators, or additional support for vulnerable people during an incident.
  - Ensure that everyone who has an allocated role before, during or after a flood incident fully understands their role, has had requisite training or instruction, and has had the opportunity to practice their role.
  - Think about how these roles might be needed in or out of school hours.
  - Ensure that systems are in place to update staff around changes to personnel or roles.
- Determine your trigger points, for example:
  - What would have to happen to make you activate your flood plan – perhaps a weather forecast, flood alert or warning, or visual signs of flooding within the setting. The triggers need to make sense to you and to your situation.
  - Be clear about what would happen initially and what escalation could look like.

- o Agree actions for different role holders, they need to be realistic to the local situation.
  - o Consider mechanisms for de-escalating and standing down.
- Consider what arrangements will need to be put in place to help you recover after a flood incident, for example:
  - o Understand the actions you can take immediately [after a flood](#)
  - o Use more detailed advice given to public bodies and risk management authorities on cleaning up to help you [recover after a flood](#)
- Consider your flood planning in the local context, for example:
  - o Check what other flood plans apply in your area, such as in other schools, the local council, police and social services, and consider links with your own plan.
  - o Share your plans with other authorities, such as other schools, local council, police, social services and others as locally relevant.
  - o Share your plans with others who use the school and grounds out of school hours
  - o Consider whether and how details of your plans may be shared with stakeholders, governors, parents and carers of pupils at your school.

> **Note**
>
> If your school acts as a refuge centre or area in the event of local emergencies, alternative arrangements will need to be made when your school is affected by flooding.

You have now assessed your flood risk and planned for responding to and recovering from a flood incident. These next steps will help you implement your plans.

Section 3 - Scaling up for a flood (when severe weather and / or local flooding is predicted in the next few days)

- Check for [flooding in the next 5 days](#)
- Ensure that those with allocated roles during a flood incident are reminded of their role and know what to do. Ensure all necessary roles are filled.
- Plan for checks during this period over and above your routine maintenance checks, for example, a drain could have become blocked even if it were only checked last week.
- Use this time to secure items or move to safe locations as required.
- Check that access routes for people and vehicles are clear.

Section 4 – Responding to a flood incident (from the start and throughout the incident)

- Implement your plan, focussing on what you now know to be the affected locations.
- Keep relevant stakeholders including governors, authorities, staff, parents and carers informed.
- Sensitively share information about flooding where the school community also live.

- Consider vulnerable families and members of school community.
- Record the extent of any flood damage or impact. Take photographs if it is safe to do so.
- Initiate clean-up and recovery arrangements.

Section 5 – Recovering from a flood incident (as incident peak passes and activities begin to return to normal)

- Implement your recovery plan.
- Consider specific areas of setting at risk from repeat flooding
- Review maps and flood plans and update risk assessments
- Capture learning about what went well and what needs improvement for next time.
- Agree any actions to be taken as a result of flooding, for example, installation of property protection measures or nature-based solutions, or changes to your flood planning.
- Be prepared for future flooding.