St George's C of E Primary School

Adverse Weather Policy

St George's
C of E School

School's theological-rooted Christian Vision

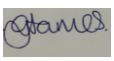
At St George's CE Primary school our vision is that every child upholds the Christian values with them in their daily lives. Our children strive to be confident, kind, thoughtful and selfless. You can see our vision come to life when walking through our school and in our classrooms. Our school motto is 'Jesus colours our love, our life, our learning'. We strive to live out this vision in everything we do in school to allow children to enjoy the fullness of life and enable them to flourish in the world in which they live.

Our vision is rooted in the Gospel of John and in particular chapter 10 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.' Our vision is rooted in the principle of Jesus' teaching that we must use his teaching to allow children to live life to the full and be able to flourish in their life within and beyond school. Our school vision encompasses our 6 Christian values (compassion, love, truthfulness, thankfulness, forgiveness and hope)

December 2023

Policy adopted:- December 2023

Policy to be reviewed:- December 2024

Signed on behalf of Governing Body:- 

Signed by the Headteacher:- A Seddon

1 Introduction

1.1 This guidance document provides advice for Head Teachers and School Governors and has been prepared following the severe weather of recent winters. The advice aims to provide clarification on a number of important matters relating to severe weather and includes information provided by government.

1.2 Bolton Council recognises the important role of Head Teachers in deciding whether schools should remain open in periods of severe weather and this advice has been prepared in order to help them in making those decisions. Above all, it strongly encourages schools to make every effort to remain open during periods of severe weather and suggests strategies for doing so, including, for example, reduced hours of opening and clearance of snow from the school site.

1.3 It is for individual schools to make any decision to close. They know the local conditions and the contingency possibilities which may allow the school to stay open for some or all pupils. Such decisions should however be based on a common sense approach, having regard to the conditions at the school and the need to continue to provide an education to children whenever feasible.

2 Planning ahead for severe weather

2.1 When it comes to severe weather conditions such as heavy snow, Head Teachers are expected to keep schools open for as many pupils as possible whenever it is reasonable for them to do so. If schools close for whatever reason it can be disruptive to children's education and make life difficult for working parents. Therefore schools should be planning on the basis that they intend to remain open during severe weather.

2.2 At some time during the winter we might expect there to be a bout of severe weather. Therefore schools need to have plans in place, even if it doesn't happen this year, it will be valuable planning for the future.

2.3 In making plans for the winter, the Head Teacher should consider:

- how to contact staff and parents, as well as the wider community, including the local authority and the press
- maintaining stocks of salt and grit and reviewing the level of stock held, in the light of supply problems in previous years
- identifying which areas of the school site need to be kept clear of snow and ice and ensuring that school staff who will usually assist with salting and gritting or otherwise keeping the relevant parts of the site clear know what steps to take, including undertaking these tasks safely
- arranging for help to be available from the school community to help clear paths, entrances and steps which will involve;

    i. associated risk assessments to be undertaken by the school and issuing specific instructions to staff, or other people, based on them

ii. estimating who amongst your staff will be able to get in safely for the beginning of the day and how you will be able to manage the school in those circumstances
iii. preparing for a day (or more) that might involve a reduced curriculum offer, where you will need to supervise students more than be able to provide the usual rich curriculum
iv. setting up an incident management team that would be available to manage the situation when it arises
v. working together in cluster groups so that parents with more than one child in schools are able to make their decisions on the basis that schools in the area are making the same arrangements (it might also help with transport arrangements if all schools in an area decide, for example, to open late)
vi. ensure you have all the information you need in advance including contacts (name, telephone numbers) for those who will collect children if parents are not available and bus and taxi drivers' telephone numbers for school transport, so that direct contact can be made with them

3 Taking the decision to close the school

3.1 The local authority advice will be to remain open except in the most extreme or exceptional of circumstances. Head Teachers are authorised to make an emergency closure when the state of the weather or any other exceptional circumstance make it absolutely necessary in the best interests of the pupils.

3.2 The overall decision on whether to close therefore lies with the Head Teacher – it is not possible to have a centralised or uniform approach on this matter as each school is best placed to know the local conditions. Head Teachers should inform the Chair of Governors of the decision taken.

3.3 Decisions must be supported by the latest and most accurate information available. The presumption should be in favour of keeping the school open unless, in the Head Teacher's view, to do so would put the health, safety or welfare of pupils and/or staff at risk. In reaching this decision, Head Teachers should take full account of local circumstances and, in particular, the following considerations:

Both short and longer term weather information

3.4 It would be inadvisable to react to the first flurry of snow without seeking further information on the weather conditions ahead. Equally, it would be unwise to send people (pupils or staff) home when a blizzard is at its height.

Advice from transport operators

3.5 Transport operators are key players in such circumstances as they will be the ones who decide whether vehicles should/can continue to operate.

Arrangements for pupil safety

3.6 The absolute priority is to ensure that provision is made for each and every child. Where children cannot be collected or delivered home, they should be kept at school and supervised.

3.7 It is often specific access or other localised issues that require schools to close. Therefore in these circumstances the closure or opening of other schools in the proximity should not be the key factor in taking decisions. The overriding principle is that it is the responsibility of all employees to make every effort to attend for duty at their normal school.

3.8 Any decision to close should, where practicable, be made before 7.00am to allow information to be passed onto the media and relevant people as soon as possible.

Closure during the school day

3.9 The safety and well-being of pupils should be paramount. If in doubt a child should not be released. Safe and speedy dismissal of pupils in the event of an emergency closure depends on the school and parents working in partnership.

3.10 Parents should be fully aware of the procedures which will operate in any particular school should there be an emergency closure. Normally, this information would appear in the school prospectus and school website.

3.11 Parents should provide the school with any specific instructions in respect of their child should the school require to close during the day. Parents are required to give schools an emergency contact and should have told the children what to do in the event of an emergency closure.

Precautions

3.12 Reasonable attempts should be made to ensure that children and young people will go home to a safe environment should school be closed. Clearly, the relevance of the following precautions will be dependent upon the age of the child or young person.

3.13 It may be that a parent who collects his/her children offers to give shelter to other children. The agreement of the parents of these children should be sought before releasing pupils in this way.

3.14 If it is customary for pupils to walk home at the end of the school day, it would be reasonable for the school to release these pupils to walk home in an emergency but only if there were a parent or an identified adult expecting their arrival. Account should be taken also of the age of the pupil, the severity of weather conditions and the distance to be walked. It would not be seen to be reasonable to release pupils with the instruction to return to school if they find no one at home.

3.15 On occasion, teaching staff escort pupils home and return with them to school if there is no one at home to supervise them. Before this course of action is undertaken, due attention should be paid to the severity of the weather and to the pupil to teacher ratio in the escorted group.

Children remaining in school

3.16 Provision of adequate supervision by members of teaching staff should be made for those pupils who cannot go home or to their emergency destination immediately and have therefore to remain at school.

4 Remaining open

4.1 As an alternative to closure, Head Teachers should consider:

- opening the school later in the day and closing earlier
- how the school building might be used to ensure there is adequate supervision, for example use of the hall and other larger spaces where this is practicable
- limit the extent to which students have to move between buildings
- plan the curriculum offer or the strategies you will use to ensure students are managed effectively and safely with the staff available

5 Communication arrangements

5.1 It is essential that when there is potential for school closures due to severe weather conditions, Head Teachers are in a position to communicate quickly and clearly with parents. This is just as important in relation to schools which are to remain open as it is to those which are closed. The school or council website and local media are now seen by many parents as the information channel in these situations. To make best use of the communication channels they offer, any decision to close should be taken as early in the day as possible.

5.2 Schools should also follow the usual procedures (i.e. text messaging) to inform parents and carers. To make every attempt to publicise any closure, a member of staff or a notice posted at the school gates could prevent pupils from being left by parents at the start of the school day.

Services

5.3 All of the service providers who will be affected by the closure should be informed as soon as possible.

5.4 Arrangements for school transport and crossing patrols should be made.

5.5 Schools which share transport should make absolutely certain that each is aware of what the other is doing.

5.6 Parents should give strict instructions to the children as to what they should do in the event of transport not turning up to take them to school.

6 Arrangements for staff

6.1 The overriding principle is that it is the responsibility of all school staff to make every effort to attend for duty at their normal school. The following arrangements will be adopted where time away from normal place of work becomes necessary as a result of severe weather.

First day of bad weather

6.2 Where a member of staff arrives late or leaves early, or is unable to attend work for their contracted hours they should make every effort to report their absence as early as possible. Where the Head Teacher is satisfied with the teacher's explanation, one of the following options can be agreed:

- a suitable programme of work to be carried out at home

6.3 Where none of the above options are possible, the Head Teacher should authorise unpaid leave.

Subsequent days of bad weather

6.4 If the member of staff is still unable to report for work on subsequent days, the following options may be available:

- a suitable programme of work to be carried out at home for up to a maximum of three days in total, subject to review each day

6.5 Where neither of the above options are possible, the Head Teacher should continue to authorise unpaid leave.

Deterioration of weather whilst at work

6.6 Should a staff member request to leave early due to weather becoming worse and their desire to head for home, before it possibly becomes too bad to travel, a Head Teacher would be expected to use suitable discretion. In such circumstances, a suitable programme of work to be carried out at home should be agreed.

Where a school is closed to pupils

6.7 All staff should attend their normal place of work. If unable to attend, the following options should be agreed with the Head Teacher:

- a suitable programme of work to be carried out at home,

6.8 If the member of staff is unable to report to their normal place of work on subsequent days or to fulfil any of the above options, unpaid leave will apply.

6.9 Where a school is completely closed to all, for example when the police or the authority deems this to be necessary, then salary payments will be unaffected.

Absence due to sickness

6.10 Where an employee is absent due to sickness on a day which is known to the Council to be a severe weather day (school closure, severe weather warnings etc.) then the Managing Sickness Absence Framework must still be followed.

Name/Job Title	Contact to staff	Contact to parents/carers	Role during Closure
Headteacher	Liase with Deputy Headteacher to decide on school closure. Contact Key stage 1 and EYFS Phase Leaders. Contact school office staff to inform of school closure.		
Deputy Headteacher	Liase with Headteacher to decide on school closure. Contact Key stage 2 Phase Leaders. To contact Kitchen Staff to inform of school closure.	School website and Facebook page message to inform parents of school decision.	
Business Manager			
Caretaker			
School Secretary		To report school closure via Eduspot (Text Message) and Parent Pay (Email)	
Phase leaders	To contact class teachers in their Phase to inform of the school closure.		
Class teachers	To contact Teaching assistants that work within their class to inform of school closure.		
Teaching Assistants			
Kitchen Staff			
Cleaners			