

FRAMWELLGATE MOOR PRIMARY SCHOOL



SEVERE WEATHER POLICY

September 2023

Introduction

This information is taken from Durham County Council's advice to Teachers and Support staff, a copy of which is available on request from the Head Teacher.

Over-riding Principle

The school will, wherever possible, remain open even if only a small number of pupils are able to attend. The school will make every effort to provide for pupils who are able to get to school, and will particularly avoid the sending home of pupils whose parents have not been contacted or where there are no arrangements to receive them at home.

Pupil attendance

After the decision has been made to close or partially close the school the Headteacher will communicate that closure to parents and staff as soon as possible. The Durham Schools Extranet allows a school representative to log in (with a school specific password) and change the 'status' of the school to 'open', 'closed' or 'partially closed'. The information will then be displayed on the website for parents and staff. In addition, when the status of a school is changed the information is shared with Durham radio stations so the closures can be broadcast.

When pupils arrive at school, arrangements will be made for their supervision and education however weather conditions may deteriorate during the day.

If a school sends some pupils home during a session but after the register has been taken, the marks in the register must not be changed.

If a school is closed to all pupils, the attendance registers show that the school was closed and pupils will not be marked as absent.

Risk Assessment/Management Risk management

Risk Assessment/Management Risk management and assessment aims to help schools identify potential risks in advance of severe snow and ice and ensure appropriate control measures are implemented.

It also assists head teachers in making the right decision on the day by adopting an approach that is grounded in common sense and being proportionate.

'The decision whether to close must, however, be for head teachers as they know their schools

and surrounding areas. They should use common sense in assessing the risks and keep their schools open.’ – Department of Education

The decision to close or restrict attendance should be taken by the head teacher of the school or in their absence by the most senior member of the teaching staff available and after the completion of a suitable and sufficient risk assessment.

The following will be considered and appropriate management systems put in place:

- Is the school building accessible?
- Are pedestrian routes on the school grounds passable?
- Is there means to clear these routes e.g. salt/grit?
- Can priority be made in respect to slopes, steps or ramps or can these areas be restricted from use?
- Can the head teacher gain enough teaching and/or supervisory staff to operate safely?

The emphasis would be to operate safely, not whether a full or normal curriculum could be followed.

- Is the school appropriately heated?
- Is there enough fuel for the day?
- Are water systems working appropriately?
- Is it possible to restrict outside play to limit the snow/ice becoming compacted and therefore more dangerous?

It is vital a risk assessment is completed prior to the decision being taken to close, in order to ensure all the safety issues have been considered and control measures implemented. It will also serve as evidence should justification be needed to defend the school closure.

During the day the head teacher will review their risk assessment. It is expected that a school will remain open until normal time for the end of the school day. However, if the revised risk assessment indicates that circumstances have changed to such an extent that the head teacher believes conditions are now unsafe, early closure may be necessary. In such circumstances the school will register the closure online at www.durham.gov.uk/schoolclosures.

Staff

Staff cannot be directed to drive in severe weather. However the expectation is that staff will make every effort to attend school during severe snow and ice except in the most extreme cases where they can demonstrate a high degree of risk or by virtue of distance or terrain and absence of transport that it's simply not possible for them to attend.

Further advice for all DCC employees can be found in Section D, paragraph 10 of the County Council's Decisions Affecting Salaries and Conditions of Service (The Green Book).

Following periods of severe weather it is the employee's responsibility to notify the Head Teacher as soon as possible of their whereabouts to enable effective communication and planning to take place.

The Head Teacher should consider asking staff what alternative arrangements they intend to make to get to work: walk, bus, train, car sharing. Please also consider planning for staff such as county clearance/gritting plans/routes etc (information about planned gritting routes can be found on www.durham.gov.uk/winterroads).

Staff should be aware that where they are unable to get to their normal place of work they are expected to report to their nearest school or educational establishment if possible. Staff should produce their I.D. to the reporting school or establishment.

The Head teacher and Management Committee note that Employees of the County Council will only grant special leave to cover absences as a result of inclement weather if the above conditions have been satisfied.

Remote Learning

If the school cannot be accessed by teachers they will be asked to teach remotely via TEAMS. A maths, English and one other subject in the afternoon. The TA in the classroom will manage and support the children to access this. This was successfully achieved during COVID 19.

If the teacher can access school they will provide live lessons for pupils via TEAMS who are not able to attend. Again this was achieved successfully during COVID 19 and resources and skills embedded to offer this.

Practical considerations including the following should also be considered:

- An employee is expected to make a genuine attempt to get to work. For instance when a bus service is operating, the fact that an employee could not get to work by car will not

necessarily be accepted as an excuse for absence.

- If possible, arrange for staff to accommodate each other locally in severe conditions if returning home is impossible.
- An agreement may be reached for certain staff not to be expected until later in the morning or to be released early.
- Staff should keep the Headteacher/ school informed of their expected time of arrival to assist with internal arrangements and as the situation develops or changes.
- Local circumstances may well differ across the County.
- Staff need to make their own decisions based on their knowledge of conditions in certain areas, but remember that they have a duty to get to work and are paid on that basis.
- The Local Authority will not unreasonably withhold pay if staff do not get to work, but must be satisfied that staff have acted reasonably and responsibly in seeking to do so.

This should be ascertained following a return to work interview when the school examines the individual circumstances and the efforts made to get to work

If a member of staff does not arrive at work either at his or her own school or at any other, this will, of course, be recorded in the normal way on the weekly absence details form which is returned to the Staffing section (Human Resources) indicating the reason for absence.

Policy Review

The policy will be reviewed annually. There are procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness in improving emergency procedures in respect of severe weather.

Monitoring

Leadership Team will monitor the policy.

The Leadership Team members will maintain records and data to help illustrate the impact that the policy has had in reducing school closures.

Evaluation

This will be done by regular reports by Headteacher to the SLT.

Review

The policy will be reviewed by the Management Committee and the Headteacher annually and adapted to fit changing circumstances and priorities.

Signed: B Smith

Date: September 2023