

WDF Severe Weather Planning

As usual at this time of year the federation checks our emergency plans especially for the chance of ice and snow through our Severe Weather Plan. I thought that I would take this opportunity to share with parents how we make these decisions and what happens.

We fully realise closing a school disrupts children's education therefore we plan for severe weather on the assumption that we will stay open wherever possible, with closure always considered as the last resort. I hope we do not have to consider closing but felt that this information may be helpful in explaining the processes.

Remaining open during Severe Weather:

Remaining open during severe weather may increase risks arising from less supervision, longer journeys to and from school, minor slips and bumps, etc. These are some of the practical steps we may take to manage these increased risks, for example:

- Reducing the extent to which children have to move between school buildings for example staying in at break times or bringing some classes together in the hall to ensure adequate supervision.
- Ending the school day early so that children do not get home too late (while making arrangements for children who cannot get collected by parents until later).

Closure during severe weather:

Closing one of our schools is never an easy option. In taking a decision to close a school, the safety of pupils, staff and visitors is of paramount importance. The decision to close is made by the governing body and myself. We take into account local weather and ground conditions, and the likely impact of the weather on the numbers of staff and pupils who will be able to get into school. Before making the decision to close, myself and the governors will undertake a risk assessment and decide if there is significant risk of severe injury, ill health or inability to comply with relevant legislation leading to the decision.

The attendance of many of our pupils will depend on road conditions locally

If the school decides to close school staff must remain at school to supervise the pupils remaining on site until they can be taken home.

In timing the decision, it is important to balance the likely accuracy of weather forecasts against the benefits of early decisions to help parents and staff plan ahead; in many cases, decisions will however need to be taken in the hours immediately before the start of the school day. However it may sometimes be necessary for schools to close during the day; for example, if the weather is deteriorating and children may not be able to get home later.

Once the decision to close has been reached we will communicate this as promptly as possible to all relevant parties, including the local authority and local radio stations.

We have a variety of methods to get information to parents, staff and pupils about closures and re-opening. These include:

- Posting notices on the school gates
- Message on website
- Messages via the local media
- School and DCC websites
- Informal parent telephone cascade