

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

YSGOL

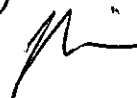
Inclement Weather Policy and Utilities Failure and Gritting Procedure

Adolygwyd a Mabwysiadwyd gan y Corff Llywodraethol/
Policy reviewed and adopted by the Governing Body

Llofnod Cadeirydd / **Chair's signature:**



Llofnod Pennaeth / **Headteacher's signature:**



Dyddiad / Date: Gorffennaf / **July 2020**

Dyddiad adolygu / **Review Date: October 2022**



Yn agored a blaengar - Open and enterprising

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This document clarifies Powys County Council's policy in relation to the impact on schools and the requirement for employees to attend work during severe or inclement weather. Its purpose is to:
- ensure the safety and wellbeing of all pupils and employees should a school have to deal with severe, inclement weather; and
 - ensure that all employees are clear about their roles and responsibilities in the event of severe weather.
- 1.2 Once the decision to close a school has been taken, the Headteacher must also notify other interested parties, including transportation and catering providers, of the decision. If the decision to close the school is made after school transport has started then staff should ensure that the parents of those children are contacted before being returned to their home. If necessary the children should be kept in school until the parents are contacted.
- 1.3 Reference should be made to the School Transport Policy document, Severe Weather or Utilities Failure -Guidance for Schools and other relevant documentation if the decision to close a school due to inclement weather is taken.

2.0 Definition

- 2.1 **Inclement weather** can be defined as snow, ice, fog and floods, which render journeys extremely hazardous.
- 2.2 **'Extremely hazardous'** includes those conditions in which the police and/or appropriate motoring organisations advise people not to make unnecessary journeys (which do not include travelling to work) or indeed travel at all.

3.0 General

- 3.1 All Schools must have contingency procedures to remain open wherever possible. The procedures must identify that the decision to close a School will only be made as a last resort.
- 3.2 The responsibility for deciding to close a school because of severe inclement weather lies with the Headteacher, in consultation with the Chair of Governors, as the Headteacher must make the decision in the light of local circumstances. The safety of individual employees who may need to travel further than pupils should also be considered when decisions are made.
- 3.3 This policy aims to maintain a service to parents and pupils for as long as is reasonably practical and that a partial closure of a school should be considered before complete closure. The Headteacher should also consider how the service can be delivered to the pupils when they only have a percentage of their staff available.
- 3.4 The interest and safety of children and employees are paramount under these circumstances. Allowing children to walk home unsupervised in potentially difficult or dangerous conditions or to return to an empty house is disallowed.
- 3.5 Employees should only be allowed to go home early if there is a genuine need on the basis of their personal safety, but decisions must be made on an individual basis.

4.0 Considerations - Pupils

- 4.1 Headteachers must comply with any request from a transport provider that wishes to transport certain pupils early as the operators may be responding to meteorological warnings. However this does not mean that all pupils should be sent home early.
- 4.2 It may be the case that only those pupils travelling on home to school transport, or those living in rural areas, need to be sent home early. There may be no safety benefits in sending home early those individuals who walk. Indeed, this may cause further problems

and may impact on other services if parents need to leave their place of work early in order to look after their children.

- 4.3 Every reasonable effort should be made to contact parents to inform them of the school's closure and to ensure the safety of pupils after they leave the school. Headteachers should consider whether it is preferable to keep children at school until they are collected. Parents should be informed in advance of the school's procedures in the event of inclement weather, and advised to listen to various radio stations for announcements about closures and requests to collect pupils.

5.0 Considerations – Employees

- 5.1 It is essential that employees who are going to be late or are unable to attend work, telephone the Headteacher as soon as reasonably practicable and no later than thirty minutes before the start of the school day. Clearly there may be times when this is not possible and allowances will be given in circumstances when there is no access to a telephone. However contact must be made as soon as reasonably practicable in such instances.
- 5.2 All employees are advised that, in circumstances where they are unable to attend their normal place of work either because the school has been closed to pupils and staff by the Headteacher, or they are unable to travel to their normal place of work then they are **not** to attend their nearest school.
- 5.3 Employees are advised that, in circumstances where conditions prevent their attendance at their normal place of work, then they and their Headteacher must agree an appropriate course of action or suitable alternative, for example:
- undertaking appropriate professional duties;
 - undertaking CPD which must be agreed with the Headteacher
 - any other reasonable local arrangement as agreed between employee and Headteacher.
 - Taking the day/part day as unpaid leave.

It is deemed that it would not be unreasonable for the Headteacher to have prepared CPD activities and if the school is closed that the CPD activity could be undertaken at home.

- 5.4 Employees may be allowed to go home early if there is a genuine need on the basis of their personal safety, or that of a dependent, but decisions must be made on an individual basis and sanctioned by line managers, and consideration given to adopting one of the alternative provisions stated in paragraph 5.3.
- 5.5 If the school has been closed by the Headteacher, **all** employees will be paid at their normal daily rate. This will include supply teachers who have attended the school to find that the decision to close has been taken or have been booked and are informed by phone that the school has been closed.
- 5.6 Any decision regarding leaving the school early must be made in consultation with the Headteacher.
- 5.7 If pupils are sent home early due to hazardous driving conditions, consideration to employees who travel to work by car should also be taken by the Headteacher and sent home if appropriate.
- 5.8 In the event that the school remains closed and the weather conditions do not improve, resulting in absence of more than one day, employees should maintain regular contact with the Headteacher.

GRITTING PROCEDURE – Ysgol Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant

Gritting of main paths and routes used by pedestrians at Ysgol Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant should be:

- **undertaken in severe frost and icy weather.**
- **undertaken by the nominated caretaker/staff on duty at the time**
- **undertaken, where possible, in the morning before staff start work**
- **undertaken in conjunction with signs being displayed at strategic locations across the site to warn staff and visitors of the dangerous conditions.**

Clearance of Snow on main paths and routes used by pedestrians at Ysgol Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant:

- **should follow as closely as possible the guidance above**
- **it is recognised that the same coverage (as with gritting) may not be achievable due to the additional effort of removing snow from pathways.**
- **Routes from car parks should take precedence, with routes onto the site being secondary.**

Other Duties:

- **Ensure that grit is always available in the bins provided**
- **Review/update and make revisions required to this procedure.**

Preferred Routes

- **These routes are subject to change by the caretaker/staff if required, depending upon the weather conditions as they present.**
- **Attach plans to demonstrate the coverage required in normal conditions and the anticipated location of the signs.**

Name _____

Date _____

July 2020

SEVERE WEATHER OR UTILITIES FAILURE PROCEDURES

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS – PUPILS

Although spells of severe weather are relatively few and far between, Governing Bodies are strongly advised to have a clear documented procedure in place for the occasions when some pupils may have to be sent home early or when a whole school may be forced to close in order to ensure the safety and well-being of all pupils and staff.

This document gives guidance in relation to severe weather procedures and exemplifies good practice. It is for Governing Bodies to determine their own procedures and to ensure that all employees are clear about their roles and responsibilities in the event of severe weather.

These procedures are principally intended in relation to severe weather but can also be applied in other circumstances e.g. heating failure, etc.

The Council and schools have a duty of care to their staff and pupils. By following the recommended arrangements below, any problems should be kept to a minimum:

1. The decision to close a school should not be taken lightly. Children have an entitlement to 190 days education annually and may also have an entitlement to a free mid-day meal. Low numbers of pupils in attendance due to weather conditions is not a reason in itself for a school to close. If the school can provide suitable staffing ratios and health and safety issues have been addressed then the school should remain open. The great majority of our schools will have pupils within safe walking distance of their homes and therefore schools should remain open for them. The fact that a headteacher or other staff cannot reach the school is not in itself an adequate reason for not opening.
2. The decision as to whether a school should close because of severe weather rests with the Headteacher, in consultation with the Chair of Governors, with the health and safety of pupils and staff being the major consideration. Powys County Council will not take a decision to close all schools but do reserve the right to suspend school transport through discussion with transport contractors. Again this decision will be based on health and safety grounds.
3. The Headteacher must make the judgement to close the school in light of local circumstances. The decision will depend on an assessment of the relevant factors including weather forecasts, the prevailing situation in the area where the school is located, whether the weather and road conditions are expected to improve later in the day, the availability of members of staff, in particular those who have to travel, and the health and safety of both pupils and staff.
4. Some schools (e.g. special schools; Welsh-medium provision; etc.) may have lengthy taxi/bus routes. Whilst conditions at the school may be reasonable, the Headteacher should make attempts to ascertain the road conditions in the pupils' home area.
5. Headteachers should consider alternatives to closure before sending all pupils home. It may be the case that only those pupils travelling by school transport or those living in rural areas should be sent home early. Sending home early those pupils who walk may cause further problems and may impact on other services if parents/carers need to leave their place of work early in order to look after their children.

6. If the decision, after consultation, is to close the school, whether for a day or part of a day, the Headteacher should ensure that the pupils are not exposed to a greater degree of danger or discomfort than they would suffer were they to remain in school. The elements of danger which are involved can vary in accordance with the age of the child and can include the following:
 - (a) the distance from school to home, and whether transport is normally provided. If transport is provided by the Authority or the school itself, it is the Headteacher's responsibility to contact the transport contractors to make the necessary transport arrangements; before deciding to send pupils home, Headteachers should ascertain whether a parent/carer will be there to receive them (see also paras. 12&13);
 - (b) there is an element of danger involved in children leaving school at other than the normal time from the point of view of general road safety, etc. and this is another factor which Headteachers should bear in mind before arriving at a final decision to send pupils home or contacting parents/carers to ask them to collect their children.

In very extreme conditions/circumstances, it may be necessary for all or the majority of pupils to be retained on the school site for a considerable time. This may necessitate instigating the school's emergency planning arrangements. Guidance for schools in producing their Emergency Management Plan can be found on the Authority's website at http://www.powys.gov.uk/fileadmin/education_docs/1855.doc

There may be other factors which should be taken into account. Basically, the rule should be that emergency action involving the closure of a school should only be instigated when all the various solutions to the problem have been examined and the dangers and discomforts weighed one against the other.

7. Once the decision to close/partially close the school has been made, the Headteacher must report the closure via the Authority's on-line 'School Closure Notification System'. On submission of the information, the school closure notice will immediately appear on the Powys website (www.powys.gov.uk). *Instructions on using the system can be found at <http://intranet.powys.gov.uk/index.php?id=5368&L=0>*
8. If a Headteacher cannot access the on-line 'School Closure Notification System', they must contact the Powys Careline (0845 0544847) who will arrange for the information to be recorded and details uploaded to the Powys website.
9. By reporting the school closure via the on-line 'School Closure Notification System', the information will automatically be communicated to the media, including the Powys and BBC websites. In addition, wherever possible, schools should publish the closure of the school on its own website. Parents/carers should be encouraged to access these websites for information rather than ringing the school or Authority.
10. It should be made very clear to parents/carers that the school is open unless a message to the contrary is broadcast via the websites / media.
11. Once the decision to close a school has been taken, the Headteacher must contact the Passenger Transport Unit and Catering & Cleaning Service. Schools should not contact the media direct - where relevant, e.g. in the case of school closures due to severe weather or heating failure, the media will be informed via an automatic link to the on-line 'School Closure Notification System'.
12. In respect of a closure during the normal school day, every effort should be made to contact parents/carers to inform them of the school's closure and to ensure the safety

of pupils after they leave the school. Schools should ensure that they have up-to-date contact details for parents/carers. Pupils under 14 years of age should not be allowed to leave the school premises until parents/carers have been notified or arrangements have been made for their care. Parents/carers should be informed in advance of the school's procedures in the event of severe weather and advised to check the Powys, BBC and school websites for announcements about closures. Requests to collect pupils should also be provided on school websites.

13. Schools should consider who else might need to be informed of the closure e.g. governors or parents/carers of children with special needs. In the case of small schools, it may be relatively easy to ensure that parents/carers are contacted before pupils are sent home; in the case of larger schools this would not necessarily be the case. Schools should therefore consider, particularly in the case of children under 14 years of age, whether it is preferable for all children, other than those who travel on home to school transport, to be kept on the premises until they are collected.
14. Once a decision has been made to close the school, for either the whole or part of a day, it is the responsibility of the Headteacher to contact transport contractors to make the necessary transport arrangements. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to ascertain which transport routes are in progress at the time of deciding to close the school and they should liaise with the transport contractors on the revised arrangements. If a decision to close the school is made after the journey to school has started the transport should continue on its journey to school and pupils not returned home until parents/carers have been contacted. Contact should be made with the Passenger Transport Unit where a change in transport arrangements would impact on services to other schools e.g. shared transport, or transport for pupils in special schools/specialist centres.
15. In the event of notification that a transport contractor wishes to transport certain pupils early, Headteachers must comply with the request, as long as contact has been made with parents/carers. This does not necessarily mean, however, that all pupils should be sent home early. Where a transport contractor is unable to provide transport in the morning because of severe weather conditions, no contract transport will be provided in the afternoon. Parents/carers who are able to convey their children to school in the morning in lieu of the normal transport arrangements should be advised that they must assume responsibility for getting their children home in the afternoon as no contract transport will be available.
16. If the Headteacher of the high school makes the decision to close the school during the normal school day and there is shared transport with neighbouring primary schools, it is the responsibility of that Headteacher to contact the schools involved to inform them of the decision to close and to ensure that transport does not run until all parents/carers have been contacted.
17. Some pupils travel to and from school on public service transport. In these circumstances it is the Headteacher's responsibility to contact parents/carers to notify them of any revised arrangements for transporting pupils home.
18. If a contractor/public service vehicle cannot deliver pupils to the normal drop off point they should return the pupils to the school and the school should make contact with parents/carers.
19. A school may, in certain circumstances, be closed to pupils but remain open to staff. The Authority's policy in relation to the arrangements for employees during severe or

inclement weather is documented in the 'Inclement Weather Policy for Schools' at http://www.powys.gov.uk/fileadmin/education_docs/2923.doc

Other considerations

➤ Transport

If a school is closed for a whole day, transport contractors are still entitled to claim 50% of the daily transport cost for each day the school is closed. Early notification of next day closure is therefore essential to prevent unnecessary costs being incurred.

➤ Recording Attendance / Absence

If a school is open only pupils who normally travel by transport provided by the Authority or the school itself and are unable to attend because of severe weather conditions should be recorded using code Y (Forced and Partial Closure). All other children should be expected to attend and should be recorded as present/absent as normal.

➤ External Examinations

All reasonable efforts should be made to ensure that students are able to take their examinations as, for reasons of security and fairness, regulations do not allow candidates to take a paper at a later date than other candidates. This may mean that a school is open only to students taking examinations.

There are a range of options for examination centres unable to proceed with scheduled examinations in severe weather, including the setting up of an alternative examination centre at a central location; students being re-entered to take their examinations in the Summer or a later examination series; or special consideration being shown to students by examining boards where it is the last examination slot for a candidate taking a re-sit i.e. awarding a grade where an examination cannot be taken or the pupil has been disadvantaged, provided there is sufficient evidence to make a reasonable judgment.

➤ Responsibility for Salting / Gritting

It is the school's responsibility to ensure that there is a safe pedestrian route into and out of the school building from the school entrance. There is no requirement to grit all of the premises but a main pedestrian route into the premises should be gritted plus any steps and the area surrounding fire exits.

In larger schools, it may be necessary to restrict routes to different parts of the school, with pupils and staff travelling via internal routes rather than going outside the school buildings. Depending on access around the school site, it may be necessary to look at a partial opening.

A limited supply of salt / grit for winter maintenance is provided as part of the County Council's Repairs & Maintenance Property Plus Scheme. Those schools who do not buy into the Property Plus Scheme are responsible for purchasing salt / grit for use on the school site.

➤ School Meals

Where possible, arrangements should be made to ensure school meals are available at least to those who are entitled to free meals.

