

12th March 2018

Dear Parents/Carers,

School closures in bad weather



I wanted to write to you following a few enquiries I have received about school closures in bad weather. As you will recall, I took the decision last week to open the school late on Wednesday morning at 10am and to allow parents to take their children home from 1pm. On the Thursday, the school was closed altogether.

When the bad weather comes, schools around the city are a key frontline service. With many parents working in the public sector and in jobs that are vital to keep the city running, we need to stay open whenever it is possible. I understand the closure of the school has a big effect on families and we take our role as the educators of your children very seriously.

The decision to close a school is never taken in isolation and never without considering a number of important factors, such as:

- The condition of the school site
- The amount of snow that has accumulated and whether there is ice
- Building conditions (such as if we have electricity, heat and running water)
- The weather forecast. We prefer not make our decision based on weather forecasts, which are not always accurate, but sometimes this is unavoidable
- The number of staff able to get into school. We have a number of staff who live a good distance from school, some in Derbyshire
- What other schools in the area are doing, particularly the infant school
- Information and advice from the local authority, police and transport

Another important decision we have to make is when to inform parents. Obviously, we want to give as much notice as possible, but also need to give time to analyse the factors mentioned above. Communication, both accurate and timely is vital in these situations and we will always do our best to inform you as quickly as possible and give you the best advice or information. During the recent bad weather, I was indebted to the support and advice from other headteachers in the area, not least of all Mrs Carr. The leaders of the schools were in constant contact with each other, ensuring we were making as informed a decision as possible.

Finally, when the decision is made to stay open as it was on Wednesday (albeit at a slightly later time to enable the site to be made safe) we still need to keep an eye on conditions. The majority of our parents live outside of the catchment area for school and from over 10 different post codes. When we got the message that some bus services were going to be stopped, we sent the message out that parents could collect their children from 1pm.

We do our absolute best in this process but we realise that often no perfect decision exists. If, based on current weather conditions, you do not feel as though it is safe for your child to attend school, use your best judgement on whether he or she should attend.

I hope that this explanation helps everyone understand the process that our school uses to make the best possible decision for all our children, parents, staff and the city as a whole.

Kind regards,

Michael Watson

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