



# Snow / Inclement Weather Closure Policy

Balfour Primary School

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## Snow/Inclement Weather Closure Policy

### Rationale

We will always do everything to remain open during snow weather; however the safety and wellbeing of our children and staff are of utmost importance to us and before making the decision to close, the headteacher undertakes a rigorous risk assessment to decide if there is significant risk of severe injury, ill health or inability to comply with relevant legislation. The decision is taken on the basis of the following considerations:

- Have the Emergency Services or Local Government advised against travel?
- Are Brighton & Hove buses running in the local area?
- Can enough staff members make their way, safely, to be able to provide a proper educational environment, including first aiders and provision required for children with Special Educational Needs?
- Can the school provide lunch for the children?
- Can the school grounds be sufficiently clear of snow/ice to be safe for access?
- Does the school have heating to the legally required temperature across the whole site?
- Does the school have lighting and hot water across the whole site?

We will also take account of local and national weather forecasts and may base our decision to close or to remain closed during a prolonged snowy spell on these.

### Snowfall overnight

If there is heavy snowfall overnight we will:

- aim to make a decision to open or close by 7:00am;
- notify parents/carers via text and the school website ([www.balfourprimary.co.uk](http://www.balfourprimary.co.uk))
- update the telephone message
- notify the following radio stations which broadcast school closures on air:
  - Heart Radio (102.4FM & 103.5FM)
  - Juice Radio (107.2FM)
- if possible, put a sign on the school gates saying the school is closed

### Snowfall during the school day

If there is heavy snowfall during the school day, we will:

- monitor the depth and rate of snowfall until it becomes apparent that conditions are likely to become unsafe for all concerned on their journeys to and from the school;
- contact parents via text, email and website to advise them that the school will close early;
- keep the children in the Hall until they are picked up;
- only allow children to be collected by parent/carer or elected collector;
- supervise children until their parents/carers arrive;
- invite members of staff who live in vulnerable geographical areas to go home at the safest opportunity.



## Safety on-site

In the event of heavy snowfall the site manager will try to ensure the main pedestrian pathways (leading to both school offices) are cleared and gritted. All foot traffic will use only these paths until other pedestrian paths can be made safe. However, completion of snow clearance will be subject to the quantity of snow fallen, the number of staff/volunteers available and prevailing and expected weather conditions.

## Snow play

We understand the enjoyment that snow brings and believe that children should be allowed to play outside during snowy conditions, as long as school safety guidelines are followed.

The headteacher will decide whether to allow the children to play outside during snowy weather and will arrange for extra supervision on the school field where necessary.

- The tarmacked playgrounds will be out of bounds during break times until the snow/ice has thawed or sufficient grit has been laid;
- Children may throw snowballs but they **must not throw them at other pupils or members of staff**;
- Children must not throw ice balls or make “slides” in the snow or ice on the playground;
- Children must be dressed warmly. Please send your child to school with warm, waterproof clothing and Wellington boots.

## Planning ahead

Please ensure that we have your current mobile/landline telephone number on our system.

If you are having difficulty getting to school to pick up your child and you will be more than 15 minutes late, please call us to let us know. We will be able to reassure your child that you are on your way.

If your child normally travels home alone after school and because of the bad weather you want them to wait to be collected, please contact school as soon as possible so that we can get a message to your child and their class teacher before home time.

## Information for drivers

Some of the local roads are particularly difficult to negotiate safely in the snow. The steep roads in and out make control of vehicles both difficult and hazardous. If you **MUST** drive to the school in the snow then the following advice should be adhered to:

- Do not attempt to reach the school’s car park unless you know it has been cleared.
- Avoid driving down Balfour Road from the Ditchling Road end.

## Student attendance during adverse weather

The school appreciates that during bad weather children may arrive later than normal. Parents should contact the school to let them know they are on their way if likely to be delayed more than 15 minutes.

The school recognises there will be isolated instances where families are cut off, even where the clear majority of children can get into school. In such instances parents should inform the school of the circumstances of this exceptional situation, as the school has a duty to clarify the circumstances of each case so as to be able to formally authorise the absence to the Local Authority.



Parents acting on the assumption that the school would be closed without gaining confirmation, or failing to inform the school of the circumstances that prevents the child coming into school risks their child being registered as an un-authorised absence.

Where the school is officially closed, all absence is counted as authorized absence.

### **Staff attendance during adverse weather**

Despite closure to students, staff still have a duty to attend the school if they possibly can. The expectation is that staff will turn up irrespective of weather conditions, except in the most extreme cases where they can demonstrate a high degree of risk, or by virtue of distance and absence of transport that it is simply not possible for them to attend. Staff are responsible for getting to work safely and each person must ultimately make his or her own assessment of the day's weather conditions and the risk that may pose. Where a decision is made by a member of staff not to travel at the start of the day, the responsibility to reach school continues during the course of the day if weather or travel conditions improve. These expectations in no way compel staff to put themselves at risk by travelling in severe weather conditions.

Please refer to the Brighton and Hove Council Adverse Weather Policy (appendix 1) for more information.

## APPENDIX 1 – BHCC Adverse Weather Policy

### Adverse Weather Policy

Where employees anticipate or experience difficulty in travelling to work due to adverse weather conditions (e.g. heavy snowfall) and are unable to reach their workplace by their normal start time they must telephone their workplace as early as possible on that day to advise their manager of the situation.

If they are unable to attend their normal workplace, their manager may make arrangements for them to go to an alternative workplace for that day or, if possible, to work from home. Employees will be credited with a normal day's pay/flexi-time for the day concerned where:

- they have experienced difficulty in travelling to work and arrive up to 4 hours late
- they have made a serious attempt to travel into work but have had to turn back because of the weather conditions and where it can be confirmed that no public transport was operating
- they have attended work but have been allowed to depart before their normal finishing time to enable them to travel home safely
- they have been able to work productively at home
- they have a recognised disability under the Equality Act 2010, and are unable to travel to work, or use alternative transport modes as a result of their impairment.

Employees who did not start out on their journey to work are required to take a day's annual leave or to book flexi-leave to cover their period of absence from the workplace. Employees who have been credited with a normal day's pay/flexi-time under this Policy will be required to confirm, in writing, to their line manager that the reasons they have given for their absence are genuine.

Managers need to be aware that employees with certain disabilities and/or physical or health conditions may find it more difficult, or be unable, to attend work when the weather is bad and in these circumstances longer term arrangements should be planned. The Reasonable Adjustments Guide for Managers covers this in more detail and recommends that arrangements (such as working from home where possible) should be planned well before the winter months.

In periods of adverse weather the priority for all managers should be the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff. In addition, extra care and precautions should be taken where colleagues have a disability or condition, that makes mobility more difficult in adverse weather, or when normal travel is disrupted.

Where an individual has a disability, health condition, or vulnerability that affects their ability to attend work during adverse weather, a manager, in consultation with the individual, may agree that it would be unwise for a colleague to attempt a journey in such conditions, where there is a risk of not being able to safely complete that journey.

For absences under these circumstances, managers may decide that a reasonable adjustment can be made, such as working from home, to ensure that the requirement to take annual leave or flexi-time does not have to be used.

Where the poor weather continues beyond the first day, managers will be expected to make appropriate plans with individuals to ensure that they are able to attend work. The above provisions are only for the first day of a period of adverse weather conditions, except for employees who are the subject of reasonable adjustments applying to adverse weather. Managers of these employees should have made alternative arrangements to maintain service delivery.

Heads of Units will determine when the weather conditions are sufficiently poor to justify the activation of this policy.