

# **Adverse Weather Arrangements**

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# 1. Rationale

Aberdeenshire has a clear presumption in favour of keeping establishments open whenever practicable, in order to minimise the impact on learning provision and associated community impact. It is recognised that the impact of establishment closures on businesses and the wider economy is significant and as well as the service provision impact on staffing levels across all public sector service areas.

## **Guiding Principles:**

- Prolonged or blanket closure of establishments across Aberdeenshire, are to be the exception. Decisions will first be taken by local managers based on local conditions, which can often differ from one part of Aberdeenshire to another.
- As far as possible, schools should provide pupils with the support needed to enable them to continue learning if schools are closed to pupils for an extended period, due to the impact of severe weather; this is equally important for the continuing education of pre school aged children.

## 2. Pre-Winter Checks – October/November

### 2.1 Business Continuity -

- identify those members of staff who may find it difficult to travel to work due to adverse weather conditions
- pre-agree possible alternative locations for those staff who fall into the above category AND whose role allows them to work from an alternative location, i.e. working in an establishment closer to their home
- where a member of staff is unable to attend their base or an alternative location, prepare work that can be completed at their home location
- Line Managers should ensure ALL members of staff are aware of the expectations and their responsibilities during periods of Adverse Weather (refer to HR policy: [Adverse Weather Arrangements Guidance](#) and Appendix 1, page 8 of this document)
- Ensure your establishments Business Continuity Plan is up to date, **especially any contact details for staff** contained within the document. Should this document be updated, ensure the Risk Management Officer receives an updated copy.
- Line managers should ensure that all members of staff are aware of the establishments evacuation procedures should the establishment have to close earlier than scheduled.

#### Schools to also ensure:

- they know their pupil travel/transport arrangements should the establishment have to close earlier than scheduled
- they have up to date contact details for pupils and their parents/carers
- they know their School Information Line pin number
- they know how to operate the School Status page on Aberdeenshire's website (see Appendix 2, page 11)
- they test their access to the School Status page, **from both school and from their 'out with hours' locations**
- agree who is to record the messages on the School Status page, the School Information Line, 'Out of Office' notification on the schools main email account and School voice mail/answer machine, where available.
- access to both the School Information Line and to the School Status page should be regularly tested.

### 2.2 Out with Core Hours Arrangements

#### All Site Managers:

Should have and check the emergency contacts numbers for the various services that might be required out with core hours, i.e. water, gas, janitorial, school transport, etc

#### School to also ensure:

- they know their School Information Line pin number
- they know how to operate the School Status page on Aberdeenshire's website

- agree who is to record the messages on the School Status page, the School Information Line, 'Out of Office' notification on the schools main email account and School voice mail/answer machine, if available
- access to both the School Information Line and to the School Status page should be tested from the agreed 'Out with Core Hours' location.

## **2.3 Communication with Service Users**

### **Schools:**

- Should pre-inform parents/carers:
  - of their schools adverse weather arrangements including access numbers for the School Information Line.
  - that, "where school transport is not running, please do not take your child(ren) to school yourself, unless it is safe to do so. If you do take your child(ren) to school, you must also be able to collect them at the end of the day"
  - that, where appropriate, learning activities for pupils will be available on GLOW and the support of parents/carers is sought to encourage their children to make use of on-line educational resources or carry out revision, in the event of a school closure

the above bullet points can be part of a newsletter as well as being included on the schools webpage
- If not organised through the school, schools should ensure that those who run breakfast clubs, after school clubs, etc are also aware of the schools adverse weather arrangements in advance of winter period.
- Head Teachers should read further advice on Appendix 2, page 11 of this document

### **L&L Centres:**

Should display their local adverse weather arrangements on public display boards, i.e. message will be left on answer machine service, if available

### **3. Closing an Establishment**

#### **3.1 Closure Responsibilities**

##### **Schools**

Schools may be closed in 2 ways:

- **blanket closure** –

only in exceptional circumstances will a decision be taken by the Director to close ALL SCHOOLS to PUPILS AND STAFF due to adverse weather.

- **decision of Head Teacher** –

in the absence of a blanket closure, it is up to the Head Teacher of each school to decide whether it should be closed. The Head Teacher must make it clear in any closure communication whether the school is closed to PUPILS ONLY or to PUPILS AND STAFF.

##### **Communicating with other Head Teachers within the same town -**

While recognising that each school within a town or large village would have different constraints in terms of where staff live, every attempt should be made by Head Teachers to coordinate school closures in a town or large village (secondary and primary schools).

##### **Schools with community facilities and staff –**

Where a school hosts a dedicated leisure facility, community centre, provide space to the community or have a leisure facility on site, Head Teachers should note that the decision to close such a facility lies with the Leisure Services.

Therefore, in the event that a Head Teacher takes a decision to close a school, they should contact the Community Leisure Officer to receive feedback on whether that community/leisure facility will continue to operate, even when the school is closed.

Janitorial/caretaking staff should be aware that a leisure facility could remain open and make the necessary arrangements around opening times, including path clearing and sanding for pool, sports centre and community facility users (leisure staff can assist with this).

#### **3.2 Communication**

Decision to close an establishment should not be taken lightly; however, every effort should be made to communicate the decision to staff and service users as soon as possible. Particular attention should be made to contact the following:

- Parents/Carers
- Service users
- Support and teaching staff (NB Visiting Specialists, Music Instructors, Escorts, external ASN provision)
- Janitorial
- Local school transport providers
- Catering services
- School Crossing Patrollers

- Landscape Services
- Out of School providers, i.e. breakfast clubs, etc
- Pre-arranged visitors to the establishment

See Appendix 2 and 3 for specific communication and responsibilities.

### **3.3 SEEMIS:**

Due to the impact on pupil attendance figures, schools require to alter SEEMIS. Detailed advice on what is required can be found on Appendix 3, page 15.

## APPENDIX 1



### **Adverse Weather/School Closure Arrangements**

#### **Staffing Guidelines**

##### ALL STAFF IN EL&L ESTABLISHMENTS

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that adverse weather conditions can prevent employees from reaching their normal place of employment. No employee will be required to attend for work if it is unsafe to do so. These arrangements apply to all employees of the Council.

##### ALL STAFF IN EL&L ESTABLISHMENTS (EXCLUDING TEACHERS AND MUSIC INSTRUCTORS)

The Council must ensure that the health and safety of its employees is not compromised, by allowing affected employees immediate access to leave entitlement (special, paid, flexi or unpaid depending on the circumstances). That said it is expected that employees should make every reasonable effort to reach their normal place of employment or an agreed alternative location.

If a Line Manager is satisfied that an employee has genuinely been prevented from attending work because of a serious effect of adverse weather such as road closure, the first day of absence will be regarded as paid special leave. **EMPLOYEES WILL BE ENTITLED TO ONE PERIOD OF PAID LEAVE IN ANY ONE INSTANCE OF ADVERSE WEATHER.** Any subsequent day(s) should be considered as flexi leave, annual leave or, (if annual leave is fixed or has been used up) unpaid leave. The normal requirement for advance notification for leave will be suspended in these circumstances.

Any alleged abuse of this policy must be subject to investigation and, if necessary, action, under the Disciplinary Policy of the Council.

As an alternative to the granting of leave an employee will, if appropriate, be required to attend at a different workplace or work from home.

**WORKING FROM HOME:** In certain circumstances Line Managers should agree that an employee can work from home. Home working must be the subject of prior agreement with the employee's line manager. The work to be undertaken at home must be agreed with the line manager and should be subject of normal managerial procedures on return to work. Where home working is authorised, the employee will be credited with normal or actual hours, whichever is greater.



**ATTENDANCE AT AN ALTERNATIVE PLACE OF WORK:** If an employee's normal place of work is open but it is deemed unsafe for him/her to travel, or if his/her normal workplace is closed, he/she will be required to attend another Council work location to which he/she can safely travel. Where possible these arrangements should be agreed and put in place prior to the advent of adverse weather. Travel expenses will be paid as appropriate.

It is the responsibility of employees to ensure that they have emergency care arrangements in place for their children, in case of a school closure due to adverse weather. If this is not possible the employee should discuss the matter with their line manager and will be entitled to take annual/ flexi/ unpaid leave. The normal requirement for advance notice of the intention to take leave will be suspended in these circumstances.

Supply and Relief Workers who are contracted to work in advance of the first day on which they are unable to attend work due to adverse weather will be credited with their normal working hours for that day.

Whilst it is appreciated that there may be operational and service delivery considerations in working during periods of adverse weather, managers are expected to ensure that employees are treated in an equitable and consistent manner and that the safety of employees is not compromised in any way. Advice should be sought from the HR Officer teams within HR as necessary.

#### TEACHERS, PERIPATETIC TEACHERS and MUSIC INSTRUCTORS

##### **Base School Open to pupils – staff able to travel**

If able to travel safely, teachers should attend their base school (or timetabled school(s) for peripatetic teachers or music instructors) to support the delivery of the curriculum and possibly cover the classes of absent colleagues.

##### **Based School Open to pupils – staff unable to travel**

If unable to travel to their base school, they should contact their base school as soon as possible to inform them they are unable to attend, and to provide work for their classes that day.

If able to travel safely to one or more other Aberdeenshire schools, normally in the same sector (primary or secondary) as the school in which they are currently employed, teachers, peripatetic teachers and music instructors should contact the alternate school(s) and offer to cover classes for absent teachers/music instructors,.

If unable to travel at all, they may choose to work from home on tasks they deem appropriate.

##### **Base School Closed to pupils and staff**

If able to travel safely to one or more other Aberdeenshire schools, normally in the same sector (primary or secondary) as the school in which they are currently employed, teachers, peripatetic teachers and music instructors should contact the alternate school(s) and offer to cover classes for absent teachers/music instructors.

If unable to travel at all, they may choose to work from home on tasks they deem appropriate.

**Base School Closed to pupils only**

Follow process above for 'base school closed to pupils and staff' but with the option of working from base school

## APPENDIX 2

### Adverse Weather/School Closure Arrangements

#### Communication Guidelines

- **COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS/CARERS**

Once a decision has been made to close a school, schools should communicate the decision as soon as possible.

In order to keep parents/carers fully informed, and to pre-empt queries, it is important that messages include the reasons for each school closure, who is effected, alternative work arrangements being followed by teachers (working in another school, working at home, etc) and any changes to school transport or school catering arrangements. This message should be kept to a minimum.

There are five methods for informing parents/carers:

**Aberdeenshire School Closures System (website):**

Schools can use the Office Computer, HT Laptop, and Curricular Computers that are connected to the Internet or a computer at home to close their school:

1. Open Internet Explorer.
2. Open the Schools Closures page by typing this address into the address bar of Internet Explorer:
3. <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/adverse/> (you could add this address to your favourites so it's easier to get to next time: click favourites, add to favourites)
4. Select your school CSN then your school from the drop down list.
5. Type your unique 10 digit ID in the box. This is the school's own private PIN. (If a school does not have this, please contact your Area Education Office)
6. Fill in the closure status message (see page 6.) Click preview (at this stage the information has not been submitted).
7. Check the information and finally click submit, to make your closure live.

To see your closure on the Aberdeenshire Council website visit the closure list:

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/closures/>

- Please remember to enter your details on the website when your school requires to be closed.
- The website is **reset at 4.00pm each day**, so a new entry will be required if your school is to close for a subsequent day.
- It is important that the website is used as Radio Stations and ELL Officers are sent an automatic email from the website if a school has been closed.

- If for any reason you are unable to get on to the website, please contact your Area Education Office (within office hours), and they will enter the details for you.

Please can schools test their access to the website, from both school and from their 'out with hours' locations.

#### **School Information Line:**

- Like the website, please remember to record a message on the School Information Line if your school is to be closed. The telephone number to call to leave a message is 0870 050 6222. The same 10 digit pin number which is used for updating the website must be entered.
- Please keep your message brief - the shorter the message, the shorter the parent/carer is on the line, and therefore, more people will get through.
- Please date stamp your message at the start. This will let parents know if a new message has been placed and can end the call quicker if they have already heard it.
- Suggestion for message "This is 2.00pm Tuesday 18 November 2013. Aberdeenshire School will be closed today for all"
- Messages are **not deleted automatically** from the School Information Line. **Please check your current message as it may be very out of date.**

#### **School Answer machine/voice mail:**

- If your school has a message facility for the main telephone (answer machine, '1521', etc), please also leave a closure message on there.

#### **School email account:**

- If there is a possibility that during a school closure, there will be no-one to reply to emails arriving in the main school account, please activate the 'out of office' message. This also applies to members of staff with dedicated Lotus Notes email accounts.

#### **School texting facilities, i.e. Groupcall:**

- If your school has texting facilities, this can also be used to inform parent/carers of a school closure or early finish.

#### **• LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR PUPILS IN THE EVENT OF SCHOOL CLOSURE**

Head Teachers should have ensured that appropriate learning activities/materials have been posted on GLOW by staff for all secondary subjects/stages and for key primary curricular areas/stages and that pupils have been advised as appropriate, including how to access these. Schools will also wish to make use of SCHOLAR, department websites/blogs and other online resources.

Parents/carers should be made aware that learning activities for pupils are available on GLOW and their support sought to encourage their children to make use of on-line educational resources in the event of a school closure.

- **COMMUNICATING WITH STAFF**

Staff should be made aware of the content of Appendix 1 and specific attention should be drawn to the different expectations of teaching staff and music instructors in relation to attending their normal place of work/other schools.

Staff should be made aware of the various communication channels, including the website, to be referred to in the event of adverse weather.

Staff should be advised not to post unprofessional or inappropriate comments on social networking sites, i.e. Facebook, in the event of a school closure. This is in breach of Council policy as stated in the Code of Practice on Social Networking.

All establishments will have an evacuation procedure in place to be followed in the event of an early closure, and on which, all staff must be briefed.

Where staff will be working from home during an establishment closure it is appropriate for discussion to take place with their Head Teacher or line manager regarding the activities to be undertaken.

Teachers should be made aware that when they cannot travel safely, even if their school is open, they should contact their school, by email or otherwise, to provide work for their classes.

- **COMMUNICATING WITH CATERING SUPERVISORS/STAFF**

Catering supervisors/staff should be contacted as early as possible where a school closure or partial closure is being considered.

In the event of parents/carers being requested to provide a packed lunch for their child it should be noted that this would apply to all parents/carers, including those whose children would normally receive a free school lunch.

- **COMMUNICATING WITH TRANSPORT OPERATORS**

Head Teachers should have discussed and agreed reciprocal contact arrangements in the event of adverse weather/school closure with their local transport operator(s), including emergency contact out with normal working hours.

Head Teachers can contact their local transport operator(s) if they wish to open the school at a later time than normal during adverse weather to allow for longer travel to work journeys by staff. Variations to pick up times have to be discussed and agreed with transport operators and posted on the school closure/adverse weather website. Only when the school website is changed from “school closed” to “school opening time changed to ...” (or similar) should PTU be alerted by emailing [school.transport@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:school.transport@aberdeenshire.gov.uk).

In previous year, Public Transport Unit have emailed relevant schools with the contact names and telephone numbers for Stagecoach Bluebird management should these be required for emergency use in relation to adverse weather/school

closure/ road conditions. As previously advised, under no circumstances should these numbers be passed to anyone beyond those who require them in order to carry out their duties or to anyone out with the Council.

- **ABERDEENSHIRE ROADS SERVICES (TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICE)**

Aberdeenshire Roads Services will clear/sand the access road to the main school entrance.

Roads Services will ensure that the Met Office and internal roads reports will be emailed on Lotus Notes to all Head Teachers from 6.00 am whenever information is received.

- **RESPONSIBILITIES OF JANITORIAL STAFF AND LANDSCAPE SERVICES IN RELATION TO SNOW CLEARING AND SANDING OF PATHS, ETC**

Landscape Services staff, or nominated contractor, will ensure that the entrance to the school car park within the school grounds is cleared/sanded. Landscape Services will also clear/sand the main staff car park and decide whether they or Roads Services clear/sand the bus park. In the first instance Head Teachers or janitors should contact their designated Landscape Services supervisor/charge hand who will make the necessary arrangements including contacting Roads Services. A list of named Landscape Services staff responsible for each school, with contact telephone numbers, has been issued to all schools.

Janitorial staff are responsible for clearing/sanding all paths within the internal school path network and Fire Exits.

- **RESPONSIBILITIES OF CARETAKERS IN RELATION TO SNOW CLEARING AND SANDING OF PATHS, ETC**

Caretaking staff have the same responsibilities for clearing/sanding all paths within the internal school path network, as would be applicable to janitorial staff.

## APPENDIX 3

### SEEMIS: BAD WEATHER / TRANSPORT PROBLEMS

Just a reminder to schools on how to deal with closure days or partial closures:

<u>Adverse Weather Circumstance</u>	<u>Absence/Attendance Recording Practice</u>
The entire school is closed because of bad weather	Remove the opening from the school register (see Advice Note 1)
The school is partially closed for particular year groups or stages	Use the SNA* code for the year groups/stages (see Advice Note 2)
The school is partially closed to some or all transport pupils and notification of this has been made on the Aberdeenshire School Closures website	Use the SNA code for the groups of transport pupils concerned (see Advice Note 3)
The school is open (or partially open) and certain groups of pupils are unable to attend due to the weather.	Use ABS absence code on receipt of note from parent explaining the circumstances for the absence

#### **Full Closure (Advice Note 1):**

If a school is closed to all pupils this should be reflected in the school calendar as a closure.

#### **Partial Closure (Advice Note 2):**

If the school is partially closed e.g. where the school has advised S1 to S3 pupils not to come to school, a SNA (should not attend) should be entered in these circumstances. This will be recorded as an attendance on the pupils' records.

#### **Partial Closure (Advice Note 3):**

If a school is partially closed to some or all transported pupils i.e. where the school has advised pupils not to travel to school, a SNA (should not attend) should be entered in these circumstances. This will be recorded as an attendance on the pupils' records.

However if a school is open to all pupils but a parent decides not to send the pupil to school due to adverse weather conditions then this should be recorded as ABS (Absent), on receipt of explanatory note from parent which will be recorded as an authorised absence in national statistics.

### **How to enter an SNA in the register (Primary)**

Application  
Attendance  
Planned Patterns  
Set SNA

Search by stage or casual group and highlight pupils on the left side of the screen. On the right hand side select start and end date then click on enter rotation pattern. Click on the boxes for the day to set SNA and then click on proceed and then save.

### **How to enter SNA in the register (Secondary)**

Application  
Pilot or Attendance  
SNAs and OATS or Planned Patterns (and Set SNA)

Search by stage or casual group and highlight pupils on the left side of the screen. On the right hand side select start and end date, then select attendance mark e.g. SNA ensure entry mode is at Set then click on enter rotation pattern. Either click on 'select all' for all periods or click on the periods for the day on the timetable until the periods show SNA and then click proceed.