



Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and
Newcastle

St Mary's RC Primary School: Snow Policy



Excellence, inspired by Gospel values

Headteacher: Mr David Miller

Chair of Governors: Mrs Michelle Harris

Date: November 2017

Date for Review: November 2019

Snow Policy

“Schools should, wherever possible, stay open in severe weather. They play a key role in their communities and by staying open help both their pupils and parents.”

Department for Education

Every winter brings the possibility of snow and ice. Extreme bad weather can cause widespread and prolonged disruption. Schools are often affected and it can be difficult to maintain an education service. As a fundamental principle every effort must be made to keep schools open, even if only limited numbers of pupils can attend. However, schools may close due to 'unavoidable' circumstances. Those circumstances being that it is no longer safe for staff or pupils to be onsite.

We recognise that it is important that our school remains open so parents are able to work and pupils can continue to learn. St Mary's RC Primary School will make every effort to prepare for severe snow/ice this winter by e.g. gritting pathways, clearing access points and gateways, salt school yard and high traffic routes within the school grounds, place staff outside where appropriate.

In the event of disruption caused by heavy snow, the prime concern of the school will always be the safety of the pupils and staff. The decision whether or not to send a pupil to school, however, must be at the discretion of the parents, taking into account factors such as local road conditions and the availability of childcare.

The school aims to remain open in the event of snow. We feel this is important for the children's education. **In the event of heavy snowfall, we cannot guarantee a normal school day.**

However, there are certain factors which may lead to the school closing, such as whether:

- There are enough members of staff to be able to provide satisfactory care;
- The severity of the weather conditions is on such a major scale that it is unlikely that many people will be able, physically, to make it into school;
- The school can provide lunch for the children;
- The school grounds are sufficiently safe for children, parents and staff;
- The school has sufficient heating;
- The school has lighting and hot water across the site;
- External agencies, e.g. police, local government, motoring organisations, etc., are advising against school travel in our region.

How will we let you know if the school is closed?

However, if we do experience severe snow/ice resulting in hazardous conditions, the Headteacher may have to take the decision to close the school. Once this decision has been made we will notify parents via the Durham Closures website. To determine whether St Mary's RC Primary School is open or closed please visit:

www.durham.gov.uk/schoolclosures

Search for the school in the search box. The Durham Closures website can also be used to find out if other services in Durham are open or closed, such as nurseries, children's centres and libraries.

We also recommend parents maintain up to date emergency contact details to receive notification by SMS text alerts with the school. This service will send an SMS alert to let parents know if St Mary's RC Primary is closed. Parents can also listen to local radio stations to hear if the school has closed.

Local radio Stations which will announce School closure will be:

BBC Newcastle
Star Radio
Capital FM
Metro Radio

We will also update our school website as soon as possible; when checking the website regularly, remember to press F5 to refresh for updates.

When the school is open, we will remain open until the end of the normal school day at 3.30pm if possible. However, the amount of snowfall may dictate an early closure. During periods of snowfall all parents/ carers are advised to have a 'plan' for collecting children early at very short notice; forward planning will minimise disruption and stress.

If, for the reasons outlined above, the safest decision is to close the school early we will post this on the website, circulate information via ParentPay and answer machine as soon as possible as well as notifying you of this by text.

If the school is closed it is the responsibility of the Headteacher to ensure that the following events happen:

- The decision is ratified with the Chair/Vice Chair of Governors
- The school website and ParentPay is updated
- The information "snow tree" is activated (staff contact information)
- The information is passed to Metro Radio (97FM) and Local Authority Emergency School Closures
- The school office answer phone is amended to as a short closure message if possible.
- Notices are placed on all school entrances advising visitors, parents and pupils that the school is closed if a member of staff is able to access the building.
- School is appropriately staffed by teachers/teaching assistants and Governors to deal with any pupils who arrive at school unescorted until parents or emergency contacts can collect the pupils.

These tasks do not all have to be completed by the Headteacher, although he has the overall responsibility for ensuring each has been carried out.

Staff Attendance

Although, it is recognised that severe weather conditions make it difficult for staff to get to and from work, unless directed to the contrary by the Headteacher, then the expectation is that staff will present themselves for work. It is appreciated that the journey may take longer than normal and therefore some staff may not be able to arrive before the normal start of school time.

If the school is closed to children, again in severe conditions, staff must make a judgment about the safety of travelling and inform the Headteacher as soon as possible. Staff who live in walking distance of the school must make every effort to attend, provided the paths within the school have been cleared. If staff cannot attend school they must work from home on planning, marking, preparation of teaching resources etc. All staff should be able to access the Durham extranet and access school email.

Clearance of Snow

Within the school site, the school is responsible for snow clearance and the clearance of school paths is the specific responsibility of the Caretaker. Volunteers can put their names down to help with the clearing of the snow. When severe weather is forecast, the Caretaker should be tasked to lay salt and grit on arrival. If heavy snow falls over the weekend, the Headteacher and Caretaker should be in regular contact to ensure the safety of the premises.

The clearance of public roads and public paths is the responsibility of the Highways Department and the LA.

Children's safety in school

If there is any question of children's safety being at risk, the school has a responsibility in inclement weather to keep the children indoors. Prior to pupils being allowed to play outside in the grounds, they will be warned by their teachers not to throw snowballs near windows, not throw snowballs at other children, make slides on footpaths and to take extra care when playing in the snow. Classes will go outside with the teachers on duty and Headteacher/ Deputy Headteacher, provided it is safe. Children who do not have wellies/boots/change of suitable shoes will be supervised in the school hall by a member of staff who is on duty.

What can you do to help?

- Please visit www.durham.gov.uk/winterroads for more information about gritting routes and travel issues around Durham so you can plan your journey.
- Please provide your child with appropriate clothing and footwear. Don't forget suitable warm clothing such as - gloves, hats, scarves, wellies etc. or even a change of clothing.
- Please approach the school using the main gates.

- If you are a working parent or feel you may have a problem with a sudden earlier pick up, please could you put a back-up plan in place with another family member or parent and inform the school. This will allow staff to leave earlier for their safety if weather dictates.

Frequently asked questions

The series of frequently asked questions below should answer any queries you may have.

Will parents be contacted in the event of snow?

Our website www.blackhillstmary@durhamlearning.net should be consulted regularly. (Remember to press F5 to refresh for updates.) We will also endeavour to send everyone a clear message via ParentPay.

This document - 'Snow Policy' can be found on the school website and gives clear instructions for snow days.

Do I need to contact the School?

There is no need to contact the school regarding your decision to travel or not; this will help avoid blocked phone lines.

To travel to school or not?

Parents have to decide whether it is safe and desirable for them to make the journey into school. If the school is open, and once we have established which pupils we have on site, we will construct a schedule for the day which will include, where possible, relevant academic work - and a range of activities aimed at making the day as productive as possible.

Does it matter what time we arrive at school?

We will expect children to arrive at school on time, but appreciate that this may be difficult. If the children are late it is important that children sign in and register at the front office.

What will happen if heavy snow arrives during the school day?

We will try to stay open till the end of the day if it is deemed safe. However, if you wish to collect your child(ren) from school before this time, you are welcome to do so, but please ensure you come to the school office. Anyone struggling to collect their child by 3.30pm, due to poor road conditions, transport arrangements, etc., should contact the school to inform us of the likely collection time.

Will there be after school activities?

There will be no after school activities or tea club if we have closed early. However, should you be delayed in collecting your child, please ring the school office to keep us informed. As always, we will look after the children until you are able to get here, but please remember that members of staff will be also be anxious to get home if the weather and road conditions are poor and we have a duty of care towards them too.

Many thanks for your support in helping St Mary's RC Primary School remain open during periods of severe snow/ice.

Monitoring and Reviewing

The Snow Policy will be reviewed on a biennial basis.

This policy was reviewed by *Governors* on: November 1st 2017

Signed:

Name: (Headteacher) Date:

Name: (Chair of Governors) Date: