

Information for parents in relation to severe weather conditions

When it comes to severe weather conditions such as heavy snow, we work in accordance to advice from the Department for Education and we will always try to keep the school 'open for as many pupils as possible whenever it is reasonable' to do so. We are aware of the disruption closing the school causes 'to children's education, to their parents and to the economy.'

We realise that it 'is for individual schools to make any decision to close' and that a decision about whether to close or to stay open 'should however be based on a common sense approach, having regard to the conditions at the school and the need to continue to provide an education to children whenever feasible.'

The following information is taken directly from the Department for Education's advice on severe weather. to schools

What about health and safety - is the school site safe?

In most cases the headteacher has day to day responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of staff, pupils and visitors. In severe weather conditions such as heavy snow, we expect headteachers to keep schools open for as many pupils as possible whenever it is reasonable for them to do so. The HSE is very clear that schools should plan ahead and take a sensible and proportionate approach to managing the associated risks. Closing a school could be a reasonable decision if pupils or staff would face significant risks of serious injury. But in many cases it will be possible to keep a school open, as happens routinely in other countries with more severe winters than ours. Where roads are impassable it becomes a practical issue of access not health and safety considerations. For further advice see [Departmental advice on health and safety](#).

What about the attendance statistics?

Headteachers should not be worried about the impact that remaining open may have on their attendance statistics. In September 2010, we amended the relevant regulations so that, when a pupil cannot get in because of severe weather, the school can mark the register using absence code Y, which means that the pupil's absence will not affect the attendance statistics. However, if the headteacher believes that a child could have got to school, then the child should be recorded as code O - an unauthorised absence.

What if a number of school staff are unable to get in?

Schools have the flexibility to work creatively, perhaps bringing together groups and classes with teachers and support staff working together. There are no maximum general pupil-teacher ratios set out in law; with the exception of the infant class size legislation that limits the size of infant classes to 30 or fewer with a qualified teacher for 5, 6 and 7 year olds. The infant class size limit, which includes reception classes, will not apply unless the majority of the children will reach age 5, 6 or 7 in that school year.

The infant class size limit does not apply to activities normally carried out in larger groups, for example assemblies, sports and other structured or un-structured activities that the school may choose to provide as part of maintaining a good service.

I hope this information is useful.

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