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Inclement Weather and/or Disruption to Service Policy

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Revised Guidance for Schools – Appendix 1 (Dec14)

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1. Introduction

It is the contractual obligation of all employees to ensure that they attend for duty at their place of work at the appointed time. It is also the contractual obligation of all employees to attend for duty for the period of contracted hours as defined in the contract of employment (statement of main terms and conditions) in order to qualify for full payment in accordance with the terms of the contract of employment.

This policy applies to all staff employed by Ceredigion County Council (except those school based teaching / support staff for whom the Governing Body sets the local terms and conditions of employment – See Appendix 1 – Guidance for Schools) and should be implemented by managers in dealing with staff who face difficulties in getting to and from work due to inclement weather, a major disruption of road services, fuel crisis or other relevant major incident. This policy also covers instances where it is felt necessary for staff to be sent home on grounds of health and safety.

Inherent within all of its practices the organisation is committed to the principles of diversity, equality of treatment and equality of opportunity and believes that direct or indirect discrimination against any person is unacceptable. The aim of this policy is to ensure that all staff are treated fairly, equitably and reasonably and in a consistent manner. It also aims to ensure that no employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, civil partnership/marital status, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, creed, religion/belief, disability, age or trade union membership, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which are not justified by the job.

This policy shall be deemed to cover instances where:

- Staff are prevented from attending for duty due to inclement weather or the dislocation of public transport
- Staff arrive for duty late due to inclement weather or the dislocation of public transport
- Staff leaving their place of duty early due to inclement weather or the dislocation of public transport
- Staff who are unable to attend work or have to leave early due to caring responsibilities during periods of inclement weather or the dislocation of public transport
- Staff are sent home on the grounds of health and safety

2. Responsibilities

It is the duty of each individual member of staff to make their own arrangements to get to work at the normal time. It is, however recognised that some staff may, at times, experience severe difficulties in getting to and from work as a result of inclement weather and/or disruption to travel services. However, staff are expected to make all reasonable attempts to attend work in order for services to be maintained even if this means they will arrive late. There may be instances where it is necessary for staff to be sent home on the

grounds of health and safety. Examples of this are where the premises become dangerous, or where essential services such as water are not available for prolonged periods of time. Where the risk assessment determines that it is unsafe to remain inside the workplace, and no suitable alternative workplace is available, staff will be sent home on full pay. If a member of staff considers that their personal safety is at risk then he/she should raise the matter with their Manager at the earliest opportunity. Managers have a responsibility to ensure that this policy is adhered to and consistently applied.

3. Definitions

Disruption to travel services can be defined as:

- Severe weather conditions which result in delays/cancellations to public or private transport
- Major disruption to public services and private transport due to major accidents
- Industrial action by public transport services i.e. road/rail
- Fuel crisis
- Other major incidents involving police, fire and ambulance services

“Inclement weather” can be defined as snow, ice, fog, floods, which render extremely hazardous journeys by road. This can be to both public and/or private transport.

“Extremely hazardous” is defined as those conditions in which the police and/or appropriate motoring organisations advise people not to travel at all as a result of local weather conditions.

Staff will be expected to make every effort to use alternative modes of travel to get to work if their normal arrangements are disrupted.

“Make all reasonable attempts” - a member of staff cannot be instructed to drive in conditions they consider to be dangerous. However, they need robust reasons not to turn up for work and ultimately the decision is their responsibility.

4. Action to take when staff are unable to attend for work or need to leave early

Where members of staff are unable to attend for work, will be late or need to leave work early as a result of any of the above situations they should inform their manager as soon as possible through the normal notification channels. The Manager should then:

Record any absence from duty and either:

a) Approve the use of annual leave, flexi-time or any time in lieu hours outstanding;

b) Arrange for the individual to take time in lieu and make up the time owed to the Council on another occasion.

c) Agree for leave without pay to be taken

This arrangement will also apply to those staff with caring responsibilities.

5. Extended working

Managers may request staff to extend their hours of work to maintain services during periods of inclement weather. Any additional hours worked will be paid at the appropriate rate for the employment group. Alternatively time off in lieu would be available.

6. Sending Staff Home on Health and Safety Grounds

If it is decided by managers in accordance with the organisation's risk assessment processes that there is a significant risk to employees if they remain in the building because of any Health and Safety reason then this must be agreed with the Chief Executive and/or relevant service Director. If, as a consequence, staff are either sent home or advised not to attend for duty, then the Chief Executive and/or Director should communicate how this time will be reimbursed- i.e. if staff should work at home, receive full pay. This should be clearly communicated by the Chief Executive/Director and cascaded by way of e-mail to all the relevant managers, who will then notify employees affected and confirm working arrangements with them in accordance with this policy.

7. Physical / Health Problems

During adverse weather conditions the Authority recognises that there are employees who have specific physical or health problems that will cause them difficulty in attending work or remaining in work if weather conditions deteriorate. For employees who consider that they require special consideration then they should discuss their individual circumstances with their line manager. To ensure consistency of approach, managers should consult with the Personnel Section when dealing with such situations. It might be necessary to discuss individual cases with Occupational Health in order to obtain appropriate advice.

8. Training

All Managers are expected to read the policy and be knowledgeable of their responsibilities in order to apply the policy correctly.

9. Contingency Planning

It might be appropriate for staff to investigate public transport routes, possible lifts and/or car sharing opportunities prior to the on-set of winter.

10. Interpretation

Advice on the interpretation and application of this policy may be obtained from the Corporate Personnel Section who will formally record each decision

and make them available to all departments to ensure consistent application of the Policy.

11. Grievance arising from policy

Any member of staff who feels aggrieved with any decision in respect of this policy should follow the Council's Grievance Procedure.

12. Monitoring

Records of absences should be recorded as per any other absences by way of individual timesheets or attendance records.

INCLEMENT WEATHER CONDITIONS – GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

To: All Headteachers

We are fortunate that spells of severe weather are relatively few and far between. On these few occasions however, there is often confusion and a general lack of direction and guidance. With this in mind, this policy and guidance note has been prepared by the LEA. Governing bodies are strongly advised to have a clear documented procedure in place for the occasions when some pupils may have to be sent home early or when a whole school may be forced to close because of severe weather in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all pupils and staff.

This document gives Ceredigion County Council's recommended policy in relation to severe weather and exemplifies good practice. It is for governing bodies to determine their own procedures and to ensure that all employees are clear about their roles and responsibilities in the event of severe weather.

These procedural notes are principally intended in relation to severe weather but can also be applied in other circumstances e.g. due to heating failures etc. The LEA and schools have a duty of care to their staff and pupils. By following the recommended arrangements below, this should minimize any problems.

As a fundamental principle every effort must be made to keep schools open, even if only limited numbers of pupils can attend. **There is a legal requirement to keep schools open for children to attend for 190 days per year** (380 sessions), but they may close “unavoidably” if certain conditions apply, which usually means health and safety reasons.

The responsibility for deciding to close or restrict attendance because of severe weather lies with the Headteacher, preferably in conjunction with the Chair and/or Vice Chair of Governors. The Headteacher must make the judgment in the light of local circumstances. Before arriving at that decision, the Headteacher must take steps to ascertain the situation at the school itself. Very frequently the amount of snowfall varies very considerably from area to area. Members of the public cannot understand why schools have to be closed when they themselves have travelled without great difficulty past that same building on their way to work etc. The decision cannot be made by LEA staff who will not necessarily be aware of the weather conditions prevailing in different parts of the County, or the particular circumstances which relate to individual schools. LEA staff can however be consulted and offer advice in the knowledge of these local circumstance, albeit that the final decision is that of the school.

Before deciding whether to close, schools need to consider a range of factors such as:

- Whether there are **on-site** hazardous conditions that cannot reasonably be

mitigated (for example the pathway to the school entrance or where pupils have to move around the site during the school day)

- Will there be enough staff to supervise (but not necessarily teaching) the number of children likely to be present?
- Can a reasonable temperature be maintained in the building or parts of the building where children and staff are likely to be?
- Is water available and are sufficient toilets working satisfactorily?

Announcing school closure or partial closure

Once a decision is taken to close, then schools should implement the Ceredigion School Alerts Service system (see below) in order to notify the Local Authority.

You should use the Ceredigion School Alerts Service to notify of any school closure or partial closure on each day of closure and where appropriate which years are affected etc.

If health and safety conditions are satisfied, then the school should remain open.

During each day Headteachers will probably want to review whether or not the school should be closed early in the afternoon to enable pupils and staff to travel home in safety, or before the light fails. It is also essential to let other agencies know of school closure, e.g. school transport, catering and cleaning contractors, etc.

A school must **never** close completely unless the Headteacher is certain that no child will present him/herself. Arrangements must always be made for the security of children and parental assent must be sought if sending them home.

Please remember that you cannot direct a member of staff to drive in conditions they consider being dangerous, but they should be able to demonstrate that they have considered all other travel options.

CEREDIGION SCHOOL ALERTS SERVICE

Introduction:

The Ceredigion school alerts service is used to inform the LEA of any unplanned closures to your school.

Examples of unplanned closures include inclement weather or industrial action.

Once you have informed the LEA using this system your closure information will appear instantly on the Ceredigion Website, Council run social networking sites and a text/e-mail alerting service is also available for parents to subscribe to.

Informing the LEA of a closure:

In your Ceredigion School alerts pack, you will have received a card with your school name, DFES number and your pin number.

Your alert is telephoned through to a simple automated service similar to telephone banking. The call can be made through any telephone.

Options available:

To keep the system simple there are relatively few options, after logging in with your DFES number (local 4 digit portion) and a 6 digit pin, you have two basic choices, date you are announcing closure for (either today or tomorrow) and whether your school is open, closed or partially open.

The basic path through the system is:

Dial	DFES?	Confirm?	PIN?	When?	Status?	Confirm?
01545 572008	XXXX	Yes = 1 No = 2	XXXXXX	Today =1 Tomorrow = 2	Open =1 Closed = 2 Partial = 3	Yes = 1 No = 2

Worked Example:

So for example, if your DFES number is **1234** and your PIN **123456**, and you wanted to inform that your school is **open today**, you would:

1. Dial 01545 572008
2. Enter **1234** when prompted for your DFES number.
3. Listen carefully as your DFES, school name and telephone number read back by the system.
4. If your DFES and telephone number are correct, then press 1 to confirm.
5. Enter the six digit pin number **123456** when prompted. After entering your PIN, press * button.
6. When asked for the closure date, enter 1 for Today, 2 for Tomorrow.
7. When prompted for your status, enter 1 for Open, 2 for Closed, 3 for Partially open.
8. The system will confirm that you are reporting for <your school name>, is open on <today's date>.
9. Press 1 to confirm.
10. Wait for the system to confirm your announcement is live.
11. The system will hang up.

Questions and Answers:

Q: When can we start using the system?

A: *The system is ready to use immediately.*

Q: When is the system available?

A: *The system is available 24 hours a day, so you can call in as soon as you've made a school decision.*

Q: Does this system replace our existing school website or texting services?

A: *Not necessarily, we expect you to still retain your existing communications channels, particularly for larger schools where closures are not so clearly defined. We will for instance refer parents and pupils to your school website / telephone for schools which are partially open.*

Q: When should I report a school as open?

A: *If your school has been closed due to inclement weather it is as important to inform parents that the school is open, please phone in an "open" status as soon as you have made a decision.*

Q: Where can we view the school status?

The school alerts page will be available permanently on the Ceredigion website frontpage.

Parents can also find us on facebook: "Ceredigion school alerts" or follow us on twitter @ceredigionsa . Please go ahead and publicize this facility to parents and pupils.

Q: I've made a mistake entering a closure, what should I do?

A: *ASAP after making the incorrect entry you should phone back and reverse the decision, e.g. if opening you should then close.*

Q: Is the system bi-lingual?

A: *Unfortunately the telephone system is only available in English due to technical limitations with our voice system technology. However all of the outputs (texts, website, Twitter and Facebook) are fully bilingual.*

Q: Who can make the call?

A: *The card is sent for use by the head-teacher, however we reasonably expect that the facility may be used by other trusted members of staff. It is the head-teachers responsibility to keep the pin secure.*

Q: If we don't want to use this service?

A: *You are under no obligation, however your school status will not appear on the Ceredigion website or other sites that use the Ceredigion website as a source (eg: BBC News).*

Q: I have further questions or difficulties?

A: *Please e-mail addysg@ceredigion.gov.uk or call Nia James on: 01970 633364*

SEVERE WEATHER TOOLKIT

Advice for headteachers – how to prepare for severe weather conditions.

This will help you make a comprehensive risk assessment and prepare your staff and pupils for eventualities related to extreme weather conditions. To prepare for opening when there are severe weather conditions, headteachers should take the following action.

- Ensure grit stocks are plentiful and fuel has been stocked.(See attached document To Grit or Not To Grit)
- Check weather forecasts regularly via news and websites.
- Ensure staff travel distance is mapped and plan is in place for designating staff who can get in by walking/short drive (five miles) / long drive (10 miles) / very long drive (10 miles +). Take into consideration disability, nervous/new drivers, four-wheel drive and other things that affect ease of journey.
- Your decision making regarding expectation of staff arrival will be based on this, i.e. staff will indicate likelihood prior to event. **Please remember, you cannot direct a member of staff to drive in conditions they consider to be dangerous.** They do, however, need robust reasons not to turn up and ultimately the decision is their responsibility.
- Guidance on the non-attendance of staff due to severe weather is included in the Authorities 'Policy on Leave of Absence for reasons other than personal illness.

See planning check list

Ice, frost and snow

To reduce the risk of slips on ice, frost or snow, you need to assess the risk and put in a system to manage it.

1. Identify the outdoor areas used by pedestrians most likely to be affected by ice, for example: - building entrances, car parks, pedestrian walkways, shortcuts, sloped areas and areas constantly in the shade or wet.
2. Monitor the temperature, as prevention is key. You need to take action whenever freezing temperatures are forecast.
3. Put a procedure in place to prevent an icy surface forming and/or keep pedestrians off the slippery surface (See attached document To Grit or Not To Grit)

Checklists

Risk Management Checklist for headteachers re: inclement weather conditions

PLANNING	√ when complete
Preparation to minimise risks on site is complete (including plentiful grit)	
Plan for easy access and exit is in place	
Plan for movement around school is in place	
Supervision levels are acceptable	
There are regular weather checks	
All boilers and other heating equipment is well maintained and fuel is at correct level	
Letter to all parents/carers is sent	
Communicate the need for a packed lunch if school lunches are not available	
Consider late opening – prepare message for staff, parents/carers	
Plan to track variable attendance of pupils who arrive later and/leave earlier than school opening times	

In the event of severe weather conditions your decision will be made on assessing the risk

Please assess risk under the following headings (once you have taken action to minimize risk)

High		Satisfactory	OK
1	Site		
2	Access		
3	Temperature inside buildings		
4	Levels of supervision		
5	Other		
6	Toilets/water		

A guide to the approach here is: if you can get children safely into school and they can remain inside, the temperature is right, toilets and taps are functioning and you are comfortable with the levels of supervision, you should stay open. On, hopefully, rare occasions, schools will be looking after children and not providing teaching and learning due to levels of supervision.

If you decide to close schools, you must ensure all children who need to have parental/carer supervision at home are collected prior to total school closure.

SEVERE WEATHER - SCHOOL CLOSURE CHECKLIST

To be completed by the Headteacher prior to every school closure or part closure relating to severe weather.

Name of school:	
Extent of closure (please specify):	
Date & time of expected school closure:	
Expected duration of closure:	

Reason for closure (please tick box):-

Adverse weather report for local area	Yes	No	If yes, detail source:
Adverse road conditions in area	Yes	No	If yes, please detail (e.g. snow, flood, road blocked):
On-site hazardous conditions that cannot reasonably be mitigated (for example the pathway to the school entrance or where pupils have to move around the site during the school day)	Yes	No	
Will there be enough staff to supervise (but not necessarily teaching) the number of children likely to be present?	Yes	No	
Can a reasonable temperature be maintained in the building or parts of the building where children and staff are likely to be?	Yes	No	
Is water available and are sufficient toilets working satisfactorily?	Yes	No	
Power supply interrupted	Yes	No	
Structural damage at school	Yes	No	If yes, please detail:
Transport operator not running service	Yes	No	If yes, please detail service runs:
Notification:	Yes	No	
School Staff			
Pupils			
Parent/Guardian			
School transport			

Designated Responsible Person:

To Grit or Not to Grit During Icy Conditions

Guidance for Schools in Determining their Policy

Fortunately schools do not have to consider this issue on a regular basis, however when the situation arises schools must be prepared to take appropriate action in accordance with their policy.

The following information will be of assistance in considering the policy

1. The responsibility as to whether to grit or not rests with the school.
2. If the school decides not to grit during icy conditions the Headteacher and Chair of Governors will have to decide whether the risk of injury to pupils and staff (and parents where they are allowed onto the site) is such that the school will have to close.
3. It should be noted that if the school has already ordered grit and stored in a container located in a place visible to parents, then there is an expectation to grit.
4. Before deciding on a policy to grit the following issues will have to be considered.
 - a. Who will undertake the work and is there any payment required
 - b. Where to grit – direct route from gate to main entrance – any routes to outside classrooms plus any other areas considered necessary.
 - c. Who will decide whether to grit - Headteacher, Caretaker or Cleaner in Charge
 - d. Parents have on occasions offered to do the work as volunteers – in this respect a copy of the guidance received from the Finance Department in respect of the Insurance Provision – use of Volunteers is attached for guidance.

Note

Gritting should be carried out when frost, ice or snow is forecast or when walkways are likely to be damp or wet and the floor temperatures are at, or below freezing. The best times are early in evening before the frost settles and/or early in the morning before employees arrive. Salt doesn't work instantly; it needs sufficient time to dissolve into the moisture on the floor.

If you grit when it is raining heavily the salt will be washed away, causing a problem if the rain then turns to snow. Compacted snow, which turns to ice, is difficult to treat effectively with grit. Be aware that 'dawn frost' can occur on dry surfaces, when early morning dew forms and freezes on impact with the cold surface. It can be difficult to predict when or where this condition will occur.