

BROWNLEE PRIMARY SCHOOL



Severe Weather Policy ***2017***

Brownlee Primary School Severe Weather Policy

Information and advice on unavoidable school closures and travel arrangements in difficult weather or other unforeseen circumstances. Issued: January 2017

Definition of an Exceptional Closure

An exceptional closure is unplanned and is due to unforeseen circumstances such as adverse weather conditions, power failure or situations which might affect the safety of the pupils and staff.

The following action plan details the measures which the school will undertake to –

- Ensure the safety of pupils and staff
- Keep parents informed about arrangements for closure and re-opening
- Arrange for pupils to be picked up during the school day should the need arise.

When it snows during the school day;

On rare occasions, the weather can be so severe that getting to and from school becomes hazardous. This is especially so if the weather worsens in the afternoon. Really bad weather is disruptive and can cause anxiety and stress. Understandably, many parents ring the school if snow starts falling heavily during the day. It can be frustrating trying to get through when our outside line is engaged by other parents calling for the same reason! A jammed line and answering queries can in turn delay office staff, who are trying to get through to parents to arrange for early collection of children. We will ensure that our website www.brownleeprimary.org is updated throughout the day regarding any developments which mean that the school has had to close unexpectedly. We will also contact parents by text service. It is important that parents update the school of any changes to mobile phone contacts. Decisions about closing the school or sending pupils home early are always difficult to make. We need to gather reliable information before making a judgement. We check weather reports, get advice from the Education Authority and try to access what is happening elsewhere in the area. The decision to close school during a working day is not taken lightly but the over-riding principle is the safety of pupils and staff. It is the responsibility of the Principal, in consultation with senior staff, to determine if the school will close. The decision is taken on an individual basis and not based on those of neighbouring schools whose circumstances may differ.

If the weather deteriorates during the day;

1. The school will be closed early but only in extreme cases.
2. The decision to close the school will be made by the Principal and other key senior staff.
3. Any decision to close the school early will be passed on to staff and pupils as soon as we have arrangements in hand, posted on the website and parent and staff text message sent.
4. School will be kept open with as many staff as is possible on hand, until the last pupil has left.
5. It is not possible for pupils to be given lifts by staff.

If the school is to be closed due to adverse weather overnight

In extreme weather conditions such as heavy snowfall during the night, the Principal will make a decision on the need to close the school as early as possible. In reaching this decision, it usually means that the approach roads and/or the school grounds are inaccessible and opening the school would be deemed unsafe for staff and pupils to travel.

Prior to taking the decision to close the school, the following questions need to be considered;

1. Can parents, pupils and staff access the school building safely?
2. Are pedestrian routes in to school safe and accessible- has grit been applied?
3. Can pupils and staff be evacuated in an emergency?
4. Is safe parking possible within the vicinity of both school grounds, until remedial action has been taken to make the area passable?
5. In an emergency, can the Emergency Services access the school?
6. Have local weather forecasts and road conditions, including those for areas from which staff will be travelling, been considered?
7. Are there any areas within the school locality particularly impassable or dangerous in times of extreme bad weather?
8. Are there any N. Ireland Met Office warnings available?
9. Can the school premises be heated?
10. Is there provision of water for sanitary use or drinking?

Other considerations;

1. Can enough Teaching Staff and Classroom Assistants attend school to ensure the adequate supervision of pupils?
2. Is the severe weather likely to clear quickly and allow safe access to the school building?

The above questions will form part of our Risk Assessment.

Decisions on closure the night before can only be taken when all the indications are that adverse weather conditions will continue overnight, or that the amount of snow that has already fallen would make travel to the school extremely difficult. If there are doubts, a final decision will be deferred until early morning. If it is decided that it would be impossible to open the school, the following action will be taken to inform parents:

1. The school closure will be posted on our website **www.brownleeprimary.org** hopefully by 7.45a.m.
2. The BBC has been working with C2k school computer system to streamline their service for schools and all closures due to adverse weather that are recorded via the C2k My School function, will be automatically forwarded to the BBC. This is now the only way BBC will be informed.
3. The school will endeavour to contact all parents by text to inform them of the school closure.

How parents can help

- Check the school website and BBCNI.
- Plan ahead with your child what to do in a bad weather emergency.
- Keep looking at our website and check for texts. (Ensure school has up to date Mobile numbers)
- Only call the school if you really have to.