

SCHOOL CLOSURES DUE TO SEVERE WEATHER GUIDANCE

Background

The guidance is intended to provide some advice around the circumstances when it is appropriate to close, confirm that responsibility for choosing to close rests with yourselves as head teachers and clarify the procedure for closing. This guidance also includes some of the key HR guidance around attendance at work during periods of very bad weather.

Whilst this guidance is mainly aimed at closures due to severe weather it can also be used for other unplanned closures that occur due to unforeseen circumstances.

NB: the BBC telephone number for reporting school closures is for use by schools only. It is not a general information line for parents to get school closure information from and should not be given to parents to ring for this purpose as this jams the line and delays schools reporting closures.

Decision to close

The decision to close a school due to snow or severe weather is the responsibility of the head teacher of the school concerned, in consultation with the chair of governors. The LA can advise and support in this decision but the decision will remain the responsibility of the head. In taking this decision head teachers will want to consider the following:

- Health and Safety – will remaining open constitute a significant risk to pupils and/or staff
- Availability of staff – has the severe weather meant that a significant number of staff have been unable to attend making it impossible to open

Schools should remember that the first priority however should always be to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of staff, pupils, parents and visitors to the site.

Alternative options to closure

Where practical, schools may wish to consider opening an hour or so later in order to enable staff and children to have additional time to travel to school safely.

Schools are also encouraged to clear paths within the school to make access safe. In previous years several schools successfully mobilised volunteer staff, parents and members of the local community in clearing school paths to enable schools to open. School will obviously have to take into account any safeguarding and risk implications. This is detailed in the Winter Gritting and Snow Clearing Guidance that can be found on LTS under Health, Safety and Wellbeing service pages, then click, Browse our resources > School – Health & Safety Documents > look under the Health & Safety Documents heading for 'Winter Gritting and Snow Clearing Guidance'.

Procedure to close your school

Parents and carers should be informed by schools about any closures, including those caused by snow. Once the decision has been taken to close the school it is important to ensure that parents and pupils get the message as soon as possible. We'd encourage you to use the channels below and regularly promote them to parents as sources of information about any closure:

- ***use the 'text to parents' service, if your school subscribes to this*** This is a key way to inform parents so please encourage them to sign up.
- ***update your website***

- **update your social media sites**
- **telephone/text cascade groups**
- **if possible, make sure someone is available at school to answer the telephone to parents ringing in and advise parents when they arrive at school**

Contacting local radio

Schools are also encouraged to contact BBC Radio Leicester about a school closure, and other local radio stations as appropriate. BBC Radio Leicester will publish a full list online of closures and the breakfast show presenters will regularly signpost listeners to Radio Leicester's website, schools' websites and social media (where appropriate).

Procedure for contacting BBC Radio Leicester

- Please do not send emails saying that your school is closed, these will not be read in time for any web publishing
- One person of your Management Team to contact them - they only need to ring through **ONCE**, please be patient if they are engaged, they take calls from numerous establishments
- Before you ring, make sure you have your schools DfE number to hand, the full address and the password - as detailed in Appendix 1. BBC Radio Leicester work from an alphabetical list that the LA provide, please make sure you give the correct name of the school.
- Please provide them with a brief message i.e. school is closed or school is closed but will open for parents evening tonight
- Radio Leicester only have two numbers in operation this time (detailed in Appendix 1) – please ensure that you do use the alternative ways of contact as described above. Please do not pass this number on to your parents, it is only for your schools management team.
- **Please do not ring** BBC Radio Leicester to tell them that your school is open
- They do not offer advice as to whether other schools in the area are closed

The BBC snow desk lines will be open from 6.00 am on the day of snow and will not be open beforehand. Please remember that in the event of several schools closing this line will be busy at times. The staff handling your calls may well be operating with limited staff themselves and will have probably had the same difficult journey to work that you and your staff have experienced – please therefore be courteous and patient when telephoning.

- ***Details for other radio stations are attached as Appendix 1***

Informing staff

All employees must be advised of the action they must take in the event of adverse weather conditions affecting their availability to work and how the Head Teacher/Principal will communicate with them. In the event of a closure daily updates should be communicated to all employees and they must be notified directly when the School/College is going to reopen.

Duty/Responsibility of staff

It is recognised that adverse weather conditions will, from time to time, make travel to and from work difficult. However, employees are expected to make all reasonable efforts to reach their workplace.

Schools should contact their designated HR Adviser for further guidance on leave and staff attendance during inclement weather.

Grit supplies

Grit salt can usually be delivered within a day or next day from receipt of order.

The minimum order requirements are as follows:-

- Grit salt is supplied in a standard unit of measurement that is equivalent to 1 dustbin or wheelie bin (250 kilos) this refers only to a quantity of the grit salt and a dustbin or wheelie bin is not included in the delivery.

Contact: Property Helpdesk on 0116 3055000 or email LTSServiceDesk@leics.gov.uk for costs etc

Schools are reminded however that it will be their responsibility to clear the paths and request salt top ups.

Winter Gritting and Snow Clearing Guidance can be found on LTS under Health, Safety and Wellbeing service pages, then click, Browse our resources > School – Health & Safety Documents > look under the Health & Safety Documents heading for 'Winter Gritting and Snow Clearing Guidance'.

Appendix 1

Example, please replace with relevant school details

1. School Name	Sapcote All Saints Primary School
2. LA DCSF Number	855
3. Establishment DCSF Number	3314
4. Password	Icicle – This is the password to be used
5. Brief Message	The school is closed for all pupils today

We also ask that care is taken where schools have similar names or geographical areas to other establishments in order to avoid confusion. Radio Leicester can be contacted on the details below:

Radio Leicester only has two numbers in operation this year – 0116 251 1739 and 0116 2016644 – these numbers will get busy, so please ensure that you use your alternative means of contact.

Radio Station Contacts

BBC Radio Leicester 104.9 FM
Telephone (0116) 2016672

BBC Radio Derby 104.5 FM or 1116AM
Telephone (01332) 616161/ 01332 361111

Sabras Sound 1260AM
Telephone (0116) 2610666/ 0845 900 1260

Harborough 102.3 FM
Telephone (01858) 464 666

Oak FM 107 and 107.9FM
Telephone 01530 835108

103 The Eye (Melton – 103FM)
01664 481 103 (studio)/ 01664 565 315 (office)

Gem 106 FM (regional)
0115 910 6100 (main switchboard) / 01159 106116 (newsroom)

Capital FM (regional)
Telephone 0115 873 1520

BBC Radio Nottingham 103.8 FM
Telephone (0115) 9343434

Hermitage 99.2FM
Telephone 01530 460992