

To: All Headteachers Conwy Schools

Phone:

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(emergency closure line)**

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www.conwy.gov.uk/schoolclosures

Gofynnwch am / Please ask for: **Wyn Jones**

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Ein Cyf / Our Ref: **LVB/WJ/DW**

Eich Cyf / Your Ref:

Dyddiad / Date: **October 2017**

Dear Colleague

ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS/INADEQUATE HEATING/LIGHTING Possible Closure of Schools

Severe weather is usually short and infrequent but can, nevertheless, cause Schools, Parents and Education Services considerable problems.

The paramount concern, at all times, is the **Safety of Pupils** and any decisions made by Headteachers and Governing Bodies must ensure that pupils are not placed at risk. **Communication** may be difficult but every effort should be made through the use of the telephone and the media to inform parents, pupils and teachers of local situations. Local situations can vary considerably over the county as a whole and consequently it must be emphasised that the **ultimate decision** as to whether a school remains open or closed must be that of the Headteachers and the Governing Body.

Further guidance from a national perspective is appended to this letter.

Every effort should be made to keep schools open to pupils for 190 days a year. The homes of the majority of pupils are within safe walking distance of schools and therefore schools should normally remain open even though some pupils may be unable to attend. The level of supervision which is available is crucial to any decision which a Headteacher makes.

1. Consultation

The Headteacher should make every effort to consult with Conwy Education Officers, Chair of Governing Body and Parent Representatives before instigating a course of action. Local conditions can vary considerably and advice on weather forecasts and severe weather warnings will be communicated to schools immediately they become available.

2. School Closure

In making a decision to close a school, whether it be for the whole or part of a day, a Headteacher must ensure that pupils will not be exposed to a greater degree of danger or discomfort than they would suffer were they to remain in school.

When considering the safety of pupils a number of areas will need to be taken into account:

- The age of the pupils;
- The distance from school to home, the degree of hazard on the route and the supervision requirement for the route - in particular road safety, safety from attack etc;
- The method of transportation;
- The supervision available for the pupil after leaving school.

There may well be other local factors which should be considered. Emergency action to close a school should only be instigated when the issues have been looked at and the dangers and discomfort to all involved are considered.

3. Communication

Schools should annually circulate all parents with information about procedures to be followed in the event of inclement weather. Schools should also inform parents where information will be made available:

- School:
 - Telephone number issued by the school for parents to contact;
 - Website;
 - Text service;
- Authority website – www.conwy.gov.uk/schoolclosures;
- Local Radio – Capital FM/Heart/Radio Cymru/Radio Wales will transmit information about the circumstances of individual schools from information obtained from the Authority's website – www.conwy.gov.uk/schoolclosures.

It should be stated quite clearly in any communication to parents that the school will be open unless a message to the contrary is posted on the Authority website, broadcast on radio or available on a telephone network, or a specific letter is received from the Headteacher or any other means of communication applicable to a local area.

It would be appreciated if Headteachers could inform the Authority daily as soon as a decision has been made so that this information can be placed on the Authority's website:

Telephone: 01492 574 222 Pauline Owen (emergency closure line)

E-mail: pauline.owen@conwy.gov.uk or delyth.wynne@conwy.gov.uk.

There is no need for Headteachers to contact local radio stations as they will broadcast up to date information obtained from the Authority's website:
www.conwy.gov.uk/schoolclosures

4. Transport Arrangements

Decisions on the availability of transport will be conveyed to schools and parents by:

1. Radio broadcasts;
2. Education Services' Officers;
3. Transport Operators themselves.

5. Education Services' Advice

In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary for Education Services to advise schools that closure is desirable. This will only be done where weather conditions, severe weather forecasts or road conditions dictate. However strong this advice, it is still the responsibility of the individual Headteacher to decide whether or not to close a school, following the detailed guidance given above.

In the event of a major snowfall occurring during the weekend affecting the whole County, Education Services may take a decision on the Sunday that schools will not open on the Monday. Such a decision will be broadcast on Capital FM/Heart, Radio Wales and Radio Cymru. In addition to posting information on the Authority website, Education Officers will convey the information by telephone to as many Headteachers as possible.

6. School Staff

With regard to absence from school due to severe weather – paragraph 17 of the Scheme of Guidance states as follows:

“Employees are contracted to attend their normal place of work and are expected to make every effort to be present. Where staff are unable to be present at work due to weather problems etc, there will be no entitlement to paid leave unless such an arrangement is agreed by the Governing Body having regard to the special circumstances involved.”

Schools are asked to keep parents and Education Services informed of all decisions regarding closure.

Should there be any difficulties, uncertainties or a requirement for any information, please contact Education Services on 01492 575 003 or if out-of-office hours via the emergency closures line 01492 574 222.

Yours sincerely



Head of Education Services (Chief Education Officer)

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