



## **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES PROCEDURES (ADVERSE WEATHER)**

**2024-25**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1. This document provides advisory guidelines agreed by governors for the headteacher and staff to follow in the event of adverse weather or other exceptional circumstances.

### **2. Decision Making**

2.1. The decision to close will be made by the headteacher. The Local Authority and the Chair of Governors will be informed of any decision to close. In the absence of the headteacher, the decision to close will be made by the Chair of Governors.

2.2. The School Emergency Response Guide will be referred to when making decisions.

2.3. All decisions will be based on information available at the time.

### **3. General Guidelines**

3.1. The safety of children and staff must be the overriding consideration.

3.2. Within that guideline the aim is to keep schools open whenever possible.

3.3. Decisions will be based on information from transport providers, staff and a weather forecast.

3.4. A minimum of two members of staff must be present for a school to open. If numbers exceed the recommended staff/pupil ratio, the school may still need to close subject to the headteacher's discretion.

3.5. Where snow and ice are a hazard and cannot be cleared and paths gritted to provide safe entrance and exit in accordance with LA guidelines, before school commences, a school may not open.

3.6. Where a school cannot provide a mid-day meal (for example, catering staff unavailable, kitchens out of use) parents will be advised to send a packed lunch if they wish their child to attend school.

3.7. Where a school cannot provide either heating or water, that school must close until these services can be restored, for the health and safety of the staff and pupils.

### **4. Transport / Travel**

4.1. School transport will only operate if it is possible to do so safely.

4.2. School may open if school transport is not operating, provided that staff can reach school safely and services can be offered.

4.3. If school is open but school transport is not running, parents may transport pupils to school if they feel that they can do so safely.

4.4. If a school opens but weather deteriorates during the day, the situation will be reviewed by the headteacher in the light of circumstances, consulting transport providers as required.

4.5. Where a decision is taken to close school early parents will be informed by telephone. Priority will be given to home-school transport children and children who live out of the villages. Home-school transport will be provided where the transport provider is able to do so safely. If arrangements other than normal are required, parents will be informed. Two members of staff will remain at schools until all pupils have been collected.

4.6. Where a parent is worried that a child may not be safe travelling, that parent should exercise their right to keep the child at home in safety and should notify the school accordingly.

## **5. Alternative Arrangements**

5.1. A later opening time at 10am may enable schools to open when they would otherwise have to close.

5.2. If Gunnerside School is closed and Reeth School is open:

- Gunnerside parents may take their children to Reeth at their own risk, but must also collect them at the end of the day.
- Parents should speak to staff at Reeth School before setting off to check that it is possible to accommodate their child.

## **6. Communication**

6.1. Information will be communicated to parents via the school website and the schools' messaging service (SchoolPing). The schools' web-site will give full details of any closure and other arrangements such as changes to transport. Information will be posted up around 7.30am (and no later than 7.45am as far as is possible) and updated throughout the morning with any additional information. All entries on the web-site will show the date and time of the update.

6.2. The schools' emergency contact sheet will be used to contact staff and chair of governors. Where a decision to close is taken before the start of school parents will be sent a message via the schools' messaging service (SchoolPing) alerting them to the disruption and referring them to the school web-site for full details/further information. Parents will not be telephoned unless this is deemed necessary by the Headteacher.

6.3. Parents without access to the school messaging service (SchoolPing) on the day are asked to automatically check the web-site if they are in any doubt.

6.4. Parents who have informed the school that they are without access to the internet will be telephoned with details.

6.5. Where a decision to close the school(s) needs to be taken during the school day (for example, if there is a need to close the school unexpectedly after pupils have already arrived that day, perhaps due to loss of power or other emergency) the school will contact parents by telephone.

6.6. Parents are asked to keep contact numbers up to date for use by the school in an emergency.

**Policy reviewed by FGB Autumn Term 2024**

**Policy will be reviewed Autumn Term 2025 (annual review)**

**Brenda Price, Chair of Governors, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2024**