

Ponteland Middle School
part of Ponteland Academy Trust

SEVERE WEATHER & EVACUATION POLICY

Information and guidance regarding unavoidable school closure e.g. adverse weather.

Issued March 2018

Bad Weather

On rare occasions, the weather can be so severe that getting to and from school becomes hazardous. Schools like ours, which some students travel to on buses, are particularly vulnerable. This is especially so if the weather worsens in the late morning or 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 all our outside lines are engaged by other parents calling for the same reason! Jammed lines and answering queries can in turn delay office staff who are trying to get through to the bus companies to arrange early collection of students.

To support families, we will ensure that our website www.ponteland.academy is updated throughout the day regarding any developments which might affect transport arrangements. We shall send out a parentmail update as soon as possible. In extreme circumstances, when very bad weather is predicted or has broken out, the school will allow students to call parents via Dr Pryer's line and staff mobiles.

Local Headteachers contact each other. Transport operators offer advice regarding driving and weather conditions from their depots. The Local Authority and media are helpful too.

If the school is closed due to adverse weather overnight

Two possible scenarios might occur:

Scenario 1

The Headteachers have been in contact very early and made an informed decision. The school closure information will be posted on the school website and LA website by 7.30 am. Local radio stations will report the closure. Opening the school would be deemed unsafe for staff and students.

Staff and parents will receive a short text or parentmail before 7.30 am telling them that their school is closed. Additional information will be given where possible. It is important that the office staff have an up to date mobile number for this service to work efficiently.

Scenario 2

The school will be open for those who can attend. This will also be posted on our website by 7.30 am.

If the weather deteriorates during the day

- 1 Students living farthest from school and requiring transport may be sent home. Parents will be contacted. The school may remain open for students living locally. The closure may be staggered based on these principles.
- 2 The school will be closed early only in extreme cases.
- 3 The decision to close the school will be made by the Headteacher in conjunction with local Headteachers.
- 4 Any decision to close the school early will be passed on to staff and students as soon as we have arrangements in hand and posted on the website.
- 5 Students collected from school or with other arrangements will be allowed to phone home for advice on what to do.

- 6 Students who can walk home will be sent, preferably, in family groups or in the company of others who live near to each other. Parents will be contacted.
- 7 It is helpful when parents complete the ICE information on the first page of their child's diary.
- 8 School will be kept open with staff on hand until the last student has left.
- 9 It is not normally possible for students to be given lifts by staff.
- 10 Parents collecting their children are asked to park in the visitors' car park and walk across to the school office so that we can monitor children leaving us.
- 11 Form tutors will assume responsibility for ensuring a record is kept of their children leaving school. It would be helpful, as part of our class "settling in" at the start of the year we make a note on a class list of what arrangements should be made for each child in the event of evacuation. This will be confirmed with parents at the October parents' evening. This sheet will remain in the register until needed.

How parents can help

- Check the school website and listen to BBC Radio Newcastle.
- Plan ahead with your child what to do in a bad weather emergency and complete ICE information in the diary.
- Keep looking at our websites.
- Only call the school if you really have to – calls in prevent calls out!
- Write a note on page 1 of the Pupil Diary giving permission for your child to walk home with another child and/or be picked up by another parent.

Closure notices will appear in the following places so please can you check these websites too:

Metro FM Radio www.metroradio.co.uk
 County Council www.northumberland.gov.uk

Following is a list of some of the transport companies and their contact numbers

Bells Coaches	01661 886207 & 886397 Fax: 01661 886807 E-mail: bellscoaches@yahoo.co.uk
Keith's Coaches	0191 2290202 E-mail: Sales@keithscoaches.com
Ponteland Private Hire	07810 150138

Letter to parents

Please see Appendix 1

Directions for staff

Please see appendix 2

Appendix 1

Dear Parents

I am writing to remind you of our School Closure Policy. In the event that we have to close early during the school day, you will be sent a Parentmail or telephoned by school. If you are unable to either collect your child or cannot make arrangements for them to get home safely, we will of course keep your child safe in school until the end of the normal school day.

In the event that school is not open on any given day, you will be notified by text via Parentmail before 7.30 am. I begin the process of determining the conditions of the site and roads at 6.00 am when I communicate with the School Caretaker and fellow Headteachers. It is very important that your emergency contact mobile number is accurate and known to the school. It would be helpful if you ensure your child writes your mobile number in their diary.

Please be aware that if you do not receive a Parentmail message and you have registered your email address with the school, then school is open.

If you still wish to check that school is open, updates are posted on the school website before 7.30 am at:

www.ponteland.academy
www.northumberland.gov.uk
www.news.bbc.co.uk/local
www.metroradio.co.uk

Please bear in mind the phones are staffed from 8.00 am until 4.30 pm and there are only two lines to the school.

I can only apologise for the inconvenience the recent closures have caused and trust you will appreciate the difficulties encountered by schools in managing the situation.

The paramount intention is to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff at Ponteland Middle School.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Pryer
Headteacher

Appendix 2

Evacuation Directions for Staff – due to Extreme Weather Conditions or lack of electricity or heating

If it is decided, after consultation with other local schools and bus companies, that school has to be closed early (during the day) the following procedure will take place:

- Staff will be called to a briefing or emailed or a note sent around school if Severe Weather Policy is to be implemented.
- Students will return to form rooms at a directed time.
- Hard copy paper registers will be provided by office staff. It would be helpful, as part of our class “settling in” at the start of the year we make a note on a class list of what arrangements should be made for each child in the event of evacuation. This will be confirmed with parents at the October parents’ evening. This sheet will remain in the register until needed.
- Form tutors will take a register, after which it is their responsibility to check that students have a safe means of journeying home. Make a note on the register to say which adult has been spoken to and the means of transport.
- Non Form Teachers will support a year group allocated at the start of the academic year and will step in to release Directors where necessary.
- Students will be allowed to use the school phone or staff phones to ring parents to check arrangements if necessary.
- In the event of siblings in school teachers of older child will contact parents and pass on the information to their younger sibling. Teaching Assistants will be available to assist with any telephone calls etc. Do not allow a child to leave with another adult/or older sibling unless we have consent from the parent. See page 1 of the Pupil Diary.
- Only students who have arranged to be collected by a parent or other responsible adult need go to the Office. All High School siblings and parents must collect from front of school.
- Other students walking home will leave by the normal exits, once Form Tutors are confident about the arrangements.
- Students who are transported by Local Authority buses, contract buses or taxi may be asked to go to the hall, after they have registered, where they will be supervised and escorted to their bus.
- Please allow siblings to liaise with one another to check arrangements. Teaching Assistants will be available to help with this if necessary.
- Teaching Assistants will make sure that students with Special Educational Needs or those who are particularly vulnerable are looked after.
- Teaching staff need to hand in their class register to the Office and sign out before leaving.
- In cases of snow or severe weather overnight, teaching staff and teaching assistants need to register with Mrs Cafferty upon arrival so that they can be deployed to class groups as necessary.

School Closure before 7.30 am – Staff Information

In the event that school is not open on any given day, you will be notified before 7.30 am by text or the snowline.

I begin the process of determining the conditions of the site and roads from 5.30 am when I communicate with the School Caretaker and local Headteachers.

It is very important, and your responsibility, to ensure that your emergency contact mobile and landline number is accurate and given to office staff so that our texting and snowline databases can be updated.

In the event of school closure you are directed to work from home regarding planning, preparation or assessment.

If you can get to school you are welcome to join Dr Pryer. On rare occasions the school may be open for local children and looked after by those staff able to get to school.

In the event of snow, we have contacts with a local farmer to clear the car parks for staff, buses and visitors when possible and drivers are reminded, respectfully, to drive with care.

Remember, if you have registered your current mobile number with the office and you DO NOT receive a text before 7.30 a.m. then school is open.