



Dore Primary School

Guidelines for Staff Attendance at Work during Adverse Weather Conditions

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SECTION 1 – GENERAL ADVICE ON ATTENDANCE AT WORK DURING ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide clear advice to Headteachers and Governors when adverse weather conditions seriously affect employees' travel to and from work arrangements. The document has been developed to cover those situations other than the norm, such as heavy snow falls, flooding or other severe weather.

The City Council provides guidelines for its managers to follow, which takes account of the need to maintain adequate services to the public, the specific operational arrangements of individual services and the welfare of employees, particularly those employees with disabilities. The City Council acknowledges that given the geography of Sheffield, adverse weather may affect some parts of the City more seriously than others. In line with its other services the City Council expects schools to provide a service wherever possible on days when adverse weather affects employees' travel arrangements.

The principles of the City Council guidelines are highlighted in Appendix B of this document for Headteachers' and Governors' information. It is recognised, however, that the different working and holiday arrangements for teaching and support staff in schools mean that these guidelines need to be adapted to reflect the specific operational nature of schools. However these guidelines may prove helpful when considering each school's policy at times of adverse weather. Appendix C contains supplementary guidance for Headteachers and Managers, which was issued following the extreme weather conditions in June 2007.

Sections 2 and 3 of this paper have been developed in consultation with Trade Unions (teaching and support staff) to assist Headteachers and Governors in reviewing their school based policy. A management action checklist has been included as Appendix A to help make appropriate decisions when there are adverse weather conditions.

1.2 Purpose

It is anticipated that arrangements to change school opening/closing times or to action partial or full closure will need to be made only in exceptional circumstances. Any decision to make any of these arrangements will need to take account of legal requirements and the safety and welfare of staff and pupils alike.

SECTION 2.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS TO FOLLOW

- 2.1 A teacher employed full time shall be available for work for 195 days in any school year of which 190 days shall be days of which he/she may be required to teach pupils in addition to carrying out other duties. A decision to close the school for all or part of any of these days should not therefore be taken lightly.
- 2.2 When adverse weather conditions exist governors may need to consider reviewing school opening and closing times, partial closure or opening the school for staff only. If bus services and other forms of public transport are either cancelled or severely disrupted, meaning staff cannot get to work; Headteachers and governors are strongly advised to consider what service can be offered to the pupils before deciding on a total school closure. The Headteacher will determine as soon as possible how any discretions available via this policy will be applied in relation to pay or making up of time so this can be shared with staff.
- 2.3 The decision to keep the school open or to close or to partially open as a result of adverse weather conditions will be taken by the Headteacher. Headteachers could consider later school opening times or earlier finish times. It may also be worth considering whether certain year groups only are required to attend school. Decisions such as these will depend on staff arrivals and whether or not the weather is improving or not.
- 2.4 There is no expectation or requirement for school staff to be redeployed to support other schools or the delivery of key council services. However this can be authorised in advance provided the employee and the Headteacher are in agreement (see 4.3).
- 2.5 Where the Headteacher has taken the decision to close the school to students, there is a reasonable expectation that staff will attempt to attend work to engage in other professional activities (e.g. training, CPD, planning, preparation, marking, displays, administration activities). The Headteacher will consider this prior to closing the school entirely.
- 2.6 In terms of Employee Relations, it is important to have a fair and equitable approach to all staff, which does not disadvantage those who have managed to attend work. It is reasonable to consider specific arrangements/adjustments with staff that have disabilities.

SECTION 3 - RESPONSIBILITY OF STAFF IN SCHOOLS

- 3.1 All staff (teaching and support staff) have a contractual obligation to be at

work unless a decision is taken by the Headteacher to close the school to pupils and staff. Staff should be prepared to make alternative travelling arrangements for arriving at school on time or as soon as possible after the normal start time should adverse weather conditions make this necessary.

- 3.2 Staff with disabilities who are affected by unavoidable travel difficulties and are therefore unable to travel to and from work, may be granted special leave with pay subject to Headteacher approval.
- 3.3 It is appreciated that some staff have childcare or other domestic arrangements which may make it difficult for them to change their early morning routine in order to arrive on time. Delays in travel may therefore be unavoidable. However, staff must make every effort to arrive at school on time or as soon as possible thereafter. Staff should contact their school at the earliest opportunity if they are unable to arrive on time.
- 3.4 It is recognised that some staff may need to take time off to care for dependants, for example in the event of a school closure where alternative childcare is not available. Staff should contact their school at the earliest opportunity if they are not able to attend. Although staff do have the right to time off to care for dependants in such unforeseen events, this statutory right does not give an entitlement to unreasonable periods of extended leave. It should be clearly agreed and recorded how this time off is managed, e.g. via the use of annual/unpaid leave.
- 3.5 It is acknowledged that there may be difficulties for staff with long journeys. However, all staff must make every reasonable effort to attend on working days (even where pupils may not be present). Where pupils are not present staff can undertake relevant training or planning activities. Where appropriate staff may be permitted to undertake some work at home, however this is subject to Headteacher approval and must be for specific agreed activities.
- 3.6 At all times the health and safety of staff, pupils and school users is paramount. When making decisions about maintaining a service, even if reduced, the Headteacher will need to consider whether access to and from the school is safe. Equally important is access around the school. The Headteacher will need to liaise with their caretaking / premises management staff to ensure adequate snow and ice clearing is provided.
- 3.7 It is recognised that arriving at such key decisions will not always be easy. It is therefore important that the decision about partial closure later opening or school closure is clearly communicated to parents, pupils and staff as early as possible using the schools' agreed communication strategy for such occasions.
- 3.8 Staff who are already on leave (e.g. annual leave, maternity/paternity,

sickness etc) will not be entitled to a day in lieu if the school is closed.

- 3.9 In the event of delayed holiday travel arrangements employees will agree with their manager/headteacher if they wish to postpone or re-arrange any planned period of annual leave.

SECTION 4 PAYMENT/WORKING HOURS

- 4.1 Where an employee requests to take unpaid leave, the manager/headteacher should have discussed all options available with the employee prior to reaching the decision.
- 4.2 The Headteacher will ensure that all decisions relating to payment/non-payment of salary for periods staff are unable to work due to adverse weather are fair and consistent within the school.
- 4.3 Staff who attend their own school, or another school with prior agreement, for only part of their working day, should be paid salary for a full working day.
- 4.4 Staff who attend school where the school is only open for part of a working day should be paid salary for a full working day.
- 4.5 Where a school is closed for a full day, staff should be paid full salary

Where the school remains open but staff cannot attend work (see below)

- 4.6 Staff on 52 week contracts who are not able to attend at all due to adverse weather conditions, will, where applicable, be able to take annual leave, or with Headteacher approval make up lost time via additional hours.
- 4.7 Staff on term time contracts that are not able to attend at all due to adverse weather conditions can have salary deducted, however other alternatives may be considered e.g. in those circumstances where the Headteacher has exercised other discretions to pay as outlined in 4.11, or with Headteacher approval make up lost time via additional hours
- 4.8 Staff unable to attend work may be asked to repay the time at a later date following discussions with the Headteacher (e.g. rearrangement of a staff training day, extra hours, staff meetings, field trips etc). It is important to consider how this may be achieved as clearly the Headteacher will need to demonstrate that staff who managed to attend work are not disadvantaged.

- 4.8.1 However, in the event that the school remains open to staff it may not be possible for some categories of staff that are unable to report for work to make that time up. Such categories include teachers and term time only employees. In this situation deduction from pay may be considered (see 3.6 below).
- 4.8.2 It may be possible for other full year support staff (i.e. work 37 hours or less for 52 weeks of the year) employees to take an annual leave day or to "repay" this day during non-term time with Headteacher approval.
- 4.8.3 Part time staff may request (subject to Headteacher agreement) to work on alternative days to make up their time (e.g. what would normally be a non-working day).
- 4.8.4 In cases where the Headteacher has agreed to staff making up any lost time how this is managed will be subject to agreement between the Headteacher and the member of staff concerned. There is no expectation that this is limited to contact time with children.
- 4.9 In cases where it is not possible to repay the time, staff may have pay deducted. Each individual case will be considered on its own merits. Any decision to deduct pay in accordance with the policy will be confirmed to the employee and notified to the schools payroll provider. .
- 4.10 In the event of adverse weather conditions developing during the school day, a decision to close the school early may need to be taken by the Headteacher in the interests of the safety and welfare of pupils and staff alike. Staff may be permitted to leave school early, subject to suitable arrangements being made to ensure that the health and safety of pupils is not compromised. Staff should not be expected to make up this time at a later date or have pay deducted.
- 4.11 Under the schools leave of absence policy the Headteacher can choose to authorise paid leave for 'other reasons'. It is entirely the Headteacher's decision whether or not to use this discretion to authorise payment in circumstances such as staff with long and difficult journeys, or staff who may be injured or pregnant etc that may present a higher risk in getting to work. There is no expectation on the Headteacher to make such decisions and where they choose to do so, they are obliged to ensure all staff are treated fairly and consistently. See Appendix D for factors that may be considered prior to making any decisions.

SECTION 5 UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

- 5.1 Where there is thought to have been an abuse of the system, the Headteacher may need to investigate to establish the true extent of transport disruption and the impact on others travelling from the same area. Where

abuse is established the absence should be dealt with as unauthorised absence.

5.2 Unauthorised absence will result in salary being deducted accordingly.

SECTION 6. DISPUTES

Any disputes should be addressed via the school's grievance procedure

Adverse weather - Management checklist

Appendix A

Proposed Action	Action actually taken or needing to be devised
<p>1. Risk Assessment – inclement weather</p> <p>Areas to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety of journey to and from school for staff and pupils • Safety of site users into, out of and around the site • Adequate supervision of pupils who arrive at school • Safety of children who may need to be sent home early • Is there public transport? • Have there been any road closures? • Are school buses running or is there reduced service? • Are parents/carers aware of what decision the school has made? • Impact on staff/pupils with disabilities • Is the weather likely to deteriorate or improve? Are serious weather warnings in place? • Do local supply staff that may be called upon at short notice have satisfactory clearances in line with safeguarding requirements? • Are you aware of any staff that due to travel distance/location may experience additional difficulties travelling to school? What are their contingency arrangements? 	
<p>2. Communication Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you consulted with key stakeholders (e.g. staff, parents, community) about your policy in the event of adverse weather conditions? • How is information gained and shared about conditions of roads/school site/school building? • How do staff communicate their travel difficulties and to whom? • How are messages about management decisions regarding the school day communicated to parents/pupils/staff? • Are you clear how to contact Radio Sheffield 	

<p>and is your message to be broadcast unambiguous?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By what time will decisions be communicated about the schools arrangements for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Morning b) The Afternoon? • How will you respond to parents/guardians who may be critical of the decision made? 	
<p>3. Alternative strategies to closure of school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What alternative service provision can you make if it is not possible to provide a full service? b) Who will staff the alternative provision? c) Undertake an audit of which staff live close to the school or are less likely to have travel difficulties in order to clarify what level of service this group of staff could safely provide. d) Are these staff appropriately experienced/trained to supervise children? e) Who will be site manager if the headteacher or other leadership team members are unable to attend school? f) What decision-making parameters does this acting site manager have? g) Is it possible to reduce the school day and what are the implications of such a decision? h) Should some classes or year groups attend school rather than others (e.g. examination classes)? i) Is it possible to link up with a neighbouring school to provide a service? j) Do you have suitably checked supply staff living locally that could be called upon at short notice to provide cover? k) Can school be closed for pupils but open for staff? 	
<p>4. Monitoring and Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How frequently do you review the inclement weather policy? • What provision is made to review the effectiveness of strategies implemented? • Are all staff clear about the policy and what action they should take in the event of being 	

<p>unable to attend school on time?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What provision is made to review parental feedback about the school's decisions?• What communication strategy do you have to explain decisions that were made to parents?• Is the policy part of the induction process for new staff?	
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Supplementary guidance for Headteachers.

In exceptional circumstances, where adverse weather conditions cause major disruption to transport networks affecting travel to work arrangements and/or creating health and safety risks for employees and members for the public, the Council may advise people not to undertake unnecessary journeys. In this case Headteachers should give particular consideration to the individual circumstances surrounding attendance at work and utilise maximum discretion available within the Policy.

Should staff undertake additional shifts or extra hours at the request of the School / Council in response to conditions caused by adverse weather, the normal provisions for pay or time off in lieu will apply. Headteachers may wish to consider out of hours payments, if appropriate. If this is the case, Headteachers and Governing Bodies are asked to consider amending their school's model pay policy to reflect this decision. Headteachers will record separately any costs incurred.

Where staff undertake voluntary work for the School / Council to provide support, in exceptional conditions, to members of the public and this results in extra working time, Headteachers have discretion to agree reasonable time off at a later date. Headteachers are responsible for ensuring that service delivery is not affected by these arrangements.

Where staff have worked additional hours they should take care to ensure they are not putting at risk the health and safety of themselves and others. Headteachers should recognise the effect that fatigue may have on staff and ensure any risk has been assessed and that regular rest breaks are taken,

ACAS Winter Weather guidance

How can staff keep difficulties to a minimum?

- Think about how you plan to get into work. Trains, buses and trams might be operating reduced timetables or be running earlier or later than normal. Car and bicycle travel may be delayed by road closures and slower driving. Have you arranged an alternative route or travel method to get into work and get home? Have you considered the benefit of giving yourself a little extra commute time?
- Think about what arrangements you have in place if your child cannot get to school, your normal childcare provider is unavailable or if your child's school is closed. Do you have a practical back-up arrangement?
- Make sure you know how to get in touch with your employer if you are unable to get into work and that you have a means of communicating with them if you are going to be delayed.
- If you are affected by the weather, is there some way you can work around this or keep the difficulty to a minimum? Think about if you have the option to work from home, alter your hours or if there is anything else you could discuss with your employer to help the situation.
- Consider how your employer can deal with your workload in your absence. Can you let your manager know where everything is with a phone call? Do you need to let your employer know if any deadlines are at risk?

Factors to consider when determining policy discretions

- Consistency and fairness in application across all staff
- Do staff have work they can undertake at home? What is a reasonable amount of time for the agreed activity?
- Can staff reasonably make up any lost time at a later date?
- Do any staff face particularly long and difficult journeys? What efforts have they made to get to work? What is the level of risk for those attempting to get to work accounting for conditions both at home and at work?
- Do staff have any particular medical conditions or circumstances that would present an increased risk when travelling to work?
- What are the specific reasons for not being able to attend work, is this due to weather or the need to care for dependants?
- Have the actions of other agencies e.g. fire/police service made it impossible for any employees to get to work. e.g. road closures that present no alternative route to work.