



Pontypridd High School

Inclement Weather Policy

'Learning and achieving together'
'Dysgu a chyflawni gyda'n gilydd'

Inclement Weather Policy

Date of policy:	January 2023
Adopted:	Adopted : Premises Committee Meeting, 7 th February 2023
To be reviewed:	Spring 2026
Member of staff responsible:	Headteacher
Committee Responsible:	Premises

This school policy is presented with consideration for RCT 'Workwell' Health and Safety policies. The Pontypridd High policy will take account of updated RCT policy and guidance as appropriate through governing body review meetings.

1. Introduction

Occasionally, unforeseen circumstances occur which necessitate the closure of our school at short notice, the most common of which are severe inclement weather conditions. With this in mind, this guidance note has been prepared with consideration also for advice and guidance issued by RCT Officers.

This policy and related procedures have been produced in order to ensure the safety and well-being of all students, staff and visitors in the event that some students may have to be sent home early or when a whole school may be forced to close because of severe weather, or other circumstance.

This information is principally intended for use in relation to severe weather but can also be applied in other circumstances e.g. due to heating breakdowns or loss of utilities and services such as electricity or water. This policy includes details of specific school procedures to ensure all students and staff are clear about their role and responsibilities in the event of an unforeseen occurrence.

2. The decision to close our school

The decision to close our school will not be taken lightly. We recognise that all children have an annual entitlement to 190 days education and may also have an entitlement to a free school meal. When staff and students can arrive at school safely, then our school will remain open no matter how few students and staff are in attendance.

We recognise that 70% of our school population are transported to school by RCT arranged transport such as buses or taxis. In some instances RCT will cancel such transport and this restricts opportunity to attend school. We also recognise that a number of our students live within a 'safe' walking distance and therefore our school should remain open for them when appropriate staffing levels can be maintained and they can walk to school safely.

The responsibility for deciding to close a school lies with the Headteacher, in consultation with the Chair and/or Vice Chair of Governors.

Prior to any decision to close the school or partly close the school, staff on-site will make an accurate assessment of local conditions. In cases relating to any utility issues such as heating / hot water, this will involve discussing all alternatives with Corporate Estates and Education representatives who will explore every option and may be able to provide alternatives and relevant information and timescales of rectification measures beforehand.

The school recognises that the final decision cannot be made by the LA but the LA must be consulted and can offer advice, albeit that the final decision is that of the school. In order to assist in the decision-making process a 'checklist' document has been provided for Headteachers to use (Appendix 2).

In making a decision to close or partly close our school the Headteacher, after consultation with the Chair / Vice-Chair of Governors will consider any alternatives such as:

- Sending home only those students travelling by bus or taxi, or
- sending home those who have a significant journey to make and / or those who may live in remote areas

- temporarily amending our school opening and closing times to enable at least some level of education provision to be made to students during periods of widespread disruption.

Other factors that will be considered include:

- the distance from school to home, the route to be taken and whether transport is normally provided. If transport is provided by the Council, then clearly the Headteacher will need to consult with the Integrated Transport Unit, in order to attempt to call transport provision to the school to collect pupils at an earlier time than usual.
- all safeguarding and wellbeing matters relevant to each individual child in communicating the decision to close and how any individual is to return home safely.
- specific consideration to those children with ALN and whether it is preferable for all children to be kept on the premises until they are collected.
- the element of risk involved in children leaving school at other than the normal time, e.g., general road safety, safety from attack or abduction, and this, again, is another factor which Headteachers are asked to bear in mind before arriving at a final decision to send pupils home or contacting parents to ask them to collect their children.

After consideration for the severity of conditions on-site the decision could be taken to only allow:

- children living in areas that are badly affected by inclement weather could be permitted to leave school early, rather than the whole school being closed.
- selected groups of students into school. For example those sitting examinations
- selected numbers of staff where it is known full attendance of staff in school is not safe or possible.

Parents and carers may also contact the school to request early release of their child, which they are within their rights to do.

With respect to all of the above, the emergency closure of our school will therefore only be instigated when all options to the problem have been examined, and all mitigating factors weighed one against the other.

The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will inform the Education Directorate as soon as a decision to close the school has been reached. The RCT contact directory is included as Appendix 1.

In the event of the school closing to all students and staff it must be recognised that under most circumstances and conditions the decision to close can only be made on a daily basis.

Staff, students, parents and carers should recognise that the Senior Leadership and Site Management team will make every effort to make the school site safe and any closure or part closure will be managed so that the school can be fully open the next day if at all possible.

3. School closure and catering services

The school Catering Manager will be informed promptly if any intention to close or partly close the school in order to prevent food being prepared and wasted.

Catering staff will make alternative arrangements for meal provision in exceptional circumstances, even if such provision is limited to 'packed lunch' type food only for specific individuals and those eFSM.

4. School closure and school transport services

If a decision is made to close or partly close the school then the Integrated Transport Unit (ITU) will be contacted immediately using contact numbers included as Appendix 1.

Where the school may have to close early, for example because of poor weather conditions or a forecasted deterioration of weather conditions, the school will liaise with the ITU and transport operators to confirm road conditions. Headteachers should have particular regard for the advice offered by their transport operators when deciding whether to send transported students home early.

The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher after considering all factors will make a decision and communicate that to transport operators so they can transport students safely, bearing in mind the distance that vehicles may have to travel to get to the school, the particular circumstances of the route that they are contracted to undertake and the age and needs of the pupils involved.

Where a transport contractor is unable to provide transport in the morning because of severe weather conditions, no contract transport will be provided in the afternoon.

Parents who are able to transport their children to school in the morning in lieu of the normal transport arrangements should be advised that they must assume responsibility for getting their children home in the afternoon as no contract transport will be available.

In the event of a major snowfall occurring during the weekend affecting the whole County, the LA may take a decision on the weekend to advise that schools should not open on the Monday, or that home to school transport is being suspended. The same decisions could be taken in the event of a heavy snowfall overnight. Such decisions will be broadcast via the media, and published on the Council's website.

In such circumstances the Headteacher will make a decision that gives consideration for the safety of all students and staff. In addition the fact that an early decision to close will make communication more effective and also the ability for staff to prepare learning resources and wellbeing staff to plan safeguarding procedures for all children.

5. School closure and staff responsibilities

If, during the course of a school day the decision is made to close our school on the grounds that it is not safe to be on-site then all staff will:

- Supervise children until all of them have safely left the premises
- Instruct children of work that can be completed once they have returned home if this is appropriate to the circumstances on that day
- Be given individual permission to leave early and return home where conditions and / or distance travelled requires this to happen
- Return home on the instruction of the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher with full knowledge of lines of communication and likely arrangements for the following day(s)

In the event of the school closing to all students and staff:

- Staff will be informed through the school email network as early as possible in the morning and if possible before 7am.
- Staff should wait at home for this message and not travel to work if road conditions are difficult.
- Staff should prepare appropriate work for students who will complete their normal timetable by accessing work through Classcharts or Microsoft Teams

In the event that the school is closed on any day(s)

- Staff should assume the school will be open as normal the next day and ensure they can travel to work safely. In this situation staff may make plans to car share for safer travel.

6. School closure and student responsibilities

In the event that children are attending school and a decision is made to send children home early then all students are expected to:

- Remain in class under the supervision of a member of staff who will explain all necessary arrangements and procedures to them
- If walking home to do so with consideration for local conditions and keep safe and show respect for others
- If using school transport such as buses or taxis then to access these on the instructions of staff and do so in an orderly, safe manner.

In the event that the school is closed and no student arrives in school, all students are expected to:

- Log onto Microsoft Teams to access morning registration at 8.45am
- Log onto MT and / or Classcharts to access learning resources for each lesson as per their timetable for that day.
- Submit any work as requested

7. School closure or part closure and examinations

In the event that the school is closed at a time of examinations:

- An assessment will be made as to whether any student completing the exams can attend safely. Where possible the Examinations Officer will liaise with the Site manager and Leadership Team to arrange transport so the examinations can be completed, in particular if these are external exams such as those through the WJEC.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that pupils can sit their exams in a safe environment.
- If children cannot attend safely then examinations will be re-scheduled and / or the school will follow examination board guidance regarding plans to complete examinations or submit special circumstances requests

8. School open in inclement weather conditions

In the event of the school being open to some or all students, staff and visitors everyone is expected to:

- Move carefully and with respect to others around the school site, using clearly marked external routes that have been made as safe as can reasonably be expected
- In such conditions the normal times of lessons, break and lunch may be altered to ensure safety can be maintained at all times and in all areas of the school
- In some circumstances the bus companies will cancel transport due to dangerous conditions. Therefore if our School can open safely, students can arrange alternative transport or walk if main roads and walkways have been rock salted and safe.

9. Communicating a school closure or 'part closure' to

In the event of a school closure or part closure, the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will ensure that appropriate messages are provided direct to the Council and a contact email for any advice on this is : non.r.morgan@rctbcbc.gov.uk.

Appendix 1 – RCT Contact Directory

Education & Inclusion Services Directorate (reporting closures, general information and advice etc.) 07769 164734

Officers to contact – Non Morgan, e-mail non.r.morgan@rctcbc.gov.uk,

Education Maintenance Unit 'helpline' (repairs and maintenance issues) - 01443 281155

**Catering, Ty Trevithick 'Helpline'
01443 281141**

**Integrated Transport Unit, Sardis House, Pontypridd
01443 494870 / 72 / 73, e-mail hometoschooltransport@rctcbc.gov.uk**

**Out of Hours Call Centre
01443 425011**

**Utility Companies (in the event of utility failure/loss of service) :-
Welsh Water Dwr Cymru 0800 052 0130
National Emergency Gas Service 0800 111 999
Western Power (Electricity) 0800 052 0400**

Appendix 2 : School Closure Procedures – Checklist

Pontypridd High School			
Date of school check :			
Hazard	Risk Y/N	Possible Remedial Measures	Disruption to school service Y/N
1. Condition of site and access			
Walkways and pathways affected by snow, ice or flooding			
Access road/driveway affected by snow, ice or flooding			
Car park affected by snow, ice or flooding			
Yards and play areas affected by snow, ice or flooding			
Immediate area outside school site affected by snow, ice or flooding			
Pupils and staff need to walk between buildings			
2. Staffing Issues			
How many staff are able to reach work, are there appropriate categories of staff/grades			
Can safe levels of supervision be guaranteed			
Need to combine/mix classes			
Supervision/care of pupils with SEN			
First Aid cover			
3. Building Issues			
Adequate heating level throughout school (minimum 16°C 1 hour after opening)			
Risk caused by weather conditions: Snow/ice overhanging roof at high level Water ingress Internal flooding Damage caused to building fabric (eg; by high winds) Lightning strike Other			
Loss of utility service (gas water electricity): School only Surrounding area			
Loss/lack of fuel supplies or delivery problem			
Failure or fault with plant, equipment, fixtures or fittings within school			
Has fault/problem/issue been reported to appropriate service			
4. Support Services			
School Transport operating (if applicable)			
Catering provision available			
Cleaning/caretaking service available			

Risk Assessment Undertaken by : _____ (Headteacher)

Result of Risk Assessment: School Open

☐

Open to Staff only

☐

Closed

☐

Chair/Vice Chair of Governors consulted Y/N

Education Directorate informed Y/N

Appendix 3 : School Closure – RCT Procedures

Dear All,

As we approach the Winter , this would seem to be an opportune time to remind you of the procedures you need to follow if you have to consider closing your school, for **any** reason especially as a consequence of weather related issues. Any school closure should be a last resort, as every effort should be made to remain open to pupils for as long as is safely possible, but ultimately the health, safety and welfare of pupils and staff is paramount at all times. Any decision to close is one for the Headteacher to make, in consultation with the Chair of Governors. Advice can be provided by the Education Department to make an informed decision.

The best, and easiest method to ensure that you have advised all parties of your closure is to post the details direct to the Council website. All headteachers have been provided with unique user-id's and passwords, and we would strongly encourage you to use this service. If you wish to be reminded of the details for your school, send an e-mail, using your **headteacher account** to non.r.morgan@rctcbc.gov.uk, and I will forward the details to you by return. You can access this system from any PC, not just school machines, and the link to get on to the system is <http://schoolclosures.rctcbc.gov.uk>. You will not need to make any phone calls or other contacts if you have used this method to notify us of your closure, as e-mail notifications will be sent to all interested parties within the Council.

The above system can also be used to post details of your planned Inset days on the Council website and it would be helpful if you could post this information for the whole academic year on to the website as soon as you are aware of what dates you intend to hold training. This information is of great benefit to all stakeholders of your school, especially parents and it assists everyone with forward planning.

If you are unable to use the above system for any reason, please ring Non Morgan as a matter of urgency as soon as you make the decision to close the school. The telephone numbers to contact are **07769 164734**, please do **not** ring any extensions within Ty Trevithick due to the current working arrangements. It is essential that we maintain one central list only, to deal with the inevitable queries we receive from parents, contractors and the media at such times. Following this call, you should then contact any transport contractors serving the school before 7a.m. (or the Integrated Transport Unit), Catering and parents if at all possible. If there is widespread disruption caused by inclement weather, and offices are not fully manned, you can leave messages, either text or voicemail on my mobile, **07769 164734**, or alternatively send me an e-mail which I can access remotely.

If the closure is due to a building maintenance problem, such as a heating breakdown or power failure, you should report the matter as soon as possible to the Education Maintenance Unit, who will arrange urgent repairs for you, subject to your level of participation in the SLA. The number to contact is 01443 281155, this is a 'helpline' number which will automatically go through to the first available extension in the office. It is available during office hours, i.e. 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

If any problem occurs outside of office hours, and the matter is urgent, or emergency in nature, you may contact the Council's out of hours service on **01443 425011**, if the emergency is serious, dial 999. Please do not use the out of hours service unless the repair required, or the situation is a genuine emergency (i.e. will mean the school will have to close if not resolved), always use the office number given above wherever possible. We can also assist you with advice and guidance on insurance claims, and instigate claims, and repair works, for any structural damage that is covered by the Council's insurance policies.

If you suffer a utility failure, the numbers to contact are provided below. If you have any doubt as to the location, or nature of the failure, please contact the Corporate Estates Maintenance Team 'One Stop Shop' Education Maintenance Unit for advice.

You should also, at this time of year, ensure you **MUST** have a supply of rock salt at the school for use by your Caretaker in icy conditions, details of suppliers can be obtained from our Procurement Unit if required. You **MUST** also arrange to undertake certain basic maintenance tasks on your school site, such as clearance of drains and surface gullies, clearance and repair of rainwater goods etc. An information sheet on 'Winter Resilience', prepared by our Highways Division has previously been circulated to schools.

A quick guide to the telephone numbers you may find of use :

Reporting closures, general information and advice etc. – 07769 164734
Education Maintenance Unit 'helpline' - 01443 281155

Catering, Ty Trevithick 'helpline' - 01443 281141

Integrated Transport Unit, Sardis House, Pontypridd - 01443 494871 / 72 / 73
Out Of Hours Call Centre - 01443 425011

Water, Welsh Water Dwr Cymru - 0800 052 0130

Gas, National Emergency Gas Service - 0800 111 999

Electricity, Western Power - 0800 052 0400

You should also refer to the guidance provided in the document which has also been attached, entitled School Closures and Severe Weather Guidance for Schools.

If you have any queries on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thanks

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