

# School Closures In the Event of Bad Weather

## Has there been a change to arrangements for schools?

A new protocol has been put in place for situations when adverse weather impacts on schools, replacing the Resilient Schools Policy.

The new protocol has been established after it became clear over recent severe weather events that Resilient Schools was no longer sustainable as significantly fewer teachers lived within walking distance of schools than in 2010, when the policy was developed.

## What are the new arrangements?

Decisions about school closures (including school nurseries), either individually, by cluster, or across the whole of the Scottish Borders will be taken centrally by senior staff, based on the latest weather forecasts, information from headteachers, locally-based staff and partners, including Police Scotland.

At all times, decisions regarding school closures will be taken in the interests of pupil and staff safety.

## How will I know if my child's school is closed?

The Groupcall messaging service will continue to be used to notify parents about closures, with information also available through our website, social media channels and Radio Borders. Parents and carers are reminded that they should make sure their child's school has up to date contact details.

## Why are some schools open, partially open and some schools closed?

There are various factors that need to be taken into consideration when deciding on whether a school remains open.

Health and safety dictates the number of staff required for the number of pupils, including staff with first aid training. If there are insufficient staff this may result in partial opening or not opening at all. In the case of partial opening the school will make a decision on which year groups will be asked to attend. It may be that your child is taught by a teacher from another school if your child's regular teacher cannot attend or is off work.

Only where absolutely necessary will a full school closure be implemented

## What about school transport?

As has been the case previously, all school transport operators have discretion to cancel or vary routes based on local conditions. However, we have an established system which enables the cancellation of all transport by school catchment, if conditions are localised.

For a small number of children and young people with additional support needs who attend different schools in one day and only one of those schools is open, dependent on travel conditions and transport your child or young person would attend the open school in line with their normal timetable.

For children and young people who access additional needs transport and an individual route is affected then any cancellations or changes to routes will be communicated directly to families. This guidance will apply on a day-to-day basis.

## If school transport isn't operating does that mean that my child's school is closed?

There may be occasions when school transport does not run but this does not automatically mean that your child's school is not open. In these instances it is up to parents to decide if they consider it is safe to transport their child to school. If parents take children to school then they will also need to collect them at the end of the school day.

## What is the expectation for children walking to school?

Pupil safety is our main priority. It is ultimately a parent/carer's decision whether or not you think it is safe for your child to walk to school. If you are able to, we would encourage parents of younger pupils to escort their child to and from school during severe weather. We also ask parents to ensure that their child wears clothing and footwear appropriate to the conditions, especially those waiting for school transport that may be delayed due to road conditions.

## Are pupils given work to do when their school is closed or partially open?

All schools have systems in place to ensure that work is allocated. Pupil materials have been developed and schools will share this with pupils either electronically through the school website, GLOW or in pre-prepared packs for pupils that cannot get into school.

## What happens if my child has exams or assessments scheduled during adverse weather days?

Schools will reschedule prelims, exams or assessments and will communicate directly with parents and pupils. Although many pupils may be in school, the staff group may be different to 'normal' and it is important that our young people have the best chance of success in exam situations. This is an ideal opportunity for revision and preparation.

## Why are parents being put in the position of having some children off school and others attending?

Sometimes it may not be appropriate or necessary for a blanket closure of schools, either in a cluster or across the whole region. Decisions around closures or partial closures are taken in the interests of safety and wherever possible we will attempt to keep schools open, but this is not always possible. Where schools are open in bad weather it is important that parents realise that they ultimately have the responsibility to decide whether or not they wish to send their children to school under these circumstances.

## Will school meals be affected?

The situation varies across schools. Where there are difficulties providing a hot meal, parents will be advised to send their child with a packed lunch. Often sandwich lunches can be provided for all pupils. During and immediately following a period of severe weather, food deliveries may be affected which may result in temporary changes to menus.

## How can I help?

Schools are always keen for volunteers to make themselves known to help clear accesses to schools if necessary. If you would like to volunteer, contact your local [Resilient Communities](#) team.

Link to SBC Website;

[https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20036/winter\\_weather/260/winter\\_and\\_gritting\\_faqs/6](https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20036/winter_weather/260/winter_and_gritting_faqs/6)