



January, 2017

Dear Parent/Carer,

As you know, during winter our weather can suddenly become quite severe. As a result of this, Aberdeenshire Council has clear policies and practices regarding snowstorm arrangements. This is why we updated our snowstorm arrangements in October, asking you to complete and return them to School.

General advice during periods of wintry weather

- If the weather forecast is poor, please keep an eye on the Aberdeenshire School Closure website for updates (<https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/Apps/Schools-Closures/default.aspx>)
- Please familiarise yourself with your child's bus contract number to minimise confusion if some buses are running and others are not
- Have arrangements in place for someone to be at home if required for your child to return home safely, should the School close early
- If you live in an isolated location, and the weather is severe at the beginning of the day, it would be advisable for your child to remain at home for that day. Please remember to ring the absence line on 01466 795020 to let us know that your child is remaining at home due to the weather
- If you normally transport your child to and from School by car, then upon arrival, come with them to the School Reception so that we can advise you regarding the likelihood of early closure

School Transport

- If a bus is not running at all, the Aberdeenshire School Closure website will be updated to show this. You will not need to notify the school of your child's absence if this is the case
- If your child's school transport is not running **do not** bring your child to school
- Transport often runs behind schedule when road conditions are icy. We will keep you up to date via the Aberdeenshire School Closure website and, where possible, text message if we are notified of any late buses. Pupils are expected to **wait 15 minutes** past their normal pick up time for their bus to arrive. After this time, it is the parent/carer's decision if it is safe for their child to wait until the bus arrives or if they should return home. Unless parent/carers have received notification that the bus has been cancelled, they must ring the absence line on 01466 795020 to notify the School that their child has returned home in this situation

In the event of an early Whole-School closure

- The Aberdeenshire School Closure website will be updated to show that the School is closing
- A Text Message will be sent to the **main contact** of all pupils. It is **essential** that you notify us of any changes to mobile contact numbers to ensure that you receive this message
- **Local Pupils** who walk to and from School will be dismissed
- **Bus Pupils** will go home on their designated bus as soon as all priority calls have been made and buses have arrived to collect them
- Pupils must not make any private arrangements with parent/carers - for example to collect them in Huntly - without making sure that they have permission from the member of SLT in charge of their bus. Please realise that failure to receive such permission may lead to confusion and delay the departure of the bus, endangering others as a result
- All pupils must travel home on their designated bus, indicated on their bus pass, as provided by the Transport Unit
- Please **do not ring** the School unless you have an emergency which affects the arrangements already in place for your child. The phone lines will be extremely busy while we liaise with bus contractors and priority call parent/carers in the limited time available

Priority Call

Due to the limited time and number of staff available to make calls, only pupils on the "priority calls" list will receive a phone call in addition to the standard text message which is sent to all main contacts. Please alert the School as soon as possible if you require a priority call because:

- Your child lives **more than a quarter of a mile** away from the set down point
- You are concerned that your child would be exposed to some **danger** e.g. due to a medical condition, by being allowed to leave the bus to walk home, even if the distance is less than a quarter of a mile

In all cases of priority calls for pupils, we would ask you to meet them at the setting-down point. If we cannot contact you by telephone before the bus leaves School, your child will not be allowed to set-off on the bus. We will endeavour to make the most suitable arrangements according to the situation and circumstances.

Snowstorm addresses in Huntly

There may be occasions when the weather is so severe that it may be prudent for pupils not to attempt to reach their homes, but rather to spend the night within the town boundaries. This is why you were asked to indicate a snowstorm address in Huntly.

Telephone/Internet information service for School Closure

Aberdeenshire schools have a telephone information service which can be used if there is a risk of closure due to adverse weather. This allows parents to listen to a recorded message from the Head Teacher.

When severe weather warnings are received, we will endeavour to keep the system updated. It is part of our service alongside existing methods which give out information, such as radio broadcasts, described in the Schools' Adverse Weather Guidelines.

How to use the School Closure service:

- Dial Aberdeenshire Council's access number: **0870 054 4999** (this is a business rate number charged at between 3p and 57p per minute depending on your provider). Calls should only last around 1 minute
- Enter The Gordon Schools' pin number: **021130**
 - You will hear the school's name and be taken to the main menu where you will be given four options. Press 1 to hear any messages relating to The Gordon Schools. Press 4 to enter the pin number for another school within Aberdeenshire. Parents may have children who attend different schools. This option allows you to move from one school's messaging service to another without re-dialling

A further way of accessing information is via the Internet:

<https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/Apps/Schools-Closures/default.aspx>

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if there are any matters that remain unclear, or which you wish brought to the attention of my colleagues.

Yours sincerely,



Phil Gaiter
Rector