

## Emergency School Closures

It is always a difficult decision to close a school where the educational needs of pupils need to be balanced with the health and safety of our community. Whilst we try to make decisions as early as possible (with staff treating and assessing the site in both evenings and early mornings), we are often forced to respond to fast-changing conditions and weathers which do not always make this easy to achieve. In preparation for any situations of closure that may be faced next term, we are sending out our procedures' information to parents today. **Please read this information carefully and keep it in a safe place for your future use.**

Managing over 400 pupils and additional adults during any emergency closure situation is of course both busy and hard to do, so we hope that you will bear with us during such procedures and the challenges they provide. Attached to this letter you will find our procedure for the collection of children from school during an emergency closure when the school is in session. You will also find this information on our school website in due course should you need to print another copy.

1. As long as the technology is functioning as expected, parents will be kept informed of school closures which happen both before school and during the day through information posted on the Staffordshire County Council School Closure Website at:

<http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/schoolsandcolleges/emergencyclosures>

and on our Penkridge Middle School website at [www.penkridge.staffs.sch.uk](http://www.penkridge.staffs.sch.uk)

On snowy and bad weather days, please check these sites on a regular basis, remembering to press "refresh" on your computer/device to receive newly updated information.

2. Our text messaging system will be used to inform parents of closures, but this system is dependent upon parents ensuring that school has been given up-to-date contact numbers whenever these change. Please check that we have your most recent contact number updates on record. It is also important that parents check their mobile devices regularly for any messages school may send and respond to these in collecting their children from school. Once closures are announced, pupils will collect their belongings and go into their year group bases ready to be collected by parents. Pupils will be signed out from those areas with identified designated routes to leave the building.

3. During emergency closure periods, parents of pupils who would normally walk home from school unaccompanied by an adult must contact the school to let us know if pupils are to make their own way home as usual. If we do not receive your instruction, pupils will be held at school until parents can collect them.

4. Parents who wish to make a request that their children walk home with others on the day must contact the school office to give their individual permissions for their children to leave the site together. Requests must be made at around the same time at school, since we cannot hold children back whose parents have asked them to

walk straight home whilst we are waiting for another parent to ring with permission – and our phones do get busy! Similarly, we cannot allow adults to take other children off site with them unless we have had direct permission through a call to school from individual parents, identifying the adult who has been given permission to collect them. If we do not have permission, pupils must stay on site until parents/designated adults come to collect them.

5. Arrangements made with the school transport service are made between parents and the transport section of the County Council. However, we do wait with children whilst they board buses which collect pupils from the school site and text parents to inform of school closures. In future, to improve our procedures further, we ask that all parents of bus children contact the school if their child normally travels by bus from the school site to let us know whether they wish their child to take the bus home during the early closure or whether parents will collect their child from school themselves. At the same time, a designated office member of staff will be working through calls to parents of our bus children, so that only those pupils whose parents have been spoken with are allowed to get onto buses. With so many calls to make and lines to manage, please can I ask that parents do not keep staff on the phones so that all other calls can be made quickly. If parents have not made contact with school and cannot be reached by 'phone, bus pupils will be held on site until parents can be contacted to come and collect their children.

6. Parents who usually collect their child from school by car or on foot, should arrive as soon as possible and only need to contact us if this will not be the case and they need to inform us of any alternative arrangements

Please can I ask that you keep this information safe to hand at home for future use and that you discuss with your children your planned arrangements in case of any closure. We also recognise that some of our families live much further afield in more remote rural areas where roads are less well maintained and where transport can be difficult. In such cases when parents do not feel that to send their child to school is safe, then please contact Mrs Grainger, our Attendance Officer, at school on 01785 355549.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs S. King

Head Teacher