

EL&L Circulars

Aberdeenshire Education, Learning & Leisure

Information Circular

Ref No. IN2 -- 589(b)

Action: Information Only

Category. Information

Sub-Category. Miscellaneous

Replaces circular dated: 25/11/2010 Expiry Date: 31/03/2012

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Telephone: 01224 664609 Circulation Date: 22/03/2011

Subject: ADVERSE WEATHER ARRANGEMENTS

ALL STAFF IN EL&L ESTABLISHMENTS

This Circular sets out Service expectations in relation to staff attending work and related matters during adverse weather/school closures.

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that adverse weather conditions can prevent employees from reaching their normal place of employment. No employee will be required to attend for work if it is unsafe to do so. These arrangements apply to all employees of the Council.

The Circular is relevant to all staff within Education, Learning and Leisure but different sections are applicable to particular categories of staff as indicated in the title.

ALL STAFF IN EL&L ESTABLISHMENTS (EXCLUDING TEACHERS AND MUSIC INSTRUCTORS)

The Council will ensure that the health and safety of its employees is not compromised, by allowing affected employees immediate access to leave entitlement (special, paid, flexi or unpaid depending on the circumstances).

That said it is expected that employees will make every reasonable effort to reach their normal place of employment or an agreed alternative location.

If a Line Manager is satisfied that an employee has genuinely been prevented from attending work because of a serious effect of bad weather such as road closure, the first day of absence will be regarded as paid special leave. EMPLOYEES WILL BE ENTITLED TO ONE PERIOD OF PAID LEAVE IN ANY ONE INSTANCE OF ADVERSE WEATHER. Any subsequent day(s) will be considered as flexi leave, annual leave or, (if annual leave is fixed or has been used up) unpaid leave. The normal requirement for advance notification for leave will be suspended in these circumstances.

Any alleged abuse of this policy will be subject to investigation and, if necessary, action, under the Disciplinary Policy of the Council.

As an alternative to the granting of leave an employee may, if appropriate, be required to attend at a different workplace or work from home.

WORKING FROM HOME: In certain circumstances Line Managers may agree that an employee can work from home. Home working must be the subject of prior agreement with the employee's line manager. The work to be undertaken at home must be agreed with the line manager and will be subject of normal managerial procedures on return to work. Where home working is authorised, the employee will be credited with normal or actual hours, whichever is greater.

ATTENDANCE AT AN ALTERNATIVE PLACE OF WORK: If an employee's normal place of work is open but it is deemed unsafe for him/her to travel, or if his/her normal workplace is closed, he/she may be required to attend another Council work location to which he/she can safely travel. Where possible these arrangements should be agreed and put in place prior to the advent of adverse weather.

It is the responsibility of employees to ensure that they have emergency care arrangements in place for their children in case of a school closure due to adverse weather. If this is not possible the employee should discuss the matter with their line manager and will be entitled to take annual/ flexi/ unpaid leave. The normal requirement for advance notice of the intention to take leave will be suspended in these circumstances.

Supply and Relief Workers who are contracted to work in advance of the first day on which they are unable to attend work due to adverse weather will be credited with their normal working hours for that day.

Whilst it is appreciated that there may be operational and service delivery considerations in working during periods of adverse weather, managers are expected to ensure that employees are treated in an equitable and consistent manner and that the safety of employees is not compromised in any way. Advice should be sought from the HR Officer teams within HR as necessary.

ALL STAFF IN SCHOOLS

A. SCHOOL CLOSURES

Schools may be closed in 2 ways:

- blanket closure
- decision of head teacher

Blanket Closure - only in exceptional circumstances will a decision is taken by the Director to close ALL SCHOOLS to PUPILS AND STAFF due to adverse weather.

Decision Of Head Teacher - in the absence of a blanket closure, it is up to the Head Teacher of each school to decide whether it should be closed. The Head Teacher must make it clear in any closure communication whether the school is closed to PUPILS ONLY or to PUPILS AND STAFF.

1. SCHOOL CLOSED TO PUPILS ONLY

School Support Staff

School support staff should attend if possible. If unable to attend they may be required to attend at a different workplace or work from home if appropriate. If neither of these options applies, they will receive pay for standard hours on their first day of absence, and must take annual/ flexi/ unpaid leave for any subsequent days. Further details are as described above, in pages 1 and 2 of this Circular.

Teachers and Music Instructors

Teachers may opt to attend, or, if able to travel safely to one or more other Aberdeenshire schools, normally in the same sector (primary or secondary) as the school in which they are currently employed, should contact the school(s) and offer to cover classes for absent teachers. Peripatetic teachers and music instructors should attend schools not closed to pupils for which they are timetabled on a particular day, in the first instance. If staff are not required in other school(s) they may choose to work from home on tasks they deem appropriate.

2. SCHOOL PARTIALLY CLOSED TO PUPILS ONLY

School Support Staff

School support staff should attend if possible. If unable to attend they may be required to attend at a different workplace or work from home if appropriate. If neither of these options applies, they will receive pay for standard hours on their first day of absence, and must take annual/ flexi/ unpaid leave for any subsequent days. Further details are as described above, in pages 1 and 2 of this Circular.

Teachers and Music Instructors

If able to travel safely teachers should attend their base school (or timetabled school(s) for peripatetic teachers or music instructors) to support the delivery of the curriculum and possibly cover the classes of absent colleagues.

3. SCHOOL CLOSED TO PUPILS AND STAFF

Where a school is closed to staff this means all staff from all Services.

School Support Staff

School support staff may be required to attend at a different workplace or work from home if appropriate. If neither of these options applies, employees will be paid for normal hours for the duration of the closure.

Teachers and Music Instructors

If able to travel safely to one or more other Aberdeenshire schools, normally in the same sector (primary or secondary) as the school in which they are currently employed, teachers should contact the school(s) and offer to cover classes for absent teachers. Peripatetic teachers and music instructors should attend schools not closed to pupils and staff for which they are timetabled on a particular day, in the first instance. If staff are not required in other school(s) they may choose to work from home on tasks they deem appropriate.

B. SCHOOL OPEN, TEACHER OR MUSIC INSTRUCTOR UNABLE TO TRAVEL SAFELY TO SCHOOL

If able to travel safely to one or more other Aberdeenshire schools, normally in the same sector (primary or secondary) as the school in which they are currently employed, teachers, peripatetic teachers and music instructors should contact the school(s) and offer to cover classes for absent teachers/music instructors. Alternatively they may choose to work from home on tasks they deem appropriate. In addition they should contact their school, by email or otherwise, to provide work for their classes.

ADVERSE WEATHER/SCHOOL CLOSURE ARRANGMENTS - ADVICE FOR HEAD TEACHERS

Further advice for Head Teachers on Adverse Weather/School Closure Arrangements is provided in a separate document attached to this Circular.

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Attachments:  [adverse weather arrangements 220311.doc](#) 44 (KB)

**Adverse Weather/School Closure Arrangements****Advice for Head Teachers (February 2011)**

- **EL&L SERVICE INFORMATION FOR HEAD TEACHERS ON ADVERSE WEATHER/SCHOOL CLOSURES**

Service information for Head Teachers on blanket closures and related adverse weather issues will continue to be communicated via the corporate email system on Lotus Notes.

Regarding access to Lotus Notes, Head Teachers have been provided with either a desktop or laptop PC and those with a laptop should have VPN access. Head Teachers with a council laptop who do not have VPN access should log a call with the ICT helpdesk. It should be noted that broadband connection is necessary for VPN and VPN access can only be provided on a council supplied laptop. Head Teachers who do not currently have a council supplied laptop can “upgrade” their desktop to a laptop at any time, for which there will be a charge to their school’s devolved budget. Desktop PCs are not due to be replaced until 2011.

Head Teachers can register and subscribe on the Aberdeenshire School Closure website to receive email alerts to their private email address. Information on blanket school closures and other Service announcements can therefore be accessed in this way without a VPN enabled laptop.

- **COMMUNICATING WITH OTHER HEAD TEACHERS**

While recognising that each school within a town or large village would have different constraints in terms of where staff live, every attempt should be made by Head Teachers to coordinate closures in a town or large village (secondary and primary schools).

- **COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS**

Circular PP1-076 (2010), dated 28/10/2010, Adverse weather Procedures – Informing Parents provides information and advice on communicating with parents in the event of adverse weather/school closure.

The Aberdeenshire School Closures website is now in place <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/closures>. Information is also available through TWITTER <http://twitter.com/aberdeenshire>.

Schools have been supplied with leaflets for issuing to parents: Guidance on School Closure due to Bad Weather or Other Emergency. The leaflet includes the statement “If school transport is not running please don’t take your child – or other children – to school yourself, unless it is safe for you to do so” (NB amended wording to be included in updated leaflet), it being recognised that this is an area which can cause difficulties for Head Teachers.

Where transport operators require to change pick up/drop off points, or the school has agreed later pick up times with the transport operators, these should be flagged up on the school closure/adverse weather website. Parents should be advised to check the website regularly to make themselves aware of any changes.

In order to keep parents fully informed, and to pre-empt queries, it is important that the reasons for each school closure are also posted on the website.

It is recommended that information on the website should be kept to a necessary minimum.

It would be beneficial if parents were made aware of the alternative work arrangements being followed by teachers during school closures (working in another school, working at home, etc).

- **COMMUNICATING WITH STAFF**

Staff should have been made aware of the content of Circular INT2/589 dated 25 November 2010 Adverse Weather Arrangements and their attention drawn to the different expectations of teaching staff and music instructors in relation to attending their normal place of work/other schools.

Staff should have been made aware of the various communication channels, including the website, to be referred to in the event of adverse weather.

Staff should also be advised not to post unprofessional or inappropriate comments on Facebook, or any other social networking site, in the event of a school closure. This is in breach of Council policy as stated in the Code of Practice on Social Networking.

All schools should have an evacuation procedure in place, to be followed in the event of an early closure due to adverse weather and on which all staff have been briefed.

Where staff have been working from home during a school closure it would be appropriate for discussion to take place subsequently with their Head Teacher or line manager regarding the activities undertaken.

Teachers should be made aware that when they cannot travel safely to school, even although the school is open, they should contact the school, by email or otherwise, to provide work for their classes.

- **COMMUNICATING WITH CATERING SUPERVISORS/STAFF**

Catering supervisors/staff should be contacted as early as possible where a school closure or partial closure is being considered.

In the event of parents being requested to provide a packed lunch for their child it should be noted that this would apply to all parents, including those whose children would normally receive a free school lunch.

- **COMMUNICATING WITH TRANSPORT OPERATORS**

Head Teachers should have discussed and agreed reciprocal contact arrangements in the event of adverse weather/school closure with their local transport operator(s), including emergency contact outwith normal working hours.

Head Teachers can contact their local transport operator(s) if they wish to open the school at a later time than normal during adverse weather to allow for longer travel to work journeys by staff. Variations to pick up times have to be discussed and agreed with transport operators and posted on the school closure/adverse weather website. Only when the school website is changed from “school closed” to “school opening time changed to” (or similar) should PTU be alerted by emailing school.transport@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

On 28 October 2010, Ian Thomson PTU emailed relevant schools with the contact names and telephone numbers for Stagecoach Bluebird management should these be required for emergency use in relation to adverse weather/school closure/ road conditions. As previously advised, under no circumstances should these numbers be passed to anyone beyond those who require them in order to carry out their duties, or to anyone outwith the Council.

- **RESPONSIBILITIES OF JANITORIAL STAFF AND LANDSCAPE SERVICES IN RELATION TO SNOW CLEARING AND SANDING OF PATHS, ETC**

Landscape Services staff, or nominated contractor, will ensure that the entrance to the school car park within the school grounds is cleared/sanded. Landscape Services will also clear/sand the main staff car park and decide whether they or Roads Services clear/sand the bus park. In the first instance Head Teachers or janitors should contact their designated Landscape Services supervisor/chargehand who will make the necessary arrangements including contracting Roads Services. A list of

named Landscape Services staff responsible for each school, with contact telephone numbers, has been issued to all schools.

Janitorial staff are responsible for clearing/sanding all paths within the internal school path network.

- **RESPONSIBILITIES OF CARETAKERS IN RELATION TO SNOW CLEARING AND SANDING OF PATHS, ETC**

Caretaking staff have the same responsibilities for clearing/sanding all paths within the internal school path network, as would be applicable to janitorial staff.

- **COMMUNITY AND LEISURE FACILITIES**

Head Teachers should ensure that Community Leisure Officers are contacted prior to a decision on school closure being made, given that community/leisure facilities may continue to operate. A list of named Community Leisure Officers with responsibility for each network, with contact numbers (work and emergency), has been issued to all schools. This instruction is only necessary where schools provide space to the community or have a leisure facility on site.

Where a school hosts a dedicated leisure facility or community centre, Head Teachers should note that the decision to close such a facility lies with the leisure service.

Janitorial/caretaking staff should be aware that a facility could be open and make the necessary arrangements around opening times, including path clearing and sanding for pool, sports centre and community facility users (leisure staff can assist with this).

- **ABERDEENSHIRE ROADS SERVICES (TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICE)**

Aberdeenshire Roads Services will clear/sand the access road to the main school entrance.

Roads Services will ensure that the Met Office and internal roads reports will be emailed on Lotus Notes to all Head Teachers from 6.00 am whenever information is received.

- **LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR PUPILS IN THE EVENT OF SCHOOL CLOSURE**

Head Teachers should have ensured that appropriate learning activities/materials have been posted on GLOW by staff for all secondary subjects/stages and for key primary curricular areas/stages and that pupils have been advised as appropriate, including how to access these.

Schools will also wish to make use of SCHOLAR, department websites/blogs and other online resources.

Parents should be made aware that learning activities for pupils are available on GLOW and their support sought to encourage their children to make use of on-line educational resources in the event of a school closure.