

MNCT POLICY ON SEVERE WEATHER

Arrangements for school and centre staff

Information for Council staff will normally be provided by the Chief Executive in the event of staff being sent home early due to severe weather conditions. For staff in schools, this information will be communicated by the Director, Education, Communities and Economy or one of the Heads of Service. School and Centre closures should be used by staff in the same way as in-service or training days, unless the normal place of work is unsuitable for use when temporary or alternative accommodation may be used. The continued presence of staff will also be required for the supervision of certain pupils, and the delivery of Council Services. In all procedures relating to severe weather conditions, the main concern is the safety of employees, service users, students, pupils and members of the public. As a general rule, where some schools are open staff unable to reach their normal place of work should report to the nearest available Midlothian same-sector school or learning centre. Staff should always maintain contact with their head teacher, team leader or immediate line manager.

If all Midlothian schools are open

Education, Communities and Economy staff should make every reasonable effort to attend work as normal, taking account of personal safety when making travel arrangements. This may mean staff adjusting their usual travel arrangements e.g. public transport may need to be taken rather than their own cars or more time may need to be allowed for journeys. If staff are unable to get to their place of work due to adverse weather conditions, they should contact their line manager/place of work as soon as is practicable. Line managers will then advise staff on procedures to follow. Staff may be advised to travel to the nearest same-sector Midlothian school to undertake agreed tasks. For security reasons it is essential that all staff wear their identity badges.

If only some Midlothian schools are open

Where a member of staff learns that his/her school is closed but that other Midlothian schools are open, they should make every effort to report to the nearest same-sector school where a school manager will allocate appropriate duties. The member of staff should contact their line manager as soon as is practicable. Should staff not be able to contact their Line Manager or Head Teacher they should call 0131 271 3718.

Prior notice of closure

Where the intended closure to pupils of a school is known before the end of the working day, the head teacher will inform staff of the arrangements for the next working day. Risk assessments will be carried out in advance of a decision for staff to attend their normal place of work to carry out agreed duties e.g. planning, curriculum development, assessment, reporting. Normal health and safety working conditions, e.g. temperature, availability of hot water, must be met.

Where a decision is taken to close schools to pupils and staff, the head teacher will advise staff of how contact will be made to update them on future arrangements. Staff will carry out agreed tasks at home, where appropriate. In this situation staff will be paid for their normal working hours that day.

Emergency Closures

If extreme weather conditions develop during the working day, the Director, Education, Communities and Economy, in consultation with the head teacher, may decide that all staff should be sent home. In this case staff, including supply staff, will be paid for their normal working hours for that day.

In the exceptional situation where a member of staff arrives at his/her normal place of work to find it closed and no one is there at all, the member of staff should first try to contact his/her line manager and if that is not possible contact Fairfield House on 0131 271 3718 to seek advice.

Working from home

Working from home during inclement weather is not normally considered to be appropriate for staff as the Council does not currently have established procedures for the management of home working. However, where there is a business need and this can be delivered by an employee at their home location a manager may approve home working during a period of adverse weather conditions. Managers should be reminded that home working should be the exception for staff and is not generally a right.

Within their 35 hour week teachers spend a maximum of 22.5 hours in class contact. The remaining hours of work beyond class contact are agreed collegiately and are used for a range of tasks (including preparation and marking) which do not require to be carried out within a school. Some of the preparation and assessment work undertaken by teachers is already undertaken at home. In relation to teachers and other school staff, where it is appropriate, working at home may be considered when there are extreme weather conditions and it is established that travel to and from work is not safely possible. This will require to be authorised by the Director, Education, Communities and Economy prior to a line manager approving temporary home working arrangements as the teaching staff working pattern is set out as an academic session. When prior authorisation has been granted by the Director head teachers will then agree with individual members of staff on administrative, CPD and curriculum development activities that will be completed either at a home or at an alternative location.