



Enforced School Closure

Why does school sometimes need to close?

We can never guarantee that we can stay open. Our rural location makes us particularly vulnerable to disruption through severe weather but problems like power cuts, gas leaks and water bursts happen too, and there is still the possibility of flu epidemics to plan for. It's probably worth mentioning here that we can also be affected by road closures at the end of the school day because of accidents which sometimes delay the home journey by several hours.

How will we find out that school is closed?

If we have severe weather in the early hours of the morning we will try to make a decision about closing the school before 7am. If the buses say they can get children to school we will try to stay open. There may well be occasions when the decision to close is made later, say 8.30am, if we don't have enough staff to cover the pupil numbers in school. We will act as quickly as possible to put the closure information on the school website www.queenelizabeth.cumbria.sch.uk, although this can be difficult to access when demand is very high. The BBC Cumbria website usually lists closed schools and can cope with lots of hits. We will also contact the following broadcasters with the news:

- The Bay (radio)
- BBC Radio Lancashire
- BBC Radio Cumbria
- Lakeland Radio

Please make sure you have contingency plans for these days and that there is somewhere safe and warm for your child to stay. It's possible that you could miss the closure notice, especially if the weather's not too bad where you are. If that happens then your child could go out to the bus stop and end up having to return home so, again, please make sure there is a contingency plan arranged for that.

If we have to make the decision to close between 7 and 8.45 am then we would hold the children on the buses and send them straight home again.



Again, your child should always know exactly what to do in this case: where to go, who to contact etc. You may wish to write this into your child's planner. We would contact the radio stations and post information on our website as soon as we knew what was happening. We would put the information on the web site and we would use twitter (**make sure you follow @QES-urgent**) and e mail to send out the message too.

What if school needs to close early?

The real difficulty starts when bad weather closes in during the day. When this happens the bus operators tell us they're coming for the children early and we load the buses as soon as they arrive. Again, it's vital that children have somewhere safe and warm they can go to. We try our best to allow children to telephone from school to let you know if that's really essential but we'd appreciate it if we didn't have our phone lines jammed by unnecessary calls on bad weather days.

We also cannot undertake to contact you all individually. We simply do not have the staff or facilities to make over a 1000 calls in a short space of time. We will put messages on twitter and our website as well as send out e mails to parents if we have a power supply. If your child is going to have a particular difficulty that day then they will need to be sensible and approach a member of staff. We will always assist pupils with problems going home but we can't provide a personal service to all of our pupils at a time like this.

Please ensure that your child knows what to do on an enforced closure day: where to go, who to contact when they get there etc and impress upon them the need to speak up if they're going to have a problem that day should an enforced closure occur. There are always lots of staff available to pupils at a time like this and they will always help a child who'll have difficulty getting in at home that day for whatever reason.

What about when there are problems with the roads?

One thing we can't do very much about is the state of the roads. There are times when buses need to divert, usually to avoid flooding. The floods tend to affect the same places every time so it is possible to have a contingency in place for days of very heavy rainfall should your child need to be dropped off at a different stop.



It goes without saying that the **LAST** thing you should do on a severe weather day is attempt to come to school to collect a child yourself unless there is no other way to get them home. These arrangements are all being made to avoid dangerous journeys and on most routes the buses are much safer than cars. We would of course contact you directly if there was a problem with the bus accessing your child's route. We work very closely with our operators to ensure children's safety and we always find that they are fantastic when bad weather strikes. The same routine follows for road closures at the end of the day. Please don't be persuaded to come and collect an impatient child: you'll probably be sitting behind the bus in the same queue!

What happens when pupils are poorly in school?

If your child is taken ill in school we would isolate them and ask you to collect them straight away. It is essential that we have up to date contact numbers for you so that we can contact you immediately if your child falls ill. You need to be absolutely sure that there is always someone we can get hold of quickly in case of emergencies. We often have trouble with mobile phone numbers being out of date or simply not known. Please keep us up to date and let us know e-mail addresses too by completing the contact details form on our Moodle site if anything changes.

Please also bear in mind that whilst we try to plan for everything that might happen, we can't always anticipate the crises that come our way. However, if your child has a back-up plan for enforced closure then most difficulties of this nature can be dealt with.

Thanks for your help with this. We hope these plans won't be needed but it's wise to be prepared for these eventualities.