



Neville's Cross Primary School & Nursery

Severe Weather Policy

Date of policy: March 2022

Review date: March 2024

Neville's Cross is an inclusive family where all are nurtured to become creative, confident and resilient learners supported to reach their unique potential. Our children develop skills to become active and respectful members of our school, community and society and during their time at Neville's Cross, make memories to cherish.

Emergency School Closure Procedures Severe Weather and Winter Planning

“Schools should, wherever possible, stay open in severe weather. They play a key role in their communities and by staying open help both their pupils and parents.”

Department for Education

Every winter brings the possibility of snow and ice. Extreme bad weather can cause widespread and prolonged disruption. Schools are often affected and it can be difficult to maintain an education service.

As a fundamental principle every effort must be made to keep schools open, even if only limited numbers of pupils can attend. There is a legal requirement to keep schools open for children to attend for 190 days per year (380 sessions). However, schools may close due to ‘unavoidable’ circumstances. Those circumstances being that it is no longer safe for staff or pupils to be on site. The cancellation of public transport or the inability to run a normal time table due to staff absences are not considered unavoidable circumstances.

The government has stressed the importance of schools remaining open, as is consistent with health and safety requirements, even if it is not possible to run a full timetable.

It is therefore our policy to remain open unless we are forced to close because there is a risk to health, safety and welfare of staff, children and parents or carers. The decision to close has been delegated to the Head Teacher who is responsible for making the decision to close school due to extreme weather conditions in the immediate locality.

Neville’s Cross Primary School and Nursery:

- Neville’s Cross is situated on the outskirts of Durham City, accessed via the A690 which means it is almost always likely that major routes into school are accessible.
- It is usual that Relly Path and the school car park are not cleared under council policy. Staff and parents are reminded to bear this in mind when travelling to school in more severe weather conditions.
- A small number of teachers and support staff live locally, however many travel from more remote villages. Journeys are often long during times of severe weather but staff strive to reach school.
- Only a small number of staff are within walking distance to school, a large number travel from out-lying villages and rely on cars or public transport to make their journey to school.

The expectation is that staff will make every effort to attend school during severe snow and ice except in the most extreme cases where they can demonstrate a high degree of risk or by virtue of distance or terrain and absence of transport that it’s simply not possible for them to attend. Further advice for all DCC employees can be found in Section D, paragraph 10 of the County Council’s Decisions Affecting Salaries and Conditions of Service (The Green Book).

Following periods of severe weather, it is the employee’s responsibility to notify the Head Teacher as soon as possible of their whereabouts to enable effective communication and planning to take place.

Staff should consider what alternative arrangements they intend to make to get to work: walk, bus, train, car sharing. Practical considerations could also include arranging for staff to accommodate each other locally in severe conditions if returning home is impossible or in

agreement with the Head Teacher, certain staff not to be expected until later in the morning or to be released early.

If any member of staff is unable to get to their normal place of work they are expected to report to their nearest divisional office or departmental establishment wherever possible.

The Head Teacher and Governing Body should note that Employees of the County Council should be granted special leave to cover absences as a result of inclement weather only if the above conditions have been satisfied.

When extreme weather is predicted or prolonged, a judgement will be made about remaining open each day by 7:15am. The Head Teacher will endeavour to contact other local schools to allow for consistency in provision. Parents and carers will be notified that the school will be closed by the following means:

- Details will be published on the LA website following notification by the school to the LA.
- Details will be published on the school website
- A text will be sent to parents from school
- Details will be shared via our Facebook page

If there is no closure message, we are open. Parents do not need to contact school.

Should the weather turn worse during a school day, the procedures for closing school may be followed.

Children will only be sent home if there are satisfactory arrangements for them returning home safely. No child will be sent home before the usual afternoon home time unless collected by a parent/carer.

In order to remain open during snowy and icy conditions our school caretaker will endeavour to clear and grit the pedestrian path for children and parents. It is not possible for our school caretaker to clear or grit Relly Path as it is not school property.

Generally, in snowy conditions children will be allowed out at playtimes and lunch times on the condition that they behave appropriately and safely and have suitable outdoor clothing and footwear. Should the conditions deteriorate then children will have 'Indoor' sessions at playtimes and lunch times.