

# Barnes Farm Junior School

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## Dealing with Severe Weather Conditions

11 January 2017



Dear Parents and Carers,

With severe weather conditions forecast, I wanted to update everyone on the arrangements around attempting to keep the school open throughout this period.

There may be days when severe weather conditions require that those responsible for running schools will have no option but to close the school or to instigate a variation to the normal start and end of the school day. Safety is of paramount importance and I recognise that any closure can cause child care issues and as Headteacher I will have taken into consideration all of the following key factors:

- **Availability of staff** - will there be sufficient teaching and non-teaching staff able to get into school and ensure that pupils are properly supervised and safeguarded? Are those able to get to school likely to be able to arrive on time or will they be delayed by problems with public transport or accessing major roads from their homes? Similarly with support staff, will the kitchen staff be able to arrive in time to carry out their duties and so on?
- **Condition of paths and access routes** in and around the school - is there any risk of slipping and injury to pupils who make their own way to school and are therefore unsupervised?
- **The decision of the Infant school** - I will remain in contact with the Infant school so that any decisions are made in collaboration with one another.
- **Deterioration of the weather** during the day - if the weather is predicted to deteriorate, will the school be able to ensure that all pupils and staff will be able to return home safely? Will the transport for pupils whose parents and carers live away from the locality of the school actually be able to return and collect the children at the end of the day?
- **Catering supplies** - will deliveries of food supplies be able to get through to enable the cook to provide a meal?
- **Is it possible to open the school for a shortened day** - by having a slightly later start will this enable more staff to get in safely and ensure the correct ratio of adults to pupils? By starting later in the morning will this reduce the risk to all who are trying to travel in the severe weather by delaying the school run?
- **How reliable has the weather forecast been** - has it been accurate or is there a high possibility that in fact the severe weather warnings may come to nothing? Or do the actual conditions in the area of the school indicate that the weather is more severe than had been indicated?

The decision, therefore, to either open or close the school due to snow is never easy and can lead to frustration and inconvenience for parents. This is especially true when you live locally and are able to walk relatively easily with your child into school. We also recognise the potential knock-on effects for parents' own working arrangements.

Our aim is to communicate any decisions to you as **swiftly and efficiently as possible**. Please read the information on the following page for what to do if this situation arises.

In the event that the school cannot be opened or that we need to open later or close early, the decision to will be shared with you in the following ways and as quickly as possible:

1. School Texting Service
2. Twitter (@barnesfarmjnr)
3. The school website. Emergency headline on the front page
4. Essex Emergency School Closure page.
5. Letter emailed out to give fuller explanation

<http://www.essex.gov.uk/Education-Schools/Schools/Dates/Pages/Emergency-School-Closures.aspx>

Essex County Council will now display information about emergency closures on their web site. This, alongside the school systems, **replaces alerts by local radio stations**. This information is on our website under 'School Info', 'School Closure'.

You may, of course, wish to contact the school directly, but please be aware that our staff may not be in from 8:00am as they usually are on these days. Please leave the phone lines open for really urgent calls. Do not contact the school during the day to find out if we are closing early - this decision will be communicated to you in the ways mentioned above.

If the school is opened, please be aware that all staff may not be present and nor would we expect all the children from surrounding areas to necessarily be able to make their way into school safely. I would also like everyone to know that if the occasion arises, school registration would stay open until 10:00am to enable you to slowly and safely make your way into school and prevent potentially dangerous congestion outside the school in icy conditions. Also, if the school opens but some pupils are unable to travel in due to the weather, those absences will be authorised by the school.

On snowy days, the children will need wellies/boots and suitable outdoor clothes to enable them to go out and play on the field. If they are not prepared, including a change of shoes, they will be unable to go outside.

In the past, we have maintained a successful and resilient approach to dealing with severe weather enabling the school to remain open throughout these periods and, with these measures in place, our aim is for this to continue.

Yours sincerely,



Ross McTaggart

Headteacher