

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AS SOME CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE TO THIS INFORMATION

November 2011

Dear Parents/Carers,

**Please note:
This letter is accessible on the
school website:
www.st-albans.suffolk.sch.uk**

Severe Weather Conditions

Once again at this time of year, it is appropriate to remind you of the procedures to follow in the event of severe weather conditions. We will do everything in our power to reduce disruption to your child's education to a minimum and to ensure his/her general safety. If for any other reason e.g. a failure in the heating system, I have to apply a full or partial closure, the same procedure will apply. To achieve this we rely upon your co-operation in the following areas:

1. **Overnight Conditions** – should overnight conditions in Ipswich deteriorate, I shall consult early in the morning with the relevant authorities e.g. the local Education Office, to determine whether conditions are local or general. If weather conditions are sufficiently bad and I decide to close the school, I shall then ask the Local Authority to inform local radio. Parents should, therefore, tune in to **BBC Radio Suffolk** (103.9, 104.6, 95.9 & 95.5FM) as early as possible for information relating to schools i.e. from approximately 6.30 a.m. onwards. If the school remains open and parents have a genuine concern about children travelling to and from school, they should, at this point, decide not to send their children to school on this day in which case, this will count as an authorised absence.
2. **Daytime Conditions** – should conditions begin to deteriorate during the course of the school day, I will again consult with the LA who will again inform local radio if the school is closing early in order that students can reach home in safety. Where we have been given parents' e-mail addresses, we will also inform them via this method and details will be displayed on the school website. We will endeavour as a school not to close once we have opened. Our experience has shown that when we close early due to weather conditions, a significant proportion of our children do not go home and ignore the health and safety reasons that have led to the decision to close early. For instance, it is clear that a number of children arrange to meet at a local park to throw snow if the school closes early under these conditions. Consequently we are going to give very careful consideration as to whether to open or not in adverse weather conditions. However, if the decision is made to open the school, then it is most likely that the school will remain open for the duration of the school day.

In the event that we do close early, senior staff will remain on site until all students are on their way home. If any student either faces or anticipates any difficulty, please be assured that they will be allowed to remain safe in school until their particular situation is satisfactorily resolved. Therefore, they will not be in any danger.

Please see overleaf for how you can help and plan ahead.

continued

PARENTS ARE REQUESTED:

a) not to telephone the school for information - as explained below, our telephone lines need to be kept clear for emergency use. All relevant information will be made available to parents as outlined above. **Parents are also requested not to arrive at school with the intention of taking their children home before the end of the normal school day as this puts additional pressure on staff to find children and disrupts further the smooth running of lessons. If this is in any way likely, children should be kept at home at the outset.**

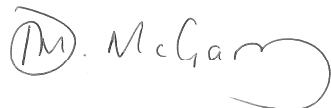
b) to listen to BBC Radio Suffolk as this the definitive source (and not rely on information from other local radio stations as this may be conflicting), for a guide on local conditions and to decide on the basis of the information, together with their own assessment of conditions in their locality, whether or not to send their children to school. Despite the fact that some students may worry that their attendance records may be adversely affected by not arriving in school on days affected by severe weather conditions, parents need to be mindful that the risks in their children attempting to reach school are often unacceptably high. Additional worry may also be caused to staff and to parents in the arrangements necessary for children to return home. I would also stress that children's attendance records would not be adversely affected by an absence caused by severe weather conditions.

c) to help the school by making their own emergency arrangements well in advance:

- i) by ensuring in the case of older children that they have a key to give access to their house and in the case of younger children, by arranging for a trusted and responsible adult or relative to receive their children if they return early from school.
- ii) by arranging for their children to be able to contact them or a responsible adult in case of emergency e.g. should your child become stranded without money for a telephone call on the way home, they should be familiar with the process of making a reverse charge telephone call i.e. dial the operator on Freefone100, giving the number to be called and requesting that the person receiving the call should agree to accept the charge. **As we need to keep the school telephone lines clear for emergency use, it will not be possible for the school to arrange for students to make telephone calls as a matter of routine in the event of severe weather, hence the importance of advance planning by parents.**

I hope that you find this information helpful and that by acting upon it together, we can ensure your child's safety in the event of severe weather conditions.

Yours sincerely,



D. McGARRY
Headteacher