



## Benton Park Closure Procedures – Adverse Weather

The safety of students at Benton Park is paramount. We are aware that there may be times when we need to consider a full or partial school closure due to adverse weather conditions. Decisions will be made using these procedures.

The learning of our students is of key importance and we recognise that for some students the school may be the safest place for them to be in the context of adverse weather. We will make every effort to remain open as normal and it is only when safety is at risk that a judgement to close the school will be made.

We have had bad weather arrangements in place for many years and it is our experience that as snow or extreme weather conditions arise, our phone lines often become quickly overwhelmed with messages and queries from parents and carers. This can hinder or prevent our communication with external partners such as school bus companies from being able to update us about any changes to student collection arrangements. We will therefore ask parents/carers **not** to phone unless it is an emergency, and to follow the arrangements sent out each year. We will also remind staff not to make non-essential phone calls during this time.

The following procedures should be observed in the case of snowfall or other extreme weather conditions.

1. On the first day of snowfall overnight we will try to remain open if the health and safety of students and staff is not compromised. A decision about closure will be made by senior leadership following consultation with the Safety & Facilities Manager by 7:00am when the first school buses leave the depot.
2. By 7:00am we will notify parents/carers/staff using the following methods
  - Notification on our website, [www.bentonpark.org.uk](http://www.bentonpark.org.uk)
  - Notification on the LA school closure pages, <http://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/School-closures>
  - By notice on Radio Leeds and Radio Aire
  - Where possible we will also send a text message to the first emergency contact number supplied to school.

If notification has not been posted parents/carers/staff should assume that the school is open. Parents/Carers are asked not to call to ask if the School is open to keep lines open for staff to call if they are having travel difficulties.

3. If snow falls during the school day the bus companies will make every effort to honour their normal contracts, even if they arrive very late. However, if they have to advise during the day that local roads are inaccessible then there may be no safe alternative than to close the school earlier, so that both students and staff can get home. Where this happens a decision will be made by senior leadership in consultation with the Safety & Facilities Manager, as described earlier, we will use the local radio snow lines, our website, and texts to parents to advise of the need for a full or partial closure. Senior staff will remain on the premises until the last student has left safely. We will endeavour to get buses to the school as quickly as possible in these circumstances.

We are aware that the school buses have to travel to get to the school in the first instance and access to our bus park on Quaker Lane is particularly difficult for large vehicles in poor conditions. If access to the bus park is compromised, we will escort students to meet the buses on Harrogate Road. If the weather deteriorates rapidly buses may take some time to arrive, or may not arrive at all, and contingency plans may need to be

made to ensure students can get home safely. Parents will be advised to discuss contingency arrangements with their child/ren. These may include:

- Going to a friend's house if they live nearer to the school until parents/carers can safely pick them up.
  - Walking home, if safe to do so – please make sure that the route is known to them.
  - Public/ School Bus routes via main roads - In this event your child needs to know their way to and from the main road.
  - Meeting parents/carers at a pre-arranged venue
4. If the school is closed on the following day/s a decision will be made as early as possible so that parents can make arrangements. Notification will be made in the same way as point 1 & 2. Due to the complexities of our school site i.e. the size of the grounds, the long drive way we need to ensure that the snow can be cleared adequately and grit applied to path ways in order to ensure the site is safe. Consideration of this will form part of the decision making process about closure.
  5. When considering the decision about closure, we will need to balance the benefits of an early decision (parents/carers having time to plan childcare, avoiding wasted journeys) against the risk of closing and finding next day that there is only a minimal problem. If forecasts make it very likely that there will be heavy snow the next day, then a decision the previous evening may be appropriate.
  6. Staff too have journeys to make home and may have children at another school or nursery to consider as they plan to get to work or get home. If the school closes early, students will be supervised and will not be left unattended, however staff living furthest away or with greatest need will be allowed to leave as soon as is practicable so supervision of students may be limited to the minimum required.
  6. If the school remains open but conditions are poor, we understand that some students may arrive late because conditions are difficult and we prefer lateness to absence in these circumstances.
  7. If travel organisations recommend only essential travel in poor weather parents and staff will be made aware that in the Department for Education's view, essential travel includes students going to school to keep learning, and school staff attending work.
  8. If roads have been left un-gritted during poor weather conditions the buses may have to re-route and/or stick to main roads which have been gritted. Parents will be advised that students should know their way to and from the main road as they may need to catch a bus from the main road or walk home from there. Our school bus time tables can be found at <http://www.generationm.co.uk/your-school/schoolfinder/B/>
  9. The Facilities Team under the direction of the Safety & Facilities Manager will ensure that adequate provisions are available to ensure optimum operation of the school site is achieved including grit and snow/ice equipment.
  10. All staff will be expected to vary their duties as required to ensure the safety and welfare of students and staff