Severe Weather Closures

Recent experience has shown us that this winter may be severe. Without being too pessimistic, we are likely to have to close the school in the event of a weather emergency or a related building systems failure (loss of heating etc.). The purpose of this letter is to explain the procedure that will be followed and sets out your responsibilities as well as ours, so that in the event of an emergency, things can run as smoothly as possible.

Closure before the start of the school day

We will notify the local radio stations [BBC Radio Kent, KM FM & Heart FM] as soon as we are aware of the need to close. Mrs Hanman and I will liaise closely and make a decision as early as we can to avoid confusion and prevent parents and pupils from making unnecessary journeys. In our experience Radio Kent is very reliable and will put out notices as soon as they are received. It is our advice that, where you think there is a likelihood of severe weather; you listen to Radio Kent from as early as possible. If you hear that the school is to be closed please **do not** telephone for confirmation. Keep your child off school and listen to the radio for further updates. As soon as a decision to close is made, this information will appear on the web sites of both schools.

Sometimes it will not be possible for you to receive the closure information until your child has left for school. Please ensure that your child knows that, even if she/he sees a sign outside the school, she/he should report to school so that we can inform you of her/his safe arrival and arrange for you to collect your child. As you can appreciate, it is impossible for the school to track children who have not reported in and this can be distressing for parents. Children who do not report in will be assumed to be at home.

Until 9.30 the telephone should be kept clear for emergency use as we will be contacting parents of those children who have arrived at school and need to return home. From 9.30, or as soon as practically possible, we will place an appropriate message on the school answer phone.

Please carry on listening to Radio Kent, or one of the other stations, at appropriate times each day until the situation is resolved.

Closure *during* the school day and dealing with children who have arrived at school.

When it becomes necessary to notify a closure **during** the school day the radio stations will be informed as soon as possible, and a notice displayed outside school. On becoming aware of this please make arrangements for your child to be collected at the earliest opportunity.

When children are in school our first priority is their safety. It is inevitable that, while many will be collected as above, a number of parents will not be aware of the closure. In this situation we will hold those children in school until they are collected or until the end

of the school day. We will always attempt to send children home, or to their nominated emergency contact and **every** effort will be made to make telephone contact.

Sometimes parents are happy for their child to go to a friend's home. We will not allow this unless you have specifically agreed to it. Many of you will have told us of these arrangements previously. If there are specific arrangements for emergency closures, or if the arrangements have been changed, please tell us as soon as possible by phone or writing in to Mrs Tilley. Please ensure that we know what you want us to do in the event of a school-time closure. It is important that all parents ensure that our information is as up to date as possible. The information will be held on file; should it change please inform us as soon as you can. This information relates only to where your child should go in an emergency - it may therefore differ from the normal emergency contact information we already hold.

The decision to close a school is not taken lightly – we know how important each day in school is and that absence has a detrimental impact on learning. This will not be a panic reaction. Each Headteacher will make a decision based on the local conditions, staffing and safety. It is therefore not unusual for a school in the local area to remain open when others close.
The decision to close will be taken for one or more of the following reasons:

- A school generally serves a local community and many children may be able to walk in to school with suitable footwear. However, road conditions are such that requiring staff to drive in (some live a considerable distance from the school) will put them at risk.
- Effective teaching will not take place without sufficient staff to effectively manage the school.
- Road and pavement conditions are such that parents and pupils will be put at risk by walking or driving to school.
- While at school, the weather deteriorates to a point where the safety of pupils and staff is jeopardised – their journey home is likely to be difficult or dangerous if the decision to close is delayed.
- A systems failure in the school leading to a lack of heat or fresh drinking water.

I do hope you find this information useful.

C P Gabbett
Headteacher