



SEVERE WEATHER GUIDANCE

As we move into the Autumn/winter season the potential for severe weather increases. During recent winters we have had prolonged spells of frost and snow which have had a disruptive effect on transport and the operational capacity of some services. We have also seen a number of severe weather incidents involving storm conditions. This advice is to help you to know how school will deal with such eventualities.

In the event of severe weather Forge will remain open unless the Management Team decide that we cannot operate safely and effectively or that the risks of continuing to operate are such that it is in the best interests of the pupils, staff and parents to close.

The decision as to whether to stay open or close is a difficult one for a school to make and is not taken lightly.

Some examples of the kinds of things that can create such a situation are:

- The school building becomes unfit for use (e.g. heating breaks down, flood damage etc.)
- Freezing conditions, ice and snow resulting in dangerous and disrupted roads to the extent that staff and pupils cannot get to school
- The conditions on the roads and streets are such that it is deemed too risky to expect parents/pupils or staff to travel
- The number of staff able to get to work is inadequate to continue operating
- The weather conditions and the short term outlook strongly suggest a rapid deterioration in conditions that may significantly affect the safe travel of children and staff on their homeward journey

The nature of the climate in Northern Ireland means that weather conditions can change and develop very rapidly and decisions about school closure are often taken at short notice. Sometimes a severe weather forecast doesn't result in much disruption in a particular area and yet in another locality nearby conditions can be much more severe.

On other occasions the situation can develop more rapidly than expected and roads can change from being fine to impassable within a very short period.

We do our best to make the right judgement call and inform parents as quickly as possible. If we do have to close we will use the following methods:

- **Facebook & Twitter** – Forge has Facebook & Twitter Pages accessible to parents with accounts – www.facebook.com/Forge Integrated Primary School – and we will update timeline information regarding disruptions and closures as soon as possible.
- **Local Media – BBC Radio Ulster** - the BBC usually also publish this information on their website.
- **SMS Text Messaging Service** (note that this service is generally reliable but in situations where secure web access is difficult it may not be the first means of communication)
- **Parents can phone the school** – although in such situations lines are often busy.



We will always do our best to make a decision and get information out as early as possible but the uncertain nature of weather events means that such decisions are inevitably short notice.

Personal Decisions – Assessing Risk



Many of us put in a determined effort to get to our work and keep things moving even when conditions are poor. It is up to each adult to make a calculated judgement about the level of risk, their personal experience and ability in dealing with the conditions (for example in driving), and the hazards that are beyond their personal control.

It goes without saying that this decision is more complex when travelling with children. Some adults may be happy to attempt a journey as individuals in poor conditions but would choose not to do so when transporting their children, as the consequences of even a minor accident or of having to abandon a vehicle are more serious. As a school we do bear these factors in mind when we make a decision about staying open or closing.

Ultimately it is up to individual parents and staff to make a judgement on whether they feel it is safe to travel to school.

- If weather is so severe that you feel you are taking an excessive risk in travelling to school you should not travel. Education is important but safety is the first priority.
- If conditions are such that you are unsure about whether the school might be open use the means of communication detailed overleaf to check before setting out.
- If conditions are such that you can get to school please do so carefully.

Note that when driving or walking on school grounds during icy and snowy weather much higher standards of care are required. We will do our best to clear as much ice and snow as possible under such circumstances and salting will be carried out as far as resources allows but we do not have the resource nor the throughput of traffic to have surfaces cleared to the extent that might be expected on a main public road. Prudent driving and walking is essential.



Useful Web Addresses

- www.forgeips.co.uk
- www.trafficwatchni.com
- www.metoffice.com