



29th November 2023

Dear Parents

Snow and Extreme Weather information for families 2023

With wintery weather on the way we wanted to update you on our procedure for snow or severe icy conditions. The question parents normally want to know is – will school be closed?

Sissinghurst VA Church of England Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. We carry out a staff survey to assess risks for staff travelling and distances that staff live from school in severe weather conditions. As we are sure you will understand, in the event of disruption caused by heavy snow the prime concern of the school must and will always be the safety of pupils, families and staff.

Will school close and should I send my child into school if the weather is bad (eg a weather warning to travel only if necessary)?

The decision to close the school will take account of the safety of all our pupils and staff - most of whom travel a fair distance to school each day. We will always endeavour to open the school in the event of bad weather, as long as it is safe to do so, however you should be aware we only have 3 members of teaching staff who live within walking distance of the school so if roads are unsafe, or travel not recommended, learning would be online via Google Classrooms as there would not be enough adults on site to make the site safe and supervise all pupils who could walk to school.

If the school is open in snow or bad weather the decision as to whether or not to send a pupil to school, must be at the discretion of you, the parent, taking into account factors such as local road conditions, weather warnings and the availability of child care. On such days, school will only be open from 8.40-3.10pm with no wraparound care or clubs running.

We always ensure pathways are gritted and salted but the car park in severe conditions would remain closed as it is not safe for turning and parking at drop off and pick up and too large to grit and clear to make safe for multiple cars so you will need to bear this in mind and park and walk into school via the pedestrian access.

If some staff can get into school and school is open for children who live close enough to attend school safely, parents would be asked to provide a packed lunch and be aware that the school would be providing a childcare service rather than a teaching day as most likely, children would be kept together or split into a couple of groups depending on staff and pupil numbers. Don't forget suitable warm clothing – gloves, hats, scarves, wellies etc. or even a change of clothing. Learning for pupils not attending school will be offered online via Google Classrooms so do ensure you have this log in information.

I do not want my child to come in if bad snow or they may be in late...

The school appreciates that during bad weather children may arrive later than normal; parents should endeavour to contact the school to let them know they are on their way if likely to be delayed as they would normally using Studybugs. The school recognises there will be isolated instances where families

are cut off, even where the clear majority of children can get into school. In such instances parents should inform the school of the circumstances of this exceptional situation, as the school has a duty to clarify the circumstances of each case so as to be able to authorise the absence to the Local Authority.

How will I know if the school is closed?

In the event of bad weather, parents should check to see if the school is open before travelling to the site. There are a number of ways to confirm whether the school is open or closed.

- Check the school website. We will aim to update the website by 7.15am at the top of the home page <https://www.sissinghurst.kent.sch.uk/>
- Check to see if you have had a text message or email from the school via Studybugs. (Please make sure we have your up to date mobile number on our records at all time.)
- Check the list of school closures on the Council Website. Please visit www.kentclosures.co.uk. Search for the school in the search box. The Kent Closures website may also be used to find out if other services in Kent are open or closed, such as nurseries, children's centres and libraries. We also recommend parents sign up for Email alerts on the Kent Closures website. This service will send an email alert to let parents know if Sissinghurst Primary School is closed. Local radio will sometimes provide information of school closures.

What if extreme weather starts during the school day?

If the school is open, but extreme weather develops during the day, we will aim to remain open until the end of the normal school day. However this is not always possible when roads are becoming treacherous. In this case parents will be contacted via Studybugs and asked to collect their children as soon as possible. Under these conditions we will take verbal permission for their child/children to be collected by a nominated adult. Normal lessons may be curtailed and the remaining pupils assembled in groups under the supervision of authorised members of staff to await collection.

In summary...

Staff will always make every reasonable effort to undertake the journey to school if it is safe to do so. It is appreciated that the journey may take longer than normal and therefore some staff may not be able to arrive before the normal start of the school day. It should be noted that a normal school day would not take place in severe weather conditions. Following a survey of staff distances from school and risk assessment it is likely that in more severe snow or icy conditions, most would not be able to make the journey safely to school so the school would be closed and is most likely to be offering learning via Google Classrooms only.

In snowy or icy weather, if the school can be open, the car park would not be open for vehicles, with the path gritted only for entry and exit to school via the hall.

We hope that this clarifies our arrangements and thank you for your understanding if weather is extreme and circumstances are beyond our control.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Holman
Headteacher

Headteacher - Mrs Sarah Holman
Common Road, Sissinghurst, TN17 2BH
office@sissinghurst.kent.sch.uk
01580 713895