



Snow Policy

The school aims to remain open in the event of snow because learning and teaching are our core purpose. We appreciate that many parents have jobs & roles which would be significantly affected if the school had to close. However, in the event of heavy snowfall, we cannot guarantee that the school, or every class at the school will be open for pupils. In the event of disruption caused by heavy snow, the prime concern of the school will always be the safety of the pupils, staff and visitors to the site. Because not all staff may be able to attend the school this might have an impact on the operation of the school day. The school will only open for the purpose of education. Staff are only deployed in the role that they are employed in.

Considerations

Assessing the prospects for opening is not a simple task and it starts early in the morning. With many constantly changing variables, the headteacher will use all available information and updates on staff availability as well as consideration of site conditions and prospects of further snow to reach a decision on opening the school.

Parents are asked to understand the complex nature of decision-making during snow and to be assured that the school will be open if at all possible. If a decision is made to close the school it will not have been a simple decision. Factors to consider include:

- Are sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified staff able to get to the school?
- Are we able to provide safe pedestrian access from Welsh Street to the school building?
- Are we able to provide school meals for pupils (free school meals and non-free school meals)?
- Are all heating & hot water systems working appropriately?
- Have external agencies offered relevant advice about the safety of opening the school site?

The Decision to Close

Any decision to close will be made by the headteacher in agreement with the Chair of the Governing Body. If the school is to close, a decision will be made by 7.30am. Wherever possible, this decision will be made earlier. If the school is closed we will display a very clear message on the front page of the website. We will also send a text message to all parents and make this announcement on twitter too.

We no longer notify local media. It is therefore easier for parents to look at the school website rather than locate the media website. School closure information is also displayed on the Monmouthshire County Council website www.monmouthshire.gov.uk. Regional media often copy the lists of closed schools onto their website. When looking at a website for updates we recommend hitting ctrl and f5 regularly to ensure the page updates with the latest information.

Late Opening

Because safe access to the site is a key factor in establishing whether the school can open, the decision to open the school at a later time might be made. We will do all we can to open the school for an 8.50am start as usual but if we cannot ensure safe pathways into the school building from Welsh Street we may have to amend this opening time. In this case, children will not be allowed onto the site before the official time.

Overnight Snow

Staff are required to contact the headteacher by telephone from 5am if they believe, having assessed site conditions at their home, that they will be unlikely to get to school safely. While staff are expected to make every effort to attend the school, only they are able to assess their individual scenarios and prospects. They are responsible for their own decision and should not travel (or continue to travel) if they feel the journey presents too high a risk. All staff MUST contact the headteacher by 7am if they feel they will not be able to get to school. If a member of staff has not contacted by 7am, they will be expected in to school as usual.

Please note that there may be a situation where the school is open to some classes but closed to others.

Daytime Snow

Sometimes the weather deteriorates during the school day and the school might consider closing during the usual school day. The school has a duty of care to all pupils and staff and this extends to consideration of their ability to safely travel home from school. Only parents will be able to assess the site conditions around their home and the prospects for safely reaching home should the weather deteriorate further. Wherever possible we will try to stay open until the end of the day. However, if you wish to collect your child(ren) from school before this time, you are welcome to do so. Please ensure you come to the school office.

If the snow falls heavily and shows no prospect of stopping, the school might consider asking parents to collect children early. This message will be sent out through a text to all parents and a clear message on our website as well as an update on our twitter page. Anyone struggling to collect their child by 3.30pm, due to poor road conditions, transport arrangements, etc, should contact the school to inform us of the likely collection time.

Pre-emptive Work

During winter months, staff at the school will keep up to date with weather forecasts for the area and region. If snowfall is predicted, the caretaker will treat paths and the driveway on the school site with salt/grit on the day/evening before the forecasted snow.

Snow Clearance

On the morning of significant snow fall, having unlocked the school, the caretaker will focus all efforts on clearing snow and ensuring safe pedestrian access from Welsh Street to the school building. The paths to be prioritised are shown on the map in Appendix A.

If time permits once these paths have been cleared, the site manager will attempt to clear a pathway on the driveway. This is to allow staff vehicles to enter the site. The site manager will consult with the headteacher to ascertain whether the car park is safe to open to staff vehicles by 8am. Staff and visitors entering the school site in their vehicle do so at their own risk. However, the school reserves the right to close the site to vehicular access for staff or parents to minimise risk and maximise safety on the site. The school might request additional assistance with on-site snow clearance from parents. Those parents attending for this purpose do so at their own risk. **All pupils, staff & visitors should use only cleared paths when accessing the site.**

Breakfast Club

Because of the complicated factors involved in assessing whether the school can open and staff availability, it is likely that Breakfast Club might be affected and might not be available. If Breakfast Club is cancelled, the school will notify all parents via text message and a very clear message on the front page of the website as well as a twitter message.

After School Club

Usually we will have more time to ascertain whether After School Club will be able to operate. If ASC cannot operate, we will notify all parents via text message and a very clear message on the front page of the website as well as a twitter message. This decision will be made after consultation with Mathern Day Nursery who operate the club for the school.

Home to School Transport

Part of the consideration during the early morning will involve discussions with Monmouthshire Transport Unit over the availability of home to school transport. If this transport cannot be provided, we will send a text to parents, place a clear message on the front of the website and update our twitter feed. Similarly, if conditions deteriorate during the day, we will be in contact with the Transport Unit and will convey any change to provision in the same way. If we DO NOT send these messages or update the website, parents should assume that the service will operate as usual.

Practical Arrangements

Parents are asked to ensure that children who attend school when the school is open have sufficient warm clothing and footwear. Children will be allowed to play outside at breaktime if the site is safe and they have appropriate clothing & footwear. However, they will be informed that they must not throw snowballs in close proximity of others.

