

## **LNCT**

### **Aberdeenshire Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers**



Date: September 2024

## **LNCT/24/09**

### **ECS Adverse Weather Arrangements**

This agreement has been subject to review in 2024 by the LNCT Joint Secretaries and HR as part of a review of current Aberdeenshire LNCT Agreements.

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# **Education & Children's Services Adverse Weather Arrangements**

**Reviewed 11<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

## **Document History**

<b>Document Location</b>	This document may be accessed electronically on the ECS Health, Safety & Risk Management Sharepoint site:
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<https://aberdeenshire.sharepoint.com/sites/ECSHealthSafetyRiskManagement175/SitePages/Adverse-Weather.aspx>

## Revision History

**Date of this revision:** 11/09/2024

**Date of next revision:** 08/09/2025

Revision Date	Previous Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Changes Marked
02.12.2022	28.11.2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addition to Appendix 1 regarding remote learning</li> <li>Link address updates to access the Aberdeenshire School Closures System (website) and view closures on website page.</li> </ul>	No
31.08.2023	02.12.2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Date amendments to reflect 2023/24</li> <li>Update of Appendix 2 to reflect update to Communicating with Transport Operators: Removal of requirement to email <a href="mailto:school.transport@aberdeenshire.gov.uk">school.transport@aberdeenshire.gov.uk</a> when website is updated.</li> <li>Update of Appendix 3 to reflect updated MIS Support guidance - (Full Closure (Advice Note 1))</li> </ul>	No
11.09.2024	31.08.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Date amendments to reflect 2024/25</li> <li>Update of Appendix 3 to reflect updated MIS Support guidance - (location of information)</li> </ul>	No

## Approvals

This document requires the following approvals.

Name	Signature	Title	Date of Issue	Ver
Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (Aberdeenshire)		Joint Secretaries	Sept 2023	
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**1. Rationale and Guiding Principles**

Aberdeenshire has a clear presumption in favour of keeping establishments open whenever practicable and safe to do so, in order to minimise the impact on learning provision and associated community impact. It is recognised that the impact of establishment closures on businesses and the wider economy is significant and as well as the service provision impact on staffing levels across all public sector service areas.

Guiding Principles:

- Prolonged or blanket closure of establishments across Aberdeenshire, are to be the exception. Decisions will first be taken by local managers based on local conditions and attendant risks, which can often differ from one part of Aberdeenshire to another.
- As far as possible, schools should provide pupils with the support needed to enable them to continue learning if schools are closed to pupils for an extended period, due to the impact of severe weather; this is equally important for the continuing education of pre-school aged children.

## 2. Pre-Winter Checks – October/November

### 2.1 Business Continuity

- Identify those members of staff who may find it difficult to travel to work due to adverse weather conditions
- Facilitating remote learning options should, where possible, be factored into planning.
- Pre-agree possible alternative locations for those staff who fall into the above category AND whose role allows them to work from an alternative Aberdeenshire location, i.e. working in an Aberdeenshire establishment that is closer to their home
- Where a member of staff is unable to attend their base or an alternative Aberdeenshire location, prepare work that can be completed at their home
- Line Managers should ensure ALL members of staff are aware of the expectations and their responsibilities during periods of Adverse Weather (refer to HR policy: Adverse Weather Arrangements Guidance) and Appendix 1, page 9 of this document)
- Ensure your establishments Business Continuity Plan is up to date, **especially any contact details for staff** contained within the document. Should this document be updated, ensure the Risk Management Officer receives an updated copy as soon as possible.
- Line managers should ensure that all members of staff are aware of the establishments adverse circumstances procedures should the establishment have to close earlier than scheduled.

#### **Schools to also ensure:**

- they know their pupil travel/transport arrangements should the establishment have to close earlier than scheduled
- they have up to date contact details for pupils and their parents/carers
- they know how to operate the School Status page on Aberdeenshire's website (see Appendix 2, page 11)
- they test their access to the School Status page, **from both school and from their 'out with hours' locations**
- agree who is to record the messages on the School Status page, 'Out of Office' notification on the school's main email account and School voice mail/answer machine, where available.
- access to the School Status page should be regularly tested.
- when a school is closed to pupils' teachers should provide appropriate remote learning.

### 2.2 Out with Core Hours Arrangements

#### **All Site Managers:**

Should have checked the emergency contacts numbers for the various services that might be required out with core hours, i.e. water, gas, janitorial, school transport, etc

**School to also ensure:**

- they know how to operate the School Status page on Aberdeenshire's website
- agree who is to record the messages on the School Status page, 'Out of Office' notification on the school's main email account and School voice mail/answer machine, if available
- access to the School Status page should be tested from the agreed 'Out with Core Hours' location.

## 2.3 Communication with Service Users

**Schools:**

- Should pre-inform parents/carers:
  - of their school's adverse weather arrangements.
  - that, "where school transport is not running, please do not take your child(ren) to school yourself, unless it is safe to do so. If you do take your child(ren) to school, you must also be able to collect them at the end of the day"
  - that, where appropriate, learning activities for pupils will be available (using a similar approach to remote learning agreements) and the support of parents/carers is sought to encourage their children to make use of on-line educational resources or carry out revision, in the event of a school closurethe above bullet points can be part of a newsletter as well as being included on the school's webpage
- If not organised through the school, schools should ensure that those who run breakfast clubs, after school clubs, etc are also aware of the school's adverse weather arrangements in advance of winter period.
- Head Teachers should read further advice on Appendix 2, page 11 of this document

**Community and Leisure Centres:**

Should display their local adverse weather arrangements on public display boards, i.e. message will be left on answer machine service, if available.

## 3. Closing an Establishment

### 3.1 Closure Responsibilities

Schools may be closed in 2 ways:

- **Blanket closure** – only in exceptional circumstances will a decision be taken by the Director to close ALL SCHOOLS to PUPILS AND STAFF due to adverse weather.
- **Head Teacher decision**– in the absence of a blanket closure, it is up to the Head Teacher of each school to decide whether it should be closed. The Head Teacher must make it clear in any closure communication whether the school is closed to PUPILS ONLY or to PUPILS AND STAFF.

#### **Communicating with other Head Teachers within the same town -**

While recognising that each school within a town or large village would have different constraints in terms of where staff live, every attempt should be made by Head Teachers to coordinate school closures in a town or large village (secondary and primary schools).

#### **Schools with community facilities and staff –**

Where a school hosts a dedicated leisure facility, community centre, provide space to the community or have a leisure facility on site, Head Teachers should note that the decision to close such a facility lies with the Leisure Services.

Therefore, in the event that a Head Teacher takes a decision to close a school, they should contact the Community Leisure Officer to receive feedback on whether that community/leisure facility will continue to operate, even when the school is closed.

Janitorial/caretaking staff should be aware that a leisure facility could remain open and make the necessary arrangements around opening times, including path clearing and sanding for pool, sports centre and community facility users (leisure staff can assist with this).

### 3.2 Communication

Decision to close an establishment should not be taken lightly; however, every effort should be made to communicate the decision to staff and service users as soon as possible. Particular attention should be made to contact the following:

- Parents/Carers
- Service users
- Support and teaching staff (N.B. Visiting Specialists, Music Instructors, Escorts, external ASN provision)
- Janitorial
- Local school transport providers
- Catering services
- School Crossing Patrollers
- Landscape Services
- Out of School providers, i.e. breakfast clubs, etc
- Pre-arranged visitors to the establishment



See Appendix 2 and 3 for specific communication and responsibilities.

### **3.3 SEEMiS:**

Due to the impact on pupil attendance figures, schools require to alter SEEMiS. Detailed advice on what is required can be found on Appendix 3, page 15.

## APPENDIX 1



### **Adverse Weather/School Closure Arrangements**

#### **Staffing Guidelines**

##### ALL STAFF IN EDUCATION, COMMUNITY AND LEISURE ESTABLISHMENTS

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that adverse weather conditions can prevent employees from reaching their normal place of employment. No employee will be required to attend for work if it is unsafe to do so. These arrangements apply to all employees of the Council.

##### ALL STAFF IN EDUCATION, COMMUNITY AND LEISURE ESTABLISHMENTS (EXCLUDING TEACHERS, PERIPATETIC AND MUSIC INSTRUCTORS – See p10)

The Council must ensure that the health and safety of its employees is not compromised, by allowing affected employees immediate access to leave entitlement (special, paid, flexi or unpaid depending on the circumstances). That said it is expected that employees should make every reasonable effort to reach their normal place of employment or an agreed alternative location.

If a Line Manager is satisfied that an employee has genuinely been prevented from attending work because of a serious effect of adverse weather such as road closure, the first day of absence will be regarded as paid special leave. EMPLOYEES WILL BE ENTITLED TO ONE PERIOD OF PAID LEAVE IN ANY ONE INSTANCE OF ADVERSE WEATHER. Any subsequent day(s) should be considered as flexi leave, annual leave or, (if annual leave is fixed or has been used up) unpaid leave. The normal requirement for advance notification for leave will be suspended in these circumstances.

Any alleged abuse of this policy must be subject to investigation and, if necessary, action, under the Disciplinary Policy of the Council.

As an alternative to the granting of leave an employee will, if appropriate, be required to attend at a different Aberdeenshire workplace or work from home.

**WORKING FROM HOME:** In certain circumstances Line Managers should agree that an employee can work from home. Home working must be the subject of prior agreement with the employee's line manager. The work to be undertaken at home must be agreed with the line manager and should be subject of normal managerial procedures on return to work. Where home working is authorised, the employee will be credited with normal or actual hours, whichever is greater.

**ATTENDANCE AT AN ALTERNATIVE PLACE OF WORK:** If an employee's normal place of work is open but it is deemed unsafe for him/her to travel, or if his/her normal workplace

is closed, he/she will be required to attend another Aberdeenshire Council work location to which he/she can safely travel. Where possible these arrangements should be agreed and put in place prior to the advent of adverse weather. Travel expenses will be paid as appropriate.

It is the responsibility of employees to ensure that they have emergency care arrangements in place for their children, in case of a school closure due to adverse weather. If this is not possible the employee should discuss the matter with their line manager and will be entitled to take annual/ flexi/ unpaid leave. The normal requirement for advance notice of the intention to take leave will be suspended in these circumstances.

Supply and Relief Workers who are contracted to work in advance of the first day on which they are unable to attend work due to adverse weather will be credited with their normal working hours for that day.

Whilst it is appreciated that there may be operational and service delivery considerations in working during periods of adverse weather, managers are expected to ensure that employees are treated in an equitable and consistent manner and that the safety of employees is not compromised in any way. Advice should be sought from the HR Officer teams within HR as necessary.

## **TEACHERS, PERIPATETIC TEACHERS and MUSIC INSTRUCTORS**

**If able to travel safely and the base school is open** to pupils and staff or open to staff only, teachers/music instructors should attend their base school. For peripatetic staff, the "base school" would include any school where they are timetabled to teach that day or during the course of the week.

**If unable to travel safely to the base school and the base school is open** to pupils and staff, they should contact their base school as soon as possible to inform them they are unable to attend and to provide work electronically for their class(es) that day. The teacher/music instructor should work from home to undertake appropriate previously agreed professional duties in line with current service/school improvement priorities

**If the base school is closed** to pupils and staff, teachers/music instructors should work from home to

- support remote learning using previously agreed electronic platforms
- undertake appropriate previously agreed professional duties in line with current service/school improvement priorities

## APPENDIX 2

### Adverse Weather/School Closure Arrangements

#### Communication Guidelines

##### COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS/CARERS

Once a decision has been made to close a school, schools should communicate the decision as soon as possible.

In order to keep parents/carers fully informed, and to pre-empt queries, it is important that messages include the reasons for each school closure, who is effected, alternative work arrangements being followed by teachers (working in another school, working at home, etc) and any changes to school transport or school catering arrangements. This message should be kept to a minimum.

##### **School Information Line:**

As of September 2022, the School Information Line will no longer be available.

There are four methods for informing parents/carers:

##### **Aberdeenshire School Closures System (website):**

Schools can use the Office Computer, HT Laptop, and Curricular Computers that are connected to the Internet or a computer at home to close their school:

1. Open internet browser.
2. Open the Schools Closures page by typing this address into the address bar of your internet browser: <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/apps/adverse/>
3. (you could add this address to your favourites so it's easier to get to next time: click favourites, add to favourites)
4. Select your school CSN then your school from the drop-down list.
5. Type your unique 10 digit ID in the box. This is the school's own private PIN. **(If a school does not have this, please contact ECS Reception on 01224 472840)**
6. Fill in the closure status message (see page 6.) Click preview (at this stage the information has not been submitted).
7. Check the information and finally click submit, to make your closure live.

To see your closure on the Aberdeenshire Council website visit the closure list:

<https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/Apps/Schools-Closures/>

- \* Please remember to enter your details on the website when your school requires to be closed.

- \* The website is **reset at 4.00pm each day**, so a new entry will be required if your school is to close for a subsequent day.
- \* It is important that the website is used as Radio Stations and E&CS Officers are sent an automatic email from the website if a school has been closed.
- \* If for any reason you are unable to get on to the website, [please contact ECS Reception on 01224 472840](#) (within office hours), and they will enter the details for you.

Note: Schools should test their access to the website, from both school and from their 'out with hours' locations.

**School Answer machine/voice mail:** If your school has a message facility for the main telephone (answer machine, '1521', etc), please also leave a closure message on there.

**School email account:** If there is a possibility that during a school closure, there will be no-one to reply to emails arriving in the main school account, please activate the 'out of office' message. This also applies to members of staff with dedicated Outlook email accounts.

**School texting facilities, i.e. Groupcall:** If your school has texting facilities, this can also be used to inform parent/carers of a school closure or early finish.

### **LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR PUPILS IN THE EVENT OF SCHOOL CLOSURE**

Head Teachers should have ensured that appropriate learning activities/materials have been posted via an appropriate electronic platform by staff for all secondary subjects/stages and for key primary curricular areas/stages and that pupils have been advised as appropriate, including how to access these. Schools will also wish to make use of SCHOLAR, department websites/blogs and other online resources.

Schools may also follow the advice detailed in our local authority [Contingency documentation](#) which states that for a short term closure learning grids with revision tasks are made available to all pupils. There would also be signposting to learning provision such as [E sgoil](#). Examples of learning grids that can be used in the event of a closure can be found [here](#).

There are some Aberdeenshire households who either do not have internet access at all or limited connectivity. As thus, consideration should also be given in encouraging and support learning activities in situation where no internet connection is available.

Parents/carers should be made aware that learning activities for pupils are available on a pre-identified electronic platform and their support sought to encourage their children to make use of on-line educational resources in the event of a school closure.

## **COMMUNICATING WITH STAFF**

Staff should be made aware of the content of Appendix 1 and specific attention should be drawn to the different expectations of teaching staff and music instructors in relation to attending their normal place of work/other schools.

Staff should be made aware of the various communication channels, including the website, to be referred to in the event of adverse weather.

Staff should be advised not to post unprofessional or inappropriate comments on social networking sites, i.e. Facebook, in the event of a school closure. This is in breach of Council policy as stated in the Code of Practice on Social Networking.

All establishments will have an adverse circumstances procedure in place to be followed in the event of an early closure, and on which, all staff must be briefed.

Where staff will be working from home during an establishment closure it is appropriate for discussion to take place with their Head Teacher or line manager regarding the activities to be undertaken.

Teachers should be made aware that when they cannot travel safely, even if their school is open, they should contact their school, by email or otherwise, to provide work for their classes.

## **COMMUNICATING WITH CATERING SUPERVISORS/STAFF**

Catering supervisors/staff should be contacted as early as possible where a school closure or partial closure is being considered.

In the event of parents/carers being requested to provide a packed lunch for their child it should be noted that this would apply to all parents/carers, including those whose children would normally receive a free school lunch.

## **COMMUNICATING WITH TRANSPORT OPERATORS**

Head Teachers should have discussed and agreed reciprocal contact arrangements in the event of adverse weather/school closure with their local transport operator(s), including emergency contact out with normal working hours.

Head Teachers can contact their local transport operator(s) if they wish to open the school at a later time than normal during adverse weather to allow for longer travel to work journeys by staff. Variations to pick up times have to be discussed and agreed with transport operators and posted on the school closure/adverse weather website.

In previous years, the Passenger Transport Unit has emailed relevant schools with the contact names and telephone numbers of management for transport operators should these be required for emergency use in relation to adverse weather/school closure/ road conditions. As previously advised, under no circumstances should these numbers be passed to anyone beyond those who require them in order to carry out their duties or to anyone out with the Council.

**ABERDEENSHIRE ROADS SERVICES  
(TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICE)**

Aberdeenshire Roads Services will clear/sand the access road to the main school entrance. Roads Services will ensure that the Met Office and internal roads reports will be emailed via Outlook to all Head Teachers from 6.00 am whenever information is received.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF JANITORIAL STAFF AND LANDSCAPE SERVICES IN RELATION TO SNOW CLEARING AND SANDING OF PATHS, ETC**

Landscape Services staff, or nominated contractor, will (on a prioritised basis) ensure that the entrance to the school car park within the school grounds is cleared/sanded. Landscape Services will also clear/sand the main staff car park and decide whether they or Roads Services clear/sand the bus park. In the first instance Head Teachers or janitors should contact their designated Landscape Services supervisor/charge hand who will make the necessary arrangements including contacting Roads Services. A list of named Landscape Services staff responsible for each school, with contact telephone numbers, has been issued to all schools.

Janitorial staff are responsible for clearing/sanding a pathway from the main pedestrian access point to the school's main entrance and a pathway from the car park to the entrance. They will ensure that fire exits are kept clear.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF CARETAKERS IN RELATION TO SNOW CLEARING AND SANDING OF PATHS, ETC**

Caretaking staff have the same responsibilities for clearing/sanding all paths within the internal school path network, as would be applicable to janitorial staff.

## APPENDIX 3



### Adverse Weather/School Closure Arrangements

#### SEEMiS: BAD WEATHER / TRANSPORT PROBLEMS

Just a reminder to schools on how to deal with closure days or partial closures:

<u>Adverse Weather Circumstance</u>	<u>Absence/Attendance Recording Practice</u>
The entire school is closed because of bad weather	Remove the opening from the school register (see Advice Note 1)
The school is partially closed for particular year groups or stages	Primary Schools should use the SNA code for the year groups/stages  Secondary Schools can partially close the school for the year groups/stages (see Advice Note 2)
The school is partially closed to some or all transport pupils and notification of this has been made on the Aberdeenshire School Closures website	Use the SNA code for the groups of transport pupils concerned (see Advice Note 3)
The school is open (or partially open) and certain groups of pupils are unable to attend due to the weather	Use ABS absence code on receipt of note from parent explaining the circumstances for the absence

#### **Full Closure (Advice Note 1):**

If a school is closed to all pupils this should be reflected in the school calendar as a closure.

*Primary Schools* - Application > Management > Calendar > School > Enter Holidays. Select single day or range of days (if closed for more than 2 consecutive days). Select the start date of the closure and then click on morning or afternoon if a half day or click both if full day closure. Select from drop down menu next to 'Save this Holiday' the Closed option then click on Save this Holiday.

*Secondary Schools* – Application > New Attendance > Manage Holidays.

Each day is split into a morning and afternoon opening. The closures are colour coded, with the legend showing on the status buttons at the top left of the screen. Select the appropriate status i.e. 'Closure' at the top of the screen and then click on first opening of



the closure and then on the last opening. This will fill in all openings between 2 dates. If closing for one day then click on the am and on the pm for that day. Click Save.

**Partial Closure (Advice Note 2):**

If the school is partially closed e.g. to nursery pupils only, a SNA (should not attend) should be entered in these circumstances. Where secondary schools have advised S1 to S3 pupils not to come to school, or have a delayed start, then this is treated as a partial closure. This will be recorded as an attendance on the pupils' records.

*Primary Schools* - Application > Attendance > Planned Patterns > Set SNA.

Use the filters and select by year group and click on new list. On the right hand side of the screen select the date and click on Enter Rotation Pattern. Click on Select All to select all pupils then click on the am and/or pm opening for that date. Click on Proceed and then on Save.

*Secondary Schools* - Application > New Attendance > Partial Closures.

Select the date and click on morning or afternoon for a half day closure or click on both for full day closure then unselect the stages the school is not closed for and click on save.

**Partial Closure (Advice Note 3):**

If a school is partially closed to some or all transported pupils i.e. where the school has advised pupils not to travel to school, a SNA (should not attend) should be entered in these circumstances. This will be recorded as an attendance on the pupils' records.

However if a school is open to all pupils but a parent decides not to send the pupil to school due to adverse weather conditions then this should be recorded as ABS (Absent), on receipt of explanatory note from parent which will be recorded as an authorised absence in national statistics.

*Primary Schools* – Application > Attendance > Planned Patterns > Set SNA

Search by year group or casual group and highlight pupils on the left side of the screen. On the right hand side select start and end date then click on enter rotation pattern. Click on the boxes for the day to set SNA and then click on proceed and then save.

*Secondary Schools* – Application > New Attendance > SNAs and OATS

Search by stage or casual group and highlight pupils on the left side of the screen. On the right-hand side select start and end date, then select attendance mark e.g. SNA ensure entry mode is at Set then click on enter rotation pattern. Either click on 'select all' for all periods or click on the periods for the day on the timetable until the periods show SNA and then click proceed.