

Thursday 3 December

Dear Parents/Carers

Bad Weather Procedure

As we enter the season of winter and we are getting the first forecasts of snow for the United Kingdom I wanted to let you know how the Trust notifies parents/carers whether Wootton Upper School and Kimberley College are open or not.

We seek to make decisions as early as possible as to whether it will be safe to open our sites on a given day. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, which are beyond our control, we will make that decision by 7.00 a.m. Wherever possible, we will seek to take the decision the previous evening by 7:00pm to give parents/carers more time to make their own arrangements.

We will put a notice on the home page of our school and college website to advise parents/carers.

Once we have posted a message on our websites we will email parents/carers of pupils and students registered at Wootton Upper School and Kimberley College to inform them of the closure. Finally, we will also send a text message to the person you have told us is the first named contact for your child to notify them this way too.

On very rare occasions the decision to close is taken outside of the Trust: this usually happens when one or more Local Authorities make a decision that the roads are too dangerous, or likely to be too dangerous, for school transport to run. This usually mirrors a similar decision taken by registered bus route operators [e.g. Stagecoach]. Local Authorities always seek to take this decision as early as possible. If the Local Authorities make that decision the Trust will judge the roads are, therefore, not safe for other road users, including parents/carers bringing their children to school/college or for staff to drive to work.

We aim to keep our school and college open as much as possible and even more so this year given the amount of time children have spent out of lessons due to the pandemic. This means that on occasion where there is doubt as to whether there will be snow in our local area, we will not make a decision until the following morning. However, we will always seek to let you know in advance that is what we are doing. If we have told you that we are not sure whether it will be possible to open the following day, then in this situation we will always put a notice on the home page of our websites to confirm whether we are open or not.

Once a decision has been made we send a text message to the first named contact for all pupils and students. We also send a text message to all staff too. However, we know that it can take some time for text messages to get through to everybody. Therefore, we also send an email to parents/carers and staff and also to Wootton Upper School pupils and Kimberley College students. Finally, we put a notice on the home page of the school and college website to make it clear if the school and college are open or closed. We will also put a message on the website stating we are open, if we have sent you a message the previous day to state we are not sure at that stage whether or not it will be possible to open, because the weather forecast is not certain.

On very rare occasions it may be necessary to close the school/college early during the school day when a weather report has not forecast snow for our immediate area, or more likely if the timing of approaching is wrong.

If this happens, the Trust will liaise with both Local Authorities to confirm the arrangements for School Transport to arrive early and then the Trust will immediately notify parents and carers by putting a message on the home page of the school and college website, sending an email to parents/carers and then sending a text message to the first named point of contact. Past experience has shown that it is very difficult to be precise on the time school transport will arrive in these situations. We will let parents/carers know the time we are closing which will coincide with the expected arrival time of our school transport. However, sometimes buses are delayed, often up to an hour or more. Therefore, you will want to keep in touch with your child in this situation using their mobile phone.

We are not able to insist that public transport timetables are adjusted. In most cases buses run frequently in any event. However, the 857 bus which picks up on the Wootton Upper School site at the end of the day will NOT arrive early. Therefore, if your child uses this bus route, you must tell your child whether you expect them to wait for that bus at its normal arrival time, or whether you want them to walk down into the village to get on the 53 bus on Church Road or Cause End Road.

We would ask that you agree with your child what you expect them to do if the school/college closes in this circumstance. For most children using school transport the decision is straightforward, they will get on to their normal school bus. Sometimes, parents/carers who collect their children themselves cannot arrive early. In this situation you need to tell your child what you expect them to do. This may be to remain at the school or the college. Alternatively, for parents/carers who have children who could get home by walking or by using a public service bus route, you may want them to make their way home using that transport. In the current pandemic, we would strongly discourage you arranging lifts in other people's vehicles. Similarly, at the current time we should avoid children going to other people's homes unless it falls within the current Covid 19 guidance.

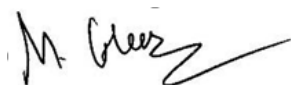
It is not possible for the school/college to monitor what each pupil/student should be doing. We need your support in making it very clear what you expect your child to do in this situation so that they know what your expectation is and that they stick to it. If you want your child to remain at the school or college until you arrive we will provide a safe, warm place for them to wait. We will tell the pupils and students where this space is on the day.

We would ask that you consider how your child will get into their home, if they arrive before you. Most children have their own keys, but it has not been unheard of for a child to arrive home and then not be able to enter the home.

If a decision is taken to close, then staff will provide work for pupils and students to do that day. This is likely to be work set on *Show My Homework* linked to the work the children would be covering in class that lesson. Clearly, for this to be effective pupils/children will need access to digital technology.

In many years, no closures are necessary and I earnestly hope that is the situation this winter.

Yours sincerely



Michael Gleeson
Executive Principal
Wootton Academy Trust

Wootton Academy Trust operates:
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Kimberley 16-19 STEM College
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