Service Children’s Education

Guidance

Severe Winter Weather Guidance

Issued January 2011
### Document information

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<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Other relevant approved documents</strong></td>
<td>MOD Statement of Civilian Personnel Policy – Other Special Leave &amp; Absence</td>
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<td><strong>Approved by</strong></td>
<td>DCE</td>
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<td><strong>Authorised by</strong></td>
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SEVERE WEATHER GUIDANCE FOR SCE SCHOOLS

1. Introduction

1.1 During any winter period there is always a possibility that severe weather will necessitate the closure of a school. However, as a fundamental principle every effort must be made to keep schools open, even if only limited numbers of pupils can attend.

1.2 The government has stressed the importance of schools remaining open wherever possible, not only because of the impact on children’s education but also because closures have a knock on effect on parents/carers who are key workers in other areas such as health provision.

1.3 The decision whether to close a school lies with the headteacher, after consultation, where practical, with HQ SCE and the local Garrison or Support Unit. The decision whether to close should be based on the judgement that it is (or will be) no longer safe for pupils and/or staff to be on site. The cancellation of school transport is not of itself a reason to close a school; it may still be possible for pupils and staff who live nearby to travel safely between home and school.

1.4 In some circumstances partial closure of a school may be an option. For example, the closure of a Foundation Stage 1 setting may be considered independently of the rest of the school.

1.5 The temporary reorganisation of classes may also need to be considered as an option. The inability to run a normal timetable or to organise classes in the normal way should not be taken as grounds for closure unless other alternatives have been examined.

1.6 The following guidance provides more detailed advice on:

- Managing and assessing risk
- Staff travel issues
- Consultation
- Notification
- Preparations for severe weather

1.7 With occurrences of severe weather on the rise, putting in place a clear adverse weather policy should be considered in conjunction with the School Governance Committee.

2. Managing and assessing risk

2.1 A suitable and sufficient risk assessment should be undertaken, prior to any decision being taken to close, to ensure all safety issues have been considered and control measures implemented. It will also serve as evidence should justification be needed to defend the closure of the school.

2.2 A suitable and sufficient risk assessment relates to on-site conditions, not the state of approach roads and paths. Consideration should be given to staffing levels where these are directly linked to safety. However it is vital that local
garrison staff are consulted as they will have taken advice about the state of roads and related services that will inevitably contribute to any decision to close. Where more than one school operates within a garrison area it is important to coordinate a strategy, however outcomes will vary as some schools will service a local community and others rely heavily on bussing.

The risk assessment of the site would consider the likelihood and the severity of an incident

2.3 It is recommended that the school identifies those areas of the school site that will probably give cause for concern in bad weather, perhaps during a premises inspection involving the local garrison health and safety coordinator. A standing instruction to the caretaker, or other appropriate member of staff, to treat the identified areas would indicate that the school has taken reasonable care.

The following areas must be regarded as high risk zones:

- Around entrances to buildings, particularly where there are steps
- Other steps around the site where lots of people will walk
- Sloping pathways and walkways around the site
- Within the school boundary, pathways used by pedestrians
- Play areas and where they exist, car parks.

Please see the risk assessment template at Appendix 2.

If you have any questions about completing a risk assessment, please contact SCE’s Health and Safety Adviser on JHQ (Mil) 5673 (Civ) 02161 4725673.

2.4 In reaching a decision to close it will be worth considering such issues as:

- Opening the school later in the day and closing earlier;
- How the school building might be used to ensure there is adequate supervision - for example use of the hall and other larger spaces where this is practicable;
- Limiting the extent to which students have to move between buildings;
- Planning the curriculum offer and / or the strategies used to ensure students are managed effectively and safely with the staff available.

3. Staff Travel Issues

3.1 Weather warnings sometimes advise against travel unless a journey is "essential". The Department for Education (DfE) has issued guidance on essential journeys in a school context:

“In the Department’s view, essential travel includes pupils going to school to keep learning and school staff going to work. The Department is confident that headteachers and parents will support this”

3.2 Within the context of the ‘essential travel’ definition given above, all staff have the individual responsibility for ensuring that they make every effort to reach school if it is open.

3.3 Where a decision is made by a member of staff not to travel at the start of the day, the responsibility to reach school continues during the course of the day if weather or travel conditions improve. Despite closure, staff still have a duty to
attend their school if they possibly can and a declaration of closure should not itself prevent staff from reporting for work\(^1\).

This guidance encourages everyone to make appropriate plans in advance of bad weather: it in no way compels staff to put themselves at risk by travelling in severe weather conditions.

NB: The headteacher does not have a duty of care towards staff which extends to include the journey to and from school.

3.4 It is recognised, that in certain circumstances, staff will not be able to get to work: headteachers will therefore need to have a system in place whereby staff can let them know if they are unable to make the journey. Headteachers can then plan the arrangements they need to make for the school day.

3.5 Headteachers / line managers cannot direct a member of staff to drive. However the expectation is that staff will turn up irrespective of weather conditions except in the most extreme cases where they can demonstrate a high degree of risk, or by virtue of distance and absence of transport, that it’s simply not possible for them to attend.

3.6 In planning for inclement weather, headteachers will wish to take into consideration the differing circumstances affecting individual members of staff: For example:

- Asking staff what alternative arrangements they can make to get to work: walk, school bus, car sharing or report for duty at a more local SCE school.
- Taking into consideration disability, nervous / new drivers and other things that affect ease of journey.
- The possibility of staff accommodating each other locally in severe conditions if returning home is impossible. A local hotel arrangement may need to be made.
- Allowing certain staff to arrive later in the morning or to be released early.

3.7 MoD Civilian Personal Policy (Special Leave & Absence) states:

Hazardous weather conditions can have a serious effect on public and private transport. When it occurs overnight, you should do all you reasonably can to attend work either by making use of any public transport if it is practicable for you to do so, or by using your own transport if that is possible. You are expected to walk up to 3 miles each way from home to office, depending always on weather conditions and on your state of health. If you arrive late because of these conditions, you may be paid at the appropriate rate for those hours, provided the Head of your Establishment is satisfied that you have made every effort to attend on time. Your line management may grant SPL provided they are satisfied that it was genuinely not possible for you to get to work because of extremely bad weather or flooding. Reasonable Adjustments will be made for people with mobility impairments. Flexi-credit may be given to you if you are on FWH to bring you up to your standard conditioned hours.

\(^1\) Unless the headteacher has given permission for a member of staff to work from home.
4. **Consultation**

“**You need to be clear who will make any decision about closure. In most cases this decision is delegated, rightly in the Department’s view, to headteachers, who will know local weather and ground conditions, and the likely impact of the weather on the numbers of staff and pupils who will be able to get into school.**” – *Department for Education.*

4.1 Where garrison / station business continuity plans or standing instructions exist, these should be factored into any prior consultation that leads to a school policy on severe winter weather.

4.2 The decision to close or restrict attendance will be taken by the **headteacher of the school**, or in his / her absence by the most senior member of the school leadership team present at the time. The school’s leadership team is best placed to know the local conditions, which could vary extensively across BFG and the Low Countries or in countries such as the Falkland Islands where extreme winters are the norm.

4.3 The decision to close or restrict attendance should be done in close consultation with the local garrison and where possible the Chair of the SGC. Agency advice will always be to remain open except in the most extreme or exceptional circumstances.

4.4 A school must never close completely unless the headteacher is certain that no student will arrive at school.

4.5 A member of the school staff must remain on site in case any students or staff arrive at the school after it has announced it is closed. Arrangements must always be made for the security of children and parental assent must be sought if sending them home.

5. **Notification**

5.1 If a decision is taken during the day to close the school early, the school will need to inform the **transport** operator. They must also consider contacting the parents of students (or their nominated contacts) who are dropped off at garrison bus stops as these parents may be working and unable to collect from bus stops at a different time.

5.2 If a decision to open later than usual is made the day before, the school can give the transport operator prior warning, however there may be difficulties if transport is shared with another school that wishes to adopt a different strategy.

5.3 If the decision is made (on the day) to **delay opening**, consideration must be given to the provision of busses. It may be possible to alter transport operations so that buses can be delayed, however there may be difficulties as bus schedules will inevitably be interwoven with other duties later in the day.

5.4 After the decision has been made to close, the school must notify parents including fee-payers, via all appropriate and agreed communication channels eg: BFBS, Unit Welfare Offices, guard room (to place notices at gates), HIVE, Thrift shops, Medical and Dental Centres, NAAFI, PRI shops, Nurseries and
6. Preparing for severe weather conditions

6.1 This section is intended to help schools make a comprehensive risk assessment and prepare staff and pupils for extreme weather conditions. To prepare for opening when there are severe weather conditions, headteachers should ensure that the following action points have been addressed.

Strategies to keep open

- Ensure salt / sand stocks are plentiful
- Boilers and heating systems are maintained regularly
- Windows and exterior doors should be inspected for draughts and draught-proofed
- Check that pipes are appropriately lagged
- Consider leaving heating on a low setting overnight
- Where curtains or blinds are fitted these should be closed at night to retain heat
- Doors between areas of differing temperatures should be kept closed as much as possible
- Radiators should be kept clear of obstruction to enable a proper circulation of warmed air
- Put plans in place to restrict the movement of pupils and staff around the school
- Consider making arrangements with the local garrison or station to clear the school site
- If your school has a minibus ensure that winter tyres are fitted
- Consider encouraging staff to use school transport during periods of bad weather

Ice, frost and snow

To reduce the risk of slips on ice, frost or snow, assess the risk and put in a system to manage it.

- Identify the outdoor areas used by pedestrians most likely to be affected by ice, for example: - building entrances, pedestrian walkways, shortcuts, sloped areas and areas constantly in the shade or wet.
- Monitor the temperature, as prevention is key. Take action whenever freezing temperatures are forecast. Keep up to date by visiting a weather service website such as http://www.wetteronline.de
- Put a procedure in place to prevent any icy surface forming and / or keep pedestrians off the slippery surface.
- Use grit or similar, on areas prone to be slippery in frosty, icy conditions. Gritting should be carried out when frost, ice or snow is forecast or when
walkways are likely to be damp or wet and the ground temperatures are at, or below freezing. The best time is early in the evening before the frost settles; if this is not possible, (or additional salt is required) use it early in the morning before people arrive. Salt doesn’t work instantly; it needs sufficient time to dissolve into the moisture on the ground. Please remember, if you grit when it is raining heavily the salt will be washed away, causing a problem if the rain then turns to snow.

- Consider covering walkways e.g. by an arbour high enough for people to walk through, or use an insulating material on smaller areas overnight.
- Divert pedestrians to less slippery walkways and barrier off existing ones. If warning cones are used, remember to remove them once the hazard has passed or they will eventually be ignored.
- Ensure that you liaise with the local garrison or station at all times and comply with local health and safety laws.

7. **Other issues**

7.1 The DfE have changed the regulations about unauthorised absences so that they should not inhibit a school when making a decision about staying open. To summarise it will be possible to mark students’ absences as authorised if they relate to severe weather conditions that prevent them getting to school. See Appendix 1.

8. **Useful websites**

**Department for Education**

Planning for, and responding to, severe weather

http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/emergencyplanning/b0060084/planning-for-and-responding-to-severe-weather

**Teachernet**

Planning for, and responding to severe weather (includes guidance on recording absence)

http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/educationoverview/severeweather/

**Directgov**

Safety in extreme weather – travel and transport

Appendix 1 – Forced and Partial Closure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brief Description</th>
<th>Forced and Partial Closure²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statistical Meaning</td>
<td>Not counted in possible attendances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Meaning</td>
<td>Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances or not attending because the pupils have a different school year to other pupils in the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Meaning</td>
<td>Not required to be in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCSF Definition</td>
<td>Where the school site, or part of it, is closed due to unavoidable cause or the transport provided by the school or local authority for pupils (who do not live with walking distance) is not available. Or where the school has different term dates for different groups of pupils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Regulation</td>
<td>6(5)</td>
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</table>

Additional useful information:

Different Term Dates for Different Pupils

The Education (School Day and School Year) Regulations 1999 require schools to be open to each compulsory school-age pupil for 380 sessions a year but schools and local authorities can agree to set different term dates for different year groups. Where they do this, schools can use Code Y to record that a year group is not due to attend. Schools and local authorities can use the attendance register to monitor the offer made to pupils because there must be at least 380 sessions recorded using codes /, \, or B to W for each pupil who is registered at the school for the whole year.

Closed due to unavoidable cause

For the purposes of recording attendance and absence, “official transport” is that arranged and funded by the school or local authority such as dedicated buses, taxis and public transport passes.

Examples include:

- road conditions make some roads impassable with the result that the school bus or taxi can only collect some of the pupils;
- public transport not available to those issued with passes due to major incident;
- burst boiler;
- floods; and
- damage.

This code should not be used for planned closures of the school site which should be recorded as Code #. It must not be used for pupils on part-time timetables or any form of exclusion.

This mark should be used where the official transport is withdrawn by the school or local authority (or with its agreement). It should not be used:

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² The Education (Pupil Registration) England Regulations 2006
• for pupils who “miss the bus” and could use a later service thereby arriving late;
• when pupils’ normal mode of transport is unavailable, such as a being driven their by parents, but alternatives are available; or
• for pupils’ who normally walk to school.

Where the whole school is forced to close in exceptional circumstances, this can be recorded in electronic attendance recording systems by way of a “system wide” entry for the whole school and applying the enforced closure to all pupils in the school.

Where only part of the school is forced to close in exceptional circumstances, e.g. one site housing 2 year groups or classes, this can be recorded in electronic attendance recording systems by way of selecting the year groups or classes and applying the partial enforced closure to all pupils in the year group or class.

Where the enforced closure relates to pupils following a failure of school/LA provided transport, this can be recorded in electronic attendance recording systems by way of selecting the pupils as a group and applying the partial enforced closure to all pupils in that group.
Appendix 2 – Business Continuity Planning & Risk Assessment - Template for Severe Weather

In accordance with government and Agency policy every effort should be made to keep a school open and the closure of the school must be justified. In order to determine a decision, work through the following risk assessment to create a suitable action plan for your school.

If your site has specific issues that are not listed, these should be added. Any pre-planning controls not in place should be transferred to your action plan at the end.

This assessment should be carried out:

- Before any bad weather arrives - make sure identified control measures are implemented: refer to your action plan at end
- At the time of the emergency - consider and complete last header column
- After the event - does the risk assessment need review?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are the following control measures in place?</th>
<th>State what risks are involved and the consequence of the risk</th>
<th>State which control measures are in place to reduce the risk</th>
<th>Are the controls in place? (Pre-Planning)</th>
<th>Are the controls in place? (On the day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there enough salt/grit available on site to keep a clear path for safe access and egress around the school site?</td>
<td>Slip/Trip of pupils, staff, 3rd party visitors, causing a twist, strain or fracture</td>
<td>Maintain stocks of salt/grit. Identify which walkways or areas need to be kept clear to allow people to get around the premises safely. Allocate a responsible person to watch weather reports and grit/salt prior to snow/ice forming. Reduce the movement of people around the premises</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there an acceptable ratio of staff to pupils to ensure adequate Supervision?</td>
<td>Staff not being able to attend school, leaving pupils without adequate Supervision</td>
<td>Estimate how many staff members need to get in for the school to operate safely by identifying how many pupils could attend. Identify how many staff would be safe to travel to work in severe conditions. Inform staff to listen to BFBS to see if the roads are safe to travel on. Remember: Travelling to school is considered ‘essential travel’.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes / No</td>
<td>Yes / No</td>
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</table>

- **Devise a system where staff can report to headteacher by 07:30 and contact number given.**
- **Consider Networking with other schools so that staff could attend a school near to their homes for additional support.**

**Are there procedures in place for heating failure?**

- **Unable to sufficiently heat school to the minimum working temperature 18°C, causing staff and pupils to suffer from the cold.**
- **Contact GWA to have emergency heaters delivered.**
- **Consider only using the parts of the school that has heating.**
- **Keep doors, curtains and blinds closed during the night to retain the heat.**

**In the event of a closure, has it been identified which pupils are safe to be sent home?**

- **Pupils unable to get into their homes, left stranded**
- **Identify which pupils have alternative arrangements if they were to be sent home.**
- **Consider if enough staff can stay on site to supervise the pupils unable to return home, and that those staff will be able to get home at a later time.**

**Will the school have adequate welfare facilities?**

- **Staff and pupils are unable to wash their hands, flush the toilets, or have access to drinking water**
- **Ensure that there is anti-bacterial wash on site.**
- **Reserve supplies of bottled water.**
- **Consider if all toilets are un-operational or whether alternative toilets can be used.**

**Does the school have provision for those pupils**

- **Pupils involved in a vehicle collision**
- **Consider if RMP is able to get to the school.**
- **Consider if alternative arrangements need to be made if RMP can not get to the school.**
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Are the controls in place? (Pre-Planning)</th>
<th>Are the controls in place? (On the day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>who walk to school to cross the road safely?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes / No</td>
<td>Yes / No</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix 3 - Checklist for Planning for Severe Weather

Before severe weather occurs

- Undertake risk assessments of site and issue specific instructions to staff, or other people, based on them
- Ensure the school has an incident management team for severe weather
- Consult with chair of SGC
- Order grit / salt bins for the school
- Arrange for help to be available from the school community - to help clear paths, entrances and steps, for example
- Consider enlisting “volunteers” to clear snow, ice when required
- Acquire protective clothing, shovels etc for those clearing snow / ice
- Set up the arrangements for communicating directly with parents as well as the wider community and HQ SCE if closure seems a real possibility
- Confirm contacts – staff, parents, garrison, bus company, medical and dental centres, BFBS, welfare offices, NAAFI, Guard Rooms, HIVE etc
- Ensure all the information needed in advance is to hand including:
  - Contacts (name, telephone numbers) for those who will collect children if parents are not available.
  - Bus (and taxi drivers’) telephone numbers, so that direct contact can be made with them.
- Make contact with local garrison staff and share business continuity plans
- Identify which areas of the school site need to be kept clear of snow and ice and ensure that school staff who will usually assist with salting / gritting or otherwise keeping the relevant parts of the site clear know what steps to take, including undertaking these tasks safely
- Estimate who amongst your staff will be able to get in safely for the beginning of the day and how you will be able to manage the school in those circumstances;
- Work together as a cluster of schools so that parents with more than one child in schools are able to make their decisions on the basis that schools in the area are making the same arrangements. It will also help with transport arrangements if all schools in an area decide, for example, to open late.

When severe weather is forecast

- See & listen to local forecast
- Remind staff of the schools plans and the expectation that the school will remain open
• Ensure that someone can get into school to answer the telephone and inform parents who are unaware of the closure
• Ensure that parents are reminded of the process for receiving information about school opening hours and the arrangements for severe weather
• Contact bus company

**On the day/s of severe weather**

• Make decision to stay open, open for limited hours, or close, etc.as early as possible.
• Notify parents (including fee payers), pupils, staff by text, phone, website, local radio & TV, welfare offices, medical and dental centres, phone NAAFI shops etc.
• Where available, consult SGC Chair, Deputy Garrison Commander, CSBMs etc.
• Notify the Business Support Staff at HQ SCE by e-mail or telephone once its convenient to do so.
  - Telephone JHQ Mil 4804 (Civ) 02161 4724804
  - info@sceschools.com
• Undertake risk assessments as appropriate.

**Afterwards**

• Review plan and revise for next year
• Update arrangements for calling together the incident management team in the light of any staff changes, etc.
Appendix 4 - Snow chaos and UK employment law

This guide was written in January 2010. It is based on UK law.

Adverse weather can give employers concerns about employee absence levels. This guide explains what employers need to know about the impact of bad weather conditions.

Minimum working temperature

The normal classroom temperature is 18 degrees C and heating systems should be capable of maintaining this temperature if the outside temperature falls to or below zero. For gymnasiums 15 degrees C is considered acceptable.

For workers who work inside, certain regulations set out the rules on workplace temperatures. The general rule is that the temperature in workplaces should be at least 16 degrees Celsius. However, there is no legal minimum outdoor working temperature so employers need to rely on thermal risk assessments.

In very cold weather, outdoor workers face two major health problems: hypothermia and frostbite. There is therefore extensive HSE guidance about protective clothing for cold weather, health issues and management guidelines. (HSE suggests, for example, "allowing sufficient breaks to enable employees to get hot drinks or to warm up in heated areas."

Paying staff who can’t get to work

Employees are obliged to attend for work unless they are sick, on holiday or on maternity leave etc. The onus is, therefore, on employees to come into work. Technically, this applies even in extreme weather conditions. Therefore, if the office is open and employees cannot make it into work because they are 'snowed in', one view is that you are entitled to treat their absence as unauthorized and are under no obligation to pay them.

However, if an employee's normal mode of transport is out of action due to severe weather disruption, you may need to revise this view. First, you should encourage employees to explore alternative means of transport. However, employees should not feel pressured to risk their safety to get into the office so it may be sensible to consider whether employees could usefully work from home until the weather situation has improved.

In practice, few contracts will state that employees who cannot get into work because of the weather will lose a day's pay. Employees have statutory protection against an unauthorised deduction being made from their pay without their consent and deducting pay could potentially be challenged as unlawful under these provisions (although the employer could argue that there was no entitlement to pay as no work was done.)

You should therefore assess whether not paying employees would be in the best interests of your business. It may be that the financial burden to the business of paying staff in these circumstances is outweighed by the benefits that such a gesture

3 The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999
would have on staff morale and productivity in the long run – especially if the snowfall is particularly heavy and it is impossible to get into the office.
School closures

If schools are closed and there is no one else available to look after an employee's children at such short notice, what are the implications for employers?

To avoid the office becoming a temporary crèche, there are statutory rules which allow parents to take time off when there is an 'unexpected disruption to childcare' and parents are protected from suffering a detriment for doing so.

Arguably, a school closure is not the same as a disruption to 'childcare', however, if the school closure was announced first thing in the morning and alternative childcare arrangements cannot be made, this could be seen as constituting an emergency situation and employees would be entitled to statutory protection for taking the day off. Strictly, SCE would authorise "special paid leave" but this is at the discretion of the line manager / headteacher. It is important for employing units to adopt a consistent approach to the policy adopted for employees without children.

Working from home

If it is safe to travel, employees should come into work as usual. If employees are concerned that the conditions are not safe or if they are dependent on public transport systems that are badly affected, many employers take the view that employees should remain at home and do what work they can from there. This is becoming more feasible as many employees have I-Phones or similar mobile devices and, if not, then they can access their work email and office applications remotely via a laptop, home PC or mobile phone.

However, even though they are at home, employees need to be clear that they must still work as far as possible – for example planning & preparing lessons. A home working policy could be helpful here making it clear that working from home is a privilege, not a right and that the employer will, if necessary, monitor output.

Falsely blaming the snow

If you believe that an employee is using the weather conditions as an excuse for absence (or lateness), particularly if they live locally, this could be a disciplinary matter.

However, it is doubtful that most employers would want to devote time and resources to investigating the circumstances of each individual worker who is suspected of taking a 'snowball' day.

In a blatant or persistent case you may, of course, choose to investigate the matter in the usual way and take any necessary action in line with the company's disciplinary policy. Alternatively, when the initial conditions that made travel to work impossible have subsided, you could let employees know by phone, email or text that any further time off will need to be taken as holiday. You may find that once this has been communicated, employees suddenly start finding ways to get in.

Closing the office / school

If you decide to temporarily close your premises at short notice because of unforeseen circumstances, such as heavy snowfall, and there is no work available for your employees as a result, you cannot usually withhold pay.
If you do, employees could bring unauthorised deduction from wages claims to recover the pay owed. The only exception to this is if you have an 'unpaid lay-off' clause in your contracts of employment, or the employees expressly consent to being laid off without pay.

There are, however, complicated rules surrounding lay-off clauses, including rules about statutory guarantee payments, and you should take legal advice before proceeding.

**Should employees who actually make it into work be rewarded?**

Employees who have battled into work, often against the odds, may resent the fact that others made less effort, especially if, once they are in the office, they have to work extra hard to cover those who are absent. Ideally, the employees' efforts should not go unnoticed – though days off in lieu or other financial rewards are unlikely.

However, employers should carefully observe weather warnings and let employees leave when appropriate to avoid any treacherous travel conditions on the way home. Never ask staff to disregard official weather and travel advice.

**Minimise the chaos**

It is worth thinking about alternative ways to manage adverse weather. Headteachers / line managers should consider introducing an 'adverse weather policy' so employees know what you expect of them when severe weather strikes. This will also help avoid confusion and conflict when the snowfall arrives.

Alternatively, you could amend your normal absence policy to cover such instances. The policy should contain guidance about workplace closures, disruptions to public transport, working from home and remote IT access, whether employees will be paid if they fail to attend work, disciplinary sanctions for 'snowball' days and whom employees should contact once they know they will be unable to make it in.

With occurrences of severe weather on the rise, putting in place a clear adverse weather policy could be a worthwhile investment.