



Rye College Policy

Policy Title:	Severe Weather Procedures (School Closure)
LT Responsibility:	Headteacher
Review Body:	Executive Headteacher
Date:	February 2020
Review:	February 2021

Introduction

Context

Many schools face difficulties in maintaining a normal service during severe weather conditions, such as a heavy snowfall or icy roads and footpaths. Local and national guidance to Headteachers, however, is that they should remain open wherever possible, to minimise the disruption to children's education and the inconvenience to parents and families. Schools are advised to have plans in place to enable a suitable programme of education to be provided for students who do attend, albeit with reduced numbers of colleagues. Headteachers are required to weigh up the risks of reduced supervision, late journeys home and minor bumps, against the disruption to learning caused by a closure.

Nevertheless, the Headteacher has complete discretion to close the school in anticipated severe conditions that would put students at risk. Where possible, the college will contact parents to let them know of such a decision and every care will be taken to ensure that students are not sent out in dangerous conditions.

The decision to close the College before or during the school day will be made by the Headteacher. The college will only be closed if one or more of the following conditions apply:

1. Insufficient colleagues are able to come in to keep the school running safely;
2. Conditions on site are dangerous;
3. Conditions are considered to be, or anticipated to become, too hazardous for travel.

The Executive Headteacher is kept informed throughout.



Action Plan

Advice for Students, Parents and Families

IN A 'WORSE CASE SCENARIO' – WE WILL LOOK AFTER THE STUDENTS.

THE COLLEGE WILL REMAIN OPEN WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

If this is not possible, we may initiate a delayed start to the day

If the 'Severe Weather Procedure' is implemented, families should first **delay** their journey to the site and aim to **arrive for 11:00am registration** instead. Students will be expected to wear school uniform but it is strongly recommended that they wear suitable outer clothing for travelling to and from site.

If we are to close prior to the start of the school day

In the event the college is deemed unsafe to open, the Headteacher has the authority to close. Therefore, on days where a local amber ('be prepared') or red ('take action') weather warning is issued¹ for Rye which could prevent the site from opening, the Headteacher will make an informed decision based on information from the site managers, colleagues and public transport providers as to whether it is necessary to close.

1. Closure will be reported on the college website **no later than 7:30am**:
www.ryecollege.co.uk
2. Closure will be reported to the local authority and alerts made via their website:
www.eastsussex.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schools/schoolclosures
3. Parents and families will be alerted to the closure using our Facebook and MyEd app:
www.facebook.com/ryecollegeuk
4. Parents and families will be alerted to the closure using our text messaging service.

We appreciate that during severe weather students may arrive later than normal. Parents should endeavour to contact the office when students are delayed or on the way. The preferred way to contact the office is by using the email: office@ryecollege.co.uk or use messaging facility on the MyEd app.

Please understand the college switchboard is very busy at these times.

We recognise there will be isolated instances where families are cut off even where a clear majority of students can get to us. In such instances, parents should inform the office of their particular circumstances in order to have the absence authorised. When the College is formally closed, all students are registered with an authorised absence.

Parents acting on the assumption that the College will close without gaining confirmation, or failing to inform the office of circumstances preventing their child from coming in, risk an unauthorised absence.

¹ Warnings are monitored via www.bbc.co.uk/weather



If severe weather affects us during the day

We will make all practicable efforts to keep parents and families informed as to the ongoing situation during severe weather conditions via our website, social media and local authority website. We appreciate such conditions can create a degree of uncertainty and in turn challenges for families however **parents are expected to check our websites or follow our social media when it is clear that closure is a possibility.**

In the event that weather becomes increasingly severe, the Headteacher has the authority to close. The Headteacher will make an informed decision based on information from the site managers, colleagues, public transport providers and weather warnings in local areas² and as to whether it is necessary to close. During periods of severe weather, extra-curricular activities are suspended.

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3. Parents and families will be alerted to the closure using our Facebook and MyEd app:
www.facebook.com/ryecollegeuk
4. Parents will be alerted to the closure using our text messaging service.

Closure and early release are only contemplated in extreme circumstances.

Duty of care

In the event of a student being unable to leave or be collected, the college will continue its duty of care and look after students. This will be undertaken by no less than two colleagues – one of which should be a member of the leadership team, in all but extreme circumstances.

PLEASE HELP US TO SAFEGUARD ALL STUDENTS IN OUR CARE: We kindly request that unless an absolute necessity, parents refrain from telephoning the college to request the individual dismissal of their children. Also, we kindly request that parents refrain from contacting their children directly and instructing them to seek dismissal by the college. The decision to dismiss must be made in the interests of all students.

Studying at home

In the event the college is closed, colleagues are expected to set work for that day's lessons via 'Class Charts'. Students are expected to carry out this work to minimise the impact of closure on their studies. In the absence of such work, students should undertake coursework, revision or similar activities and use the internet: www.bbc.co.uk/education.

² Warnings are monitored via www.bbc.co.uk/weather



Advice for Colleagues

THE COLLEGE WILL REMAIN OPEN WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

If severe weather could prevent opening, the Headteacher will risk assess

1. Establish if the college site is safe to open – **nominated 'local colleagues' should contact the Headteacher by 7:00am**. School leaders will use designated communication tools to ensure decisions are communicated to others;
2. Ensure any closure is reported on the College website **no later than 7:30am**:
www.ryecollege.co.uk
3. Ensure any closure is reported to the local authority and alerts made via their website:
www.eastsussex.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schools/schoolclosures
4. Ensure colleagues are alerted to the closure using our Facebook:
www.facebook.com/ryecollegeuk
5. Instigate the 'Severe Weather Procedure'.

If the weather prevents or delays travel to work

We acknowledge that some colleagues may experience difficulty in reporting for work during periods of severe weather and other exceptional conditions. That notwithstanding, difficulties with transport or travel caused by the location of an employee's home in relation to their place of work are primarily the responsibility of the employee, and it is the duty of all employees to make every effort to fulfil their contractual obligation to report for work and attend for their normal contracted hours.

Local weather warnings³ should guide colleagues in determining whether it is considered safe to travel.

Where a colleague decides it is not possible or feasible to report for work or anticipate delays in arrival, they must **inform human resources (Courtney Cooper), the teacher responsible for cover (Ian Grove) and their subject area leader via email by 7:00am**.

If we initiate a late opening

If a late opening is determined, colleagues will be expected to report for work by 10:00am for student registration at 11.00am.

If severe weather affects us during the day

In the event that weather becomes increasingly severe and it is likely to cause unsafe transport or travel home at the normal time, the Headteacher has the authority to close and inform colleagues of new arrangements.

Colleagues wishing to leave site early should discuss this with the Headteacher.

Colleagues should not offer lifts or drive any student home even with the permission of parents.

During periods of severe weather, extra-curricular activities are suspended.

³ Warnings are monitored via www.bbc.co.uk/weather



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4. Parents will be alerted to the closure using our text messaging service.

Closure and early release are only contemplated in extreme circumstances.

In the absence of others, colleagues are asked to be flexible

In order to fulfil our duty of care amidst a changing range of factors, we may:

- Bring together groups and classes with teachers, assistants and associates;
- Re-arrange the curriculum so as to best deploy colleagues and manage students;
- Use other colleagues or volunteers to provide supervision or oversight of alternative activities.

Class sizes are typically limited to thirty students however more than thirty in one class due to temporary exceptional circumstances is not a reason to close the college.

Setting work for students

In the event the College is closed, colleagues are expected to set work for that day's lessons via 'Class Charts'. Students are expected to carry out this work to minimise the impact of closure on their studies.



Appendix 1: Early Release Procedures

THE COLLEGE WILL REMAIN OPEN WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

IN A 'WORSE CASE SCENARIO' – WE WILL LOOK AFTER THE STUDENTS.

Overview

When the 'Severe Weather Procedure' is in operation, the status of the College will be reported as one of the following:

- 'College is open as normal';
- 'College is subject to partial closure';
- 'College is closed'.

In the case of 'full closure' or 'partial closure':

- Closure will be reported on the College website;
- Closure will be reported to the local authority and alerts made via their website;
- Parents will be alerted to the closure using our text messaging service;
- Parents will be alerted to the closure using our Facebook and MyEd app.

During 'full closure' or 'partial closure' **older students will be typically dismissed first taking younger siblings with them in line with parental preferences.** It is the responsibility of parents to ensure the College has up-to-date preferences during severe weather. The College uses the following preferences as a guide but also takes a broad range of factors into consideration when choosing to dismiss:

- 'Leave college immediately';
- 'Leave college with friend or relative (to be stated)';
- 'Remain at College until 3.20pm to be collected';
- No parental response defaults to 'remain at school until 3.20pm to be collected'.

The College will undertake a risk assessment before sending students out in adverse conditions.

Typically, dismissal is managed in the following manner **though can be dependent on circumstances:**

- 1. Year 11 and Year 10 students will be dismissed (partial closure);**
- 2. Year 9 students will be dismissed (partial closure);**
- 3. Year 8 and Year 7 students will be dismissed (full closure).**

Parents will be notified of the manner of dismissal via text message, website and other social media. In the event conditions are so severe that transport services are halted or it is deemed unsafe for students to travel alone, parents will be required to make arrangements to collect their children or arrange for a trusted adult with identification to do so. For students in outlying villages, our preference is that children are picked up from the College by a trusted adult with identification.



Appendix 2: Snow and Ice Procedures

THE COLLEGE WILL REMAIN OPEN WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

Overview

In the event of snow, we will attempt to clear and salt arterial pathways. Parents, students and visitors should be vigilant as pathways, even when cleared, can remain dangerous. Students will be reminded of this in registration.

In icy conditions, the site managers will assess the situation and typically salt pathways as follows:

- Primary site;
- College rear entrance;
- External walkways between separate college buildings;
- College main entrance.

Essential pathways will be maintained as well as possible throughout the day. On closure days, pathways will be maintained on a daily basis by site managers so as to prevent build-up of ice and snow.

Access to site

During severe weather conditions, outdoor areas may be out of bounds to students at the beginning and end of school, and potentially at break and lunch times if the Headteacher deems it necessary. Alternative activities will be provided.

Safe Behaviour

We kindly request that students, parents and visitors do not:

- Slide on any snow or ice present on the site;
- Throw snowballs or initiate snowball fights;
- Bring snow or ice into the College buildings.

Studying at home

In the event that the College is closed, colleagues are expected to set work for that day's lessons via 'Class Charts'. Students are expected to carry out this work to minimise the impact of closure on their studies. In the absence of such work, students should undertake coursework, revision or similar activities and use the internet: www.bbc.co.uk/education.