

MANAGING STAFF ABSENCE CAUSED BY EXTREME/UNPREDICTABLE WEATHER CONDITIONS – GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS (JANUARY 2019)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance provides advice for the Governing Board with regard to how they may wish to respond to situations where extreme/unpredictable weather impacts on an employee's ability to attend work and/or undertake their duties.
- 1.2 It is expected that this guidance will apply where the weather conditions are such that it may be unreasonable/unsafe for the Governing Board to expect an employee to travel to work. For example where local public transport networks cease to operate and where roads are inaccessible.
- 1.3 It is generally accepted that the provisions of this guidance will apply during the early stages of a period of extreme/unpredictable weather. Whilst the Governing Board will be initially sympathetic to any inability of an employee to attend work due to extreme/unpredictable weather, this will not necessarily continue indefinitely, where the Governing Board believes that the employee could use public transport or take alternative routes to work.
- 1.4 Periods of extreme/adverse weather are usually forecast in advance. Plans should therefore be put into place where such weather is forecast, so that employees are aware of what options are available to them if they are unable to get into work.
- 1.5 Employees should maintain regular contact with school, in order to provide an update in relation to the conditions that are causing difficulties in attending work. Likewise, employees should be kept up to date in relation to developments in respect of the closure or re-opening of school buildings, where appropriate.

2. Closure of the School buildings

- 2.1 Extreme/unpredictable weather may impact on the School's ability to remain open to pupils and/or employees. If the Governing Body decides that it is necessary to close the School either to pupils or employees, employees will be notified at the earliest opportunity. A decision may be taken to close the School to pupils, but remain open for employees. In such cases, employees will be expected to attend work, unless otherwise notified by the Headteacher/Senior Leadership Team.
- 2.2 It is expected that in such emergency situations, employees will be expected to work flexibly. This may include performing alternative tasks commensurate with their grade (support staff)/pay range (teachers), skills, terms and conditions.
- 2.3 In cases where an employee is unable to work due to the School building being closed, they will be paid their normal contractual hours. In some cases, agreement may be reached with neighbouring schools across the district to

provide a reasonable alternative work-base. In such cases, the employee will be required to attend work unless options 3.2.1-3.2.6 below have been fully considered, in discussion with the line manager, and the employee has determined that they are unable to attend work.

- 2.4 If an alternative work-base is identified, and it is further away from the employee's home than their normal work-base, the Headteacher will need to consider whether excess travel payments should be made (at a rate of 11p per mile) for the difference in mileage between home and current work base and home to alternative work base.
- 2.5 In deciding whether to close the school building or not, the Headteacher/ Governing Board should consider the 'Unavoidable School Closures Guidelines' and liaise with the Local Authority and Diocesan Authority (where applicable) as appropriate. The guidance can be found on the Schools Portal at https://schoolsportal.lancsngfl.ac.uk/sp_atoz/service.asp?u_id=2189&strSL=U
- 2.6 Details of all LCC school closures can be viewed on the County Council website at http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/education/school_closures/index.asp

3. Action that may be considered in situations where the School remains open, but an employee is unable to attend work

Governing Board/Headteacher options

- 3.1 The Governing Board is committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees during extreme/unpredictable weather conditions.
- 3.2 Headteachers may consider the following measures to respond to emergency, short term difficulties resulting from extreme/unpredictable weather conditions:
 - 3.2.1 Allowing employees to work from home, where the role can be performed remotely;
 - 3.2.2 Making arrangements for employees to work from other schools/County Council buildings, providing that the necessary provisions exist for them to be able to perform their duties, and an agreement has been reached with the other school/County Council facility;
 - 3.2.3 Allowing employees with an annual leave entitlement to take annual leave at short notice;
 - 3.2.4 Allowing employees who are not permitted to take leave during term-time, including teaching staff, to take time off and then make up the lost time at a later date within a reasonable timeframe, normally half a term or an alternative agreed timescale;
 - 3.2.5 Allowing employees to take unpaid leave;

- 3.2.6 Allowing employees to arrive late/leave early if transport difficulties or problems with the employee's caring arrangements are anticipated, and then make up any lost time within a four week period.
- 3.3 Headteachers should give particular consideration to any employees who are pregnant, or have a disability that affects their general mobility, as these groups of employees may experience particular difficulties in getting to work during adverse weather.

Employee requirements

- 3.4 Employees have no legal right to be paid if they do not attend work because of extreme/unpredictable weather.
- 3.5 It is expected that employees will make every reasonable effort to attend work during periods of extreme/unpredictable weather conditions. However, employees should not put themselves at unnecessary risk.
- 3.6 Employees must ensure that they have the contact details for the School/Headteacher and **must** telephone the School/Headteacher as soon as they can in advance of their start time if they are unable to attend work or if they encounter, or suspect they may encounter, significant delays when travelling into work. In some schools alternative contact arrangements may exist for reporting absence from work. In such schools, the employee will be expected to follow the agreed reporting procedure.
- 3.7 Employees should take all reasonable measures and make contingency plans to ensure minimum disruption to the School. Precautions could include:
- Using other available safe methods of transport, including public transport;
 - Identifying alternative travel routes;
 - Allowing extra time for journeys;

4. Unauthorised absence

- 4.1 If an employee does not notify the School/Headteacher of a delay or proposed absence, or if there are concerns that an employee is choosing not to come into work when they could attend, it may be classed as an unauthorised absence, which could result in a potential deduction to their pay and/or disciplinary action may be taken.

5. Time off for dependents

- 5.1 The Headteacher may agree to provide the employee with time off under the Special Leave arrangements or the statutory Time off for Dependents legislation, in order to care for dependents whose school/day centre etc is closed due to extreme/unpredictable weather. This time can be used to make alternative arrangements for the care of their dependants.