

December 2011

Headteacher: **Debbie Clinton BA (Hons), NPQH**

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

Adverse Weather Arrangements

We write to you as we see the approach of winter and possible adverse weather in the immediate future.

The decision to either delay our start to the working day or to close our school is always a very difficult one to make, and we always make it with considerable reluctance. We all find the inconvenience of any closure/delayed start to be annoying I am sure – as a school leader I find it incredibly inconvenient on every occasion it is necessary. However we will continue to make our closure decisions with the best interests of our students and staff at the centre of all that we do.

We obviously consult the Meteorological Office regional and local weather forecasts and use that information to make a closure decision by 1:00 pm on the preceding day. We need to make this decision by then to ensure that our school can operate normally (e.g. with catering services fully equipped with planned deliveries etc.) We also consult other local secondary schools similarly.

Any school is a very different place to manage in snowy/icy weather. Aside from all of the obvious health and safety issues for students and staff, stopping 1,450 young people in the 11-16 part of our school from the (understandable) temptations of snowballing – especially to and from school – is always of concern to us and should not be under-estimated by any of us.

We have used the delayed start arrangement with some success in the past and we will use it this coming winter as our first preference in adverse weather. Without the flexibility that a delayed opening gives us, we really do have to manage all sorts of very difficult factors. The majority of our staff travel some distance each day, and you will perhaps recall that those travelling from areas such as Newcastle, Sunderland, Durham, parts of North Yorkshire and Darlington were held up in the many traffic problems of last winter.

Without a full or nearly full complement of staff, we simply cannot guarantee either the safety of all of our students nor the quality of their learning in such circumstances. We do only have a very limited number of large indoor spaces which can hold large numbers of students. Ensuring our customary high standards of teaching and learning when short of teachers is very difficult indeed. As we are sure you can understand, one really cannot 'win' in such difficult weather situations, and one can only take decisions in the light of the information available at any specific time. Obviously, as any poor weather begins, we will continue to open fully whenever we can. Do please consult the BBC Local website (bbc.co.uk/tees/school_closures) and/or to tune in to BBC Radio Tees – the latter tend to give 15 minute updates on the ¼ hour. We will also always post a message on our own website homepage by 6 am of the relevant day – if not the night before in the majority of cases. Fingers firmly crossed, and prayers pleadingly issued, for a better winter this year!

Our very best wishes to you and your families. Keep warm; stay safe.

Yours sincerely



Debbie Clinton
Headteacher

DHC/CS

Learning to create a better future, today

