



SEVERE WEATHER POLICY

In the event that weather conditions prove to be severe it may be necessary to consider closing the College to ensure the safety of the pupils and the staff.

- 1) When severe weather is forecast the Principal will consult with the Senior Leadership Team to consider the available information (see Appendix 1). A decision will then be taken as to whether the College will close or remain open. The College will be closed only if the weather is exceptionally severe and poses a clear risk to safety.
- 2) If the weather conditions become severe overnight and there is a risk that the College will be closed the next day:
 - A decision to close the College will be made by the Principal by 6.30 am at the latest on the day in question.
 - The Principal or Senior Vice-Principal will contact the local media, the Chair of the Board of Governors and the Department of Education to inform them of the closure.
 - Parents/Guardians and Staff will receive an e-mail/text from the College's Schoolcomms service.
 - A tweet will be sent from @MethodyBelfast
 - If possible the information will be posted on the Home Page of the College's website www.methody.org.
 - The closure will also be displayed on the NI Direct Website.
 - Pupils, parents and staff should listen to the regular news, traffic and travel bulletins broadcast by the BBC, UTV, Radio Ulster (92.95FM), Cool FM (97.4FM) and Downtown (102.6AM and DAB). If Methodist College is not specifically named in these bulletins as a school that is closing due to severe weather, then it should be assumed that the College will be open.
 - **The BBC will publish the list of schools that are closed on the BBC news website and also on the red button service.**

- If a child arrives at the College not knowing that it is closed, she/he should report to Main Reception in A block. She/he will be looked after by staff until her/his return home is arranged.
- 3) If the weather turns severe after the beginning of the school day and it is decided that the College must close early:
- Pupils will be instructed about the arrangements for their dismissal from school and will be given the opportunity to telephone parents/guardians to advise them of these arrangements and to organise how they are to return home. Pupils will be able to use their own mobile phones if they have them, otherwise College phones will be made available.
 - Parents/Guardians will receive an e-mail/text from the College's Schoolcomms service.
 - A tweet will be sent from @MethodyBelfast
- 4) If the College is open as normal but there are severe weather conditions in the area of a pupil's home:
- Parents/guardians must decide for themselves whether it is safe for their child to travel to school. If the child is kept at home, her/his absence should be notified to the College on her/his return in the normal way.
 - If severe weather closes in when a child is at school and a parent/guardian wishes their child to leave for home early, the parent/guardian should contact the College for arrangements to be made. Depending on the circumstances the College may advise that it would be safer for the child to remain in school for a time, before setting out on their journey. No pupil will be allowed to leave the College early without the agreement of a parent/guardian.
 - Any such arrangements **MUST** be made by the parent/guardian through the College to ensure that relevant staff are aware of pupils' whereabouts.

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Appendix 1

Before deciding to open or close a school during severe weather, the Principal, or an agreed deputy will consider if:

- pupils and staff can get to the school building safely
- pupils and staff can evacuate the school in an emergency
- the Emergency Services could get to the school in an emergency
- the area is safe where pupils are dropped off
- buses and vehicles bringing meals or other services can reach the school

- there are enough teachers to supervise pupils

The Principal will also check local weather forecasts and road conditions in areas where staff will be travelling.

The Department of Education will be notified of the emergency closure via the C2k MY SCHOOL portal.