Adverse Weather Policy – for pupils

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Adverse Weather Policy

Background:
Pupils of the Royal Blind School travel from many different locations to attend school either as boarding or day pupils. On occasions, adverse weather conditions may make pupil travel between home and school difficult; however, because of the diverse areas in which pupils live, school staff cannot know the severity and impact of weather conditions in each pupil’s home location.

Aim of the Adverse Weather Policy
The aim of the policy is to provide a protocol to be followed, to ensure appropriate arrangements are made in the event of adverse weather and to ensure the safety of each pupil.

The Adverse Weather Policy in Action:

- The impact of adverse weather is potentially stressful for pupils, their families and school staff. It is crucial that clear and detailed communication is maintained at all times between families, school and Local Authorities so that appropriate plans for safe travel and pupil care are in place.

- If adverse weather is present, or forecast, in and around the school that might make travel difficult for pupils or staff, a notice to this effect will be posted on the school website: https://www.royalblind.org/education

- In this instance, school staff will be deployed by the Head Teacher to contact families by phone and/or email to discuss the safety of each pupil travelling between home and school.

- In the event of heavy snow, rail transport is often less affected than road transport and may be the safest option for transporting pupils. This is a decision that may need to be made early and involve a parent/carer or local authority representative travelling to Edinburgh by train to collect a pupil. School staff will assist in transporting a pupil to the station if possible. However, this would be a decision made between parents and local authorities; the school should be informed.

- It is essential that parents/carers and local authorities are proactive in anticipating the impact of forecast adverse weather in their local area and should make contingency plans well in advance. The school should be kept informed of these plans.
• If possible, parents/carers should arrange with a relative or friend to be available to care for the pupil in the event that the pupil cannot be safely transported home. These arrangements should be communicated, in writing, to both the school and the Local Authority in advance of potential difficulties.

• If alternative travel arrangements need to be made, it is the responsibility of the parents/carers to make these arrangements with the transport provider and the local authority and to inform the school of the outcome.

• In the interests of safety, the Head Teacher understands that pupils may need to be absent from school rather than risk travelling in dangerous conditions. It is also understood that pupils may need to arrive late and/or leave early to facilitate safe travel.

• If adverse weather is likely to prevent pupils from attending school for several days, where appropriate, school staff will endeavour to provide learning activities that can be completed at home.

• All efforts will be made to keep the school open and to provide safe supervision for those pupils who are at school. However, if the school cannot be adequately staffed to provide such supervision, or if the school buildings or accesses are rendered dangerous by adverse weather, the Head Teacher may close the school; parents and Local Authorities will be notified via the website, phone and/or email. If the school is closed, information about its re-opening will also be displayed on this site.

• Although the school does have residential accommodation facilities, there are only sufficient beds and residential care staff on duty to accommodate those pupils who are regular boarders or have planned respite.

• Every effort will be made to ensure that pupils who are already at school can be safely transported home, if necessary before the end of the school day. If safe transport home cannot be arranged, the Head teacher or delegate will contact the pupil’s parents/carers and Social Work department to identify and implement alternative arrangements.

• In an emergency situation, if there are spare beds and sufficient care staff available, the school will offer to provide overnight accommodation for pupils. In this case, the Local Authority will be liable for the fee for such residential accommodation.
• Should a pupil be unexpectedly accommodated under these circumstances, Care Staff will liaise with the family regarding medication, clothing and other individual requirements for the pupil.

• The school has limited accommodation for parents. In the event that the pupil cannot be transported home but the parent or carer can travel to the school, accommodation may be made available to the parent, free of charge, so that they can care for their child at school until it is possible for the pupil to return home. Such arrangements may not be possible and should only be used as a last resort; they cannot be guaranteed.

Staff Responsibilities

• It is the staff member’s responsibility to make every endeavour to travel and attend their place of work. The school accepts however, that in instances of adverse weather conditions, it may become difficult for a member of staff to comply with this.

• It is the responsibility of employees to comply with the procedures to be followed in the event of adverse weather conditions. Furthermore, employees should ensure no unreasonable risks are attempted in getting to work and if in doubt should consult their manager for advice and guidance.

Employee Notification

• Where an employee experiences substantial difficulty in attending work due to adverse weather conditions, they should notify their respective line manager or other senior member of staff immediately to explain the circumstances. Any notified absence will be treated on a case by case basis, including treating the absence as leave, paid or unpaid or an authorisation to work from home

• Where an employee does not attend work, and does not make contact with their line manager, this absence will be regarded as unauthorised and will be unpaid

Underlying Principles

The key principles to be observed to make this policy effective are:

• Clear communication between all parties (school, family, Local Authority and transport providers) is key to negotiating a safe outcome for the pupils involved. The Head Teacher will delegate ONE person at the school to be the point of contact for each pupil.
• Similarly, the Local Authority should identify one key contact person with whom the family and school can liaise until the pupil has safely been transported home or alternative arrangements put in place.

• It must be understood that weather patterns are very variable across the areas from which our pupils travel. Parents/carers/local authority staff need to be aware of this and if bad weather is expected in their area or on the route of travel between their area and Edinburgh, planning should begin. The school should be contacted at the earliest opportunity. It is not unusual for Edinburgh to be unaffected by bad weather and therefore for staff here to be unaware of developing problems in other areas.

• The importance of anticipating travel restrictions due to adverse weather is vital. Decisions need to be made in advance rather than waiting for conditions to deteriorate to the extent that travel becomes dangerous or impossible.

• Wherever possible, and the needs of the pupil permit, an emergency solution/suggestion is: to arrange for a family member or friend living in an area unaffected by adverse weather, who can transport and/or accommodate the pupil in the event that they cannot travel home. This needs to be communicated to both school and local authority in advance. It is understood that this may not be possible for those pupils who require a high level of medical/other interventions.

• The essence of this policy is to care for and protect all of those for whom The Royal Blind School has responsibility, both pupils and staff. There may be times when pupils can be transported to school but staff are unable to travel to support them, the Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team will work alongside parents/carers/local authority staff to ensure that the needs and safety of all are considered when responding to adverse weather conditions.

• The school will assist with transport arrangements for pupils wherever practicable, however it remains the responsibility of local authorities to safely transport pupils to and from school.