

Education and Lifelong Learning

To: All Parents

Please ask for: *Caroline Jackson*

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

E-Mail: *CJackson@scotborders.gov.uk*

Date: *3 December 2007*

Dear Parent/Guardian

RESPONSIBILITIES IN EMERGENCY CONDITIONS

This letter outlines the general principles to be followed in cases of emergency such as severe winter weather or severe flooding. The intention is to show how you can help us get your child home safely. Clearly, no set regulations can cover every situation and individuals do not always react to emergencies in the same way. Your help may therefore be very necessary in the event of an emergency and I should therefore be grateful if you would bear the following points in mind, most of which understandably refer to transport arrangements.

1. The ultimate responsibility for the safety of children walking to and from school or to and from bus pick-up/drop-off points rests with the parents. Parents must decide whether or not children can make their way directly to school or to meet transport in low temperatures.
2. The Headteacher will be the person who makes the decision to send children home early should severe weather conditions threaten. He/she has a set of emergency instructions which involve telephoning transport contractors, other schools using the same transport, and parents whose children have a long way to walk home from the drop-off points. It is therefore very important that all parents do not telephone the school but adopt a group system where one parent may phone on behalf of several others.
3. Once the Headteacher has made the decision to start the procedure for summoning transport, he/she will phone a priority group of parents. If you live a long way from the transport drop-off point, you or one of your neighbours will be telephoned and informed of the time transport will leave school. If you are to be the contact, you will be asked to tell other parents living nearby either by phone or on foot, if this is possible. Please help by passing the message by way of a group system as one Headteacher obviously cannot phone a large number of individual parents over a short period of time.
4. If you feel that your child should not walk home alone in bad weather from the drop-off point or from school it will be your responsibility to meet him/her. If there is no adult present at a road-end the driver will use his judgement in deciding to leave the child or to keep him/her on the bus. In the latter case, your child would be taken to a school – probably but not necessarily their own school. Children must obey instructions given to them by the driver in any emergency (bad weather or break down) and should not leave the bus to make their own way home.

5. You would then receive a telephone call as soon as possible but if you were unable to collect your child because of weather or lack of transport, local boarding arrangements would be made. This very rarely happens but would form part of the plan for severe or blizzard conditions.
6. Drivers will not normally set children down at any point significantly different from the usual one.
7. In the case of morning journeys to the school, the driver may decide that he cannot complete the trip to school. He would then return the children home. In the event of adverse weather conditions, parents should ensure that some arrangement has been made at home to cover this possibility.
8. Parents must ensure that their children are warmly dressed just in case the journey to school is very slow or even halted in bad weather. In normal circumstances, pupils should not wait more than 15 minutes if the bus is late. In severely cold weather, this 15 minute rule need not apply.
9. If your child travels to school on two different vehicles, the first drivers will be told to wait for the second one and not to leave any children standing in adverse weather conditions. Should the second bus not arrive children will be returned home. If the second bus does arrive but cannot complete the journey to school then the driver will return children to their homes.
10. Should the school transport for your child not operate in the morning because of adverse weather conditions but you decide to take your child to school yourself then you are expected to collect your child either at the end of the school day or at the time of early closure. Do not bring your children to school when buses do not run unless you are certain of being able to collect them at the end of the school day – even if the weather worsens.
11. If you collect your own child from school during severe weather the school office must be informed so that transport is not delayed while staff look for a missing child.
12. Your child's enrolment form included an emergency contact which is on file at the school – if you wish your child to be sent to another contact address in the event of severe weather conditions, please complete the attached slip and return it to the school. You only need to complete the attached form if your instructions to the school are different from those already held on their files.

Arrangements have been made with Radio Borders and Radio Tweed to relay information about school closures. Radio Borders should only be used to supplement usual arrangements for informing parents directly of early closures.

Yours faithfully



LYNN MIRLEY
HEAD OF BUSINESS SERVICES

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