

ST. MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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Voluntary Aided

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"An outstandingly effective School" Ofsted

Spring/Summer 2010

Dear Parents,

Re: School Policy on Severe Weather Conditions

I am writing to clarify St. Michael's policy so that parents and pupils are kept fully informed.

St. Michael's will always endeavour to focus on its core purpose: **to promote the fullest educational potential of every pupil so long as the health and safety of pupils can be safeguarded.** How can this be achieved if the School closes unnecessarily? **We will always strive to keep the school open in accordance with this principle.**

I will always do everything I can to open the School to receive children who arrive. Then I have to make a judgement as to whether normal lessons can continue on the school site. This is dependent on the number of staff who are able to come to work, the condition of the premises in terms of adequate heating and the degree to which movement around the site can be safely accomplished. Finally, I have to decide whether expected weather conditions mean we should shorten the day.

Only parents can decide whether it is possible/safe for their daughters/sons to undertake the journey to school but if public transport is able to operate I would expect most pupils to attend school.

I am pleased to say that the school remained open every day during the bad weather conditions in 2009-10. On each day I was able to depend upon almost every member of staff reporting for work as normal. I am grateful for their dedication. As a result a timetable of lessons continued for those pupils who came into school. Attendance varied between 40 – 80% over the 3 – 4 days of poor weather. Site staff worked hard every morning to make the site safe to move between buildings. I therefore had no reason to close the school on any day. Food was available at Break and Lunchtime.

Up to date information about the School's ability to stay open is provided on the school website, on the school switchboard and in the form of emails and texts to parents. This communication was used every day during the severe weather to give parents advance communication prior to deciding whether to send their daughters/sons to school.

Understandably, many parents tried to contact the School and the 8 phone lines were staffed from 7am. (Apologies if you could not get through). Those parents were informed that the School was open but that any parent who judged the journey too difficult or dangerous should keep their daughter/son at home.

During the day pupils were encouraged to stay inside in order to keep warm and dry. Snowballing is discouraged because of the risk of injury. I am afraid our desire to let pupils enjoy themselves conflicts with current public expectations that schools should do everything reasonably possible to protect pupils from injury. Perhaps this fear explains why so many schools close in bad weather.

In conclusion, I can promise parents that *in future* the School will always be open to receive your daughters/sons and that we will try to have as normal a day as weather conditions allow. On such days we monitor reports from Transport for London and the Meteorological Office and we may decide to close slightly early in order to ensure that pupils can make their return journey home safely. If this occurs we will always send an email and text to inform parents. Pupils can always wait in school to be collected; they never have to leave the premises. Do not hesitate to phone the school for information; the "grapevine" is rarely reliable. I hope that this clarification will help you understand what to expect and make these difficult decisions easier in the future.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

Miss U.M. Morrissey
Headmistress