

Ref: DPH/T-F

2nd November 2018

Dear Parents and Carers,

I write to remind parents of the procedure for notification of school closure in severe weather conditions and to explain some of the factors I will be taking into consideration when making a decision.

**If the decision is made to close the school for the whole day or delay the start of the school day** because of adverse weather conditions **notification will appear on the school's website home page at [www.northgate.suffolk.sch.uk](http://www.northgate.suffolk.sch.uk)** In addition, we shall endeavour to make sure that the telephone answer message also gives the most up-to-date information. **Furthermore, we are intending to contact parents/carers via Schoolcomms.**

We have improved the ability of our website to deal with heavy traffic in recent years. However, in the event of any difficulty information will also be displayed at <http://schoolclosures.suffolk.gov.uk>. Local radio stations may also broadcast information about school closures, but there is inevitably a time-lag between a decision being taken and broadcast, or information being displayed on others' websites. Therefore, if in doubt go by what is on our own website/telephone message.

**We would like to stress in response to previous media coverage that closing the school is not a decision that is taken lightly by Headteachers.** As a group we dislike having to make a decision before 7.00am that has the potential to make us appear foolish later that same day! Parental opinion is typically split, with roughly equal numbers complaining on snowy days if we close the school or keep it open.

**In making my decision prior to the start of a school day I will consider** the safety of the school site (which will be fully inspected) and the likely danger to pupils, students and staff in making their journey to school. I have to keep in mind that while many of our Year 7 to 11 pupils can travel in by foot the vast majority of our staff cannot. The likelihood of having inadequate supervision clearly adds to safety concerns when conditions underfoot are dangerous and pupil behaviour is influenced by the possibility of ice and snow related activities!

**If the school is open at the start of the day and it begins to snow heavily during the day my consideration will be slightly different.** In this situation I will weigh up the relative safety of pupils who are already on the site, compared to their likely safety if sent home. I will also try to judge if their journey home is likely to be more dangerous if delayed until the end of the school day. In this respect the decision may be different for Sixth Form students, many of whom travel long distances through rural areas to get to and from Northgate each day.



***NORTHGATE***  
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***Headteacher:***  
*Mr David Hutton*

**If the decision is made to close the school part-way through the day pupils will be told they can leave if they have immediate access to their own home.** If not then they are able to stay in the school library, where they will be supervised until a parent arrives to collect them or the normal time for the end of school day is reached. **For safety reasons we discourage pupils from leaving school to go anywhere other than their own home and I would urge you to reinforce this message.**

Thank you for reading through this somewhat dreary, yet important letter. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at the school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Hutton', written in a cursive style.

Mr D Hutton  
Headteacher