

Headmaster: **S R Clark** BA

Deputy Heads:

D Ruston BSc MEd (Pastoral)

Mrs H Stevens BA (Curriculum)

Miss A Symons BEd (Staffing)



www.lytchett.org.uk

Lytchett Minster School

Lytchett Minster

Dorset

BH16 6JD

Tel: 01202 – 622413

Fax: 01202 – 621230

29th November 2010

Dear parents

The weather this winter seems already to be shaping up for something more extreme than in recent years and that always brings with it the prospect of school closures.

Could I ask you please to read the following carefully. It will help us to handle any emergency quickly and effectively, ensure your child's safety and also make sure that you are informed at the first possible opportunity.

Last year, there was an occasion when, during a brief snow shower, over one hundred parents turned up at school before any decision to close had been taken and this caused an extremely difficult situation for all concerned, staff students and parents. We would like to avoid this in future, not least as on that occasion it also proved unnecessary as by 3.30 the roads were all clear again!

Emergency school closure procedures

The school will always endeavour to remain open. However, there are exceptional circumstances when education becomes impossible (as a result of widespread power failure) or there is a threat to student and staff safety (through extreme weather conditions) when the school might have to be closed.

In many of these rare cases, the circumstances will be known before the start of a day and closing the school then requires only a relatively simple procedure: in consultation with his senior colleagues, the Head will make his decision and this will be communicated through the school website (www.lytchett.org.uk), which is the most accurate and up to date method, and through local radio.

More difficult is when weather deteriorates suddenly and unexpectedly during the day. Closing the school during the day is a complicated process and has to be conducted in a very orderly manner if it is to be done safely and well. **If we are to achieve this, everyone's cooperation is essential.** As you read the following, I hope you will appreciate why that is and help us by following the process completely.

Stage 1

- If weather conditions look as if they may deteriorate, the Head will inform staff that a decision on closure is being considered but school will continue as normal. Staff running school trips will also be contacted and their early return discussed.
- Whilst students are permitted to bring mobile phones to school, they are **not** permitted to use them during the school day. This remains the case: no student should seek to contact parents and parents are asked please not to seek to contact students. At this point, this is just a normal day.

Stage 2

If it becomes clear that conditions are indeed deteriorating seriously, the Head will make the decision to close and **a specific time for the closure will be agreed**. The following actions will then take place

- The bus companies will be contacted and their arrival time at school confirmed (a guaranteed collection time can normally be arranged within one hour)
- **A message will be posted on the school website announcing the time of closure**. The website is the main channel of communication between parents and the school. The radio is inevitably interested in what other schools are doing but conditions vary considerably from place to place and consequently the information is slower to be broadcast and potentially less accurate. Please note that **parents are asked not to arrive on site before this time as students will not be obtainable before the closure time**. This is of the utmost importance. The school must be able to keep track of all of its students throughout an emergency event. **Parents are also asked not to park in the bus lanes as this produces traffic delays for everyone and is unsafe for students boarding buses**.

Stage 3

- 30 minutes before the official closure time, three rings of the school bell will signify that students should make their way to their tutor rooms so that registration can take place.
- Students not travelling by bus will be given the opportunity to telephone their parents using their own phones or the House telephone either to arrange lifts **after the official closure time and not before** or to gain permission to walk home (not recommended for Lytchett Matravers students – Huntick Road is dangerous in icy conditions)
- Tutors will record an action against each student's name (*home by bus; home by parental car; home with a named friend; parent permission to walk, etc*)

Stage 4

At the official closure time, the bell will ring and

- students walking home may leave the site
- students going home by bus should go to the Café and await a call to go out to the bus – this will save getting unnecessarily cold and wet
- students going home by car should make their way to the collection points in the normal manner; if any student is likely to experience a delay in the lift arriving, he/she should make his/her way to the Gallery (the old dining room) and await collection from there. Parents coming late will be able to retrieve their child from this location easily as it is just a few yards from Reception

There will always be a staff presence at the school whilst there is any pupil on site to ensure their safety. If any student is uncollected within ten minutes of the official closing time, they should report to the Gallery. **If parents are likely to be delayed, please telephone Reception on 01202 622413 to give an estimated time of arrival.** It would be helpful if the lines could be kept free for these calls only throughout the emergency event.

When all students and staff have vacated the site safely, it will be closed and information about reopening will be posted on the website as soon as further information becomes available.

In the event of inclement weather potentially disrupting examinations, the following will apply:

- When external examinations are scheduled during a school emergency closure, every effort will be made for the examinations to go ahead.
- Due to potential difficulties with travel arrangements it may be necessary to start the morning examination later than the time previously specified, and the afternoon examination to start earlier. The morning examinations will therefore start as close to 9 am as possible but no later than 9.30am and 12.30pm instead of 1.30pm for afternoon examinations.
- Students should in the first instance meet in the Portland Block where they will be registered.
- The decision on whether a student attends school will be at the discretion of the parents/guardians. Parents/guardians in these circumstances will be responsible for bringing and collecting students from school before and after the examination. Please be aware that school buses do not run on emergency closure days.
- The awarding bodies do not allow schools the flexibility to change the times and dates of specific examinations. If students therefore are unable to get to school safely to sit their examinations, it will be necessary for them to wait until the summer examination series to do so.
- A student who arrives late for the examination as a result of poor travelling conditions may be allowed the full time for the examination. However, in the case of a student who arrives more than one hour after the awarding body's published starting time for an examination, the awarding body is unlikely to accept the work for marking.
- In some rare circumstances the school could close during the course of the day, when only small numbers of exams and students are likely to be impacted. The school will remain partially open until examinations are completed. The decision of when to leave the school premises can be taken by the student. However, school buses will probably have left the school before the end of the examination and students will need to make appropriate arrangements for leaving the school site with parents.
- The Awarding Bodies will not refund the fees paid for any examination that is missed by students.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation with the processes outlined above. Lytchett can be a difficult site even on a good day and student departure needs to be even more carefully managed in poor conditions. These procedures have been carefully thought through and are designed to safeguard your children and ease the process for both you and for staff.



S R Clark
Headmaster