



WEEKLY BULLETIN 8TH January 2010

Message from the Head:

Dear Parents,

This week's bulletin focuses on issues concerning all of us regarding the current adverse weather conditions.

The school appreciates the support of parents during this period of time. Clearly we have to put the safety of students and staff first and we will need to assess risk on a day to day basis.

Key Issues

Rurality: Whilst many students live within walking distance of the school, ours is mainly a rural catchment, served by service buses and coaches. Their journey takes them through smaller roads, back roads and through the villages served by the school. These are both treacherous in the snow and perhaps more so as this begins to clear and freezes to ice during the night. This was tragically seen over the holiday period when a bus skidded in 'black ice' near Penzance.

Localised conditions: Weather conditions may also see localised variation – for instance, at one point earlier this week, St Agnes was clear of snow and Truro had several inches. If we do decide to close the school at another point, we ask parents to be understanding of this if their local area appears clear.

Responding to change: Due to the issues posed by a significant number of students taking buses, we may need to make an early decision regarding closing the school or sending students home. If we anticipate snow, it may be a more sensible decision not to open the school at all, because we would simply be putting students and staff at risk asking them to come to school and then sending them home in potentially treacherous conditions. This happened on Thursday of this week, where the school decided to open and then by 8.30am, with a sudden and unexpected downfall, we saw over 3 inches of snow. Immediately we closed the school and made arrangements to send students home, which was clearly the right thing to do.

Staffing levels: Whilst most of our students live within catchment, most staff do not and many have long journeys to work which become inaccessible during adverse weather. Some are not able to get off their own driveways. So even if we are able to get the majority of students to school, we may be faced with a position of having too few staff to reasonably ensure the safety of students. In such a circumstance, again we need to assess the risks posed in opening the school.



Process for Assessing Risk

The Headteacher, supported by senior colleagues, will be in communication on a daily basis. We will monitor weather reports and be mindful of local advice given by the Local Authority and local radio. During the evenings and early in the mornings, beginning from 6am, we will be in communication with colleagues across the school's catchment, to gauge the current conditions over our wide rural catchment area. We will also be in contact with colleague Headteachers.

As a result of this discussion, we will decide whether we can reasonably ensure the safety of students and the ability of the majority of staff to make it into school. We will then decide whether to open the school or not. If a decision is taken to close the school, this will be communicated to the Local Authority and local radio stations before 7am. We would hope this information would then be announced to parents immediately. Supporting this, we will put an announcement on the school's website. The website will then be updated with any news about following days.

Closing while the school is already in session

As you are aware, the school took the decision to close at 8.30am on Thursday 7th January. This was a massive logistical task and I would like to thank students and staff for their support through this process. Our key aim was to ensure that students were safely released from school with parent's knowledge and permission. We put a process in place to ensure that students could contact parents via their mobile phones or one of the school's telephones. Parents then gave verbal permission over the phone to a member of staff, allowing their children to be released by foot or on the school bus service. Where this was not possible, staff remained in school to look after students until contact could be made. ***However, this did mean that some students had to wait in school for up to a further 2 hours.***

It is important that when school needs to close during session, we are able to contact parents swiftly and release students safely. Therefore, can I ask parents to ensure:

- ***The school holds accurate contact details including home, work and mobile telephone numbers***
- ***The letter which was recently sent home, asking for permission to release students should we be unable to contact parents, is signed and returned to school. (If we have to close the school in session and cannot contact parents who have not returned this form, we cannot release their children along with the rest of the school.)***



8TH January 2010

RICHARD LANDER SCHOOL

Looking ahead

Currently, the weather forecast for the weekend is variable and there appears to be a likelihood of snow on Sunday.

Please log on to the school's website regularly where we will inform you of any development. Any school closure will be communicated via the website and BBC Radio Cornwall.

(For future reference: we are currently investigating a system by which we are able to access the school's ICT system remotely, enabling us to text message parents regarding matters such as these).

Student access to Moodle

Students can access Moodle remotely from home. There are plenty of resources on this for them to work from and keep them busy. There are also other online resources for specific subjects, such as 'My Maths' resources.

KS4 Science Modular Examinations

There are important GCSE modular exams in science scheduled for next week. There are plenty of resources on Moodle to support revision and students should make this a priority over the next week, particularly during periods of absence from the school.

These exams are scheduled for mid-week and we expect them to go ahead as expected. We will communicate with parents if there is any issue regarding this.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Mulcahy

(Headteacher)