

28 February 2018

Dear Parents

I would like to take this opportunity to explain why we were one of the 339 schools closed in Kent yesterday and apologise for the inconvenience.

Whilst I acknowledge that there were the lucky few families basking in glorious sunshine on the Deal to Dover coastline, we in Ash, just a few miles down the road, were hit by a very sudden snow blizzard which made the village unsafe to drive and the school unmanageable. Mr Clark had the car park, driveway and paths cleared, and school ready to open at 6.30 but then this sudden flurry at 6.50 lay on top of the gritted and salted areas that Mr Clark had cleared and we had no chance to move the tons of new snow in time to open school and welcome the 150 cars and 242 children we expect every morning. On top of this, we had a staff car stuck on the drive, an accident on the Ash bypass, a cooperative delivery van crash into the back on a bin lorry in Ash and two buses collided and got stuck on the road between Ash and Woodnesborough, it was chaos.

A good number of staff were unable to get into school and given the very strict staff/pupil ratios that we must adhere to, we were unable to provide the appropriate cover to ensure that the children were all safe and well cared for, nor did we have enough staff to meet and greet children on the outskirts of Ash to provide a walking crocodile into school. Added to this we only had one member of the kitchen staff able to get in and we wouldn't have been able to prepare suitable snacks and lunch that you would all expect for your children, especially given the freezing cold weather that they would have endured.

Furthermore, with weather forecasting further snow that day I was unable to predict as to whether or not the children who might make it into school would safely get home at the end of the day. With the school empty we then took the opportunity to have Groundcare come in once the snow had ceased falling, and bulldoze the snow off the playground and further salt and grit all areas. I then waited with baited breath as it snowed again covering all areas during the night undoing much of the good work. At the crack of dawn a team from Groundcare returned to work again clearing the snow and making all areas safe.

So as you can see, I did not take the decision lightly to close the school, especially given the fact that I recognise that most parents have huge work and business obligations themselves, but I hope you appreciate that we have gone to gargantuan efforts to get the school open. However, given the nature of the school and the fact that most staff and parents have to drive to school it made the practicalities to open problematical, to say the least.

Finally, as Headmaster I have a 'duty of care' not only to the children but to staff and parents, and must consider safe operating practices for all concerned. We think long and hard before we make a closure and only make a decision with many variables taken into consideration. Having said that, we are not 'out of the woods' yet and we have to be prepared for more bad weather forecast and disruption at the end of the week. Please be assured that we will do everything we can to keep the school open but please keep your eye on the website and your school emails for related information.

Yours sincerely

Lawrence B R Groves
Headmaster



An independent prep school and nursery for boys and girls aged 2 to 11
St Faith's at Ash School Limited, registered in England number 08101221