

Why snow days are snow joke for headteachers

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Most schools in Herefordshire were closed for a number of days when snow shut down the whole of the UK in early March. The weather was described as 'The Beast from the East' and the snow storm carried freezing winds across the whole continent, with temperatures as low as -15 degrees, meaning that dozens of roads were closed as well as trains and flights being cancelled across the continent. The UK



experienced what was predicted to be the coldest week of the winter season in five years, with almost 10 inches of snow falling across Hereford, causing major travel issues and ultimately leading to the closure of Whitecross High school, whose head teacher Mr Knapp had to take the difficult decision to close the school.

On the Thursday, the day started with very light snow and the school was safe to open but nonetheless, Mr Knapp said that taking the decision to close the school felt like "one of the most stressful things a head teacher does!" However by 9.00 am, it was clear that snow was falling steadily and that getting home could be an issue for students and staff. The head teacher also added: 'Herefordshire secondary headteachers have an email group in which we discuss the situation and try reaching a common decision.'

There are multiple factors to consider when closing the school, one of which is the conflict between enjoying the snow and the responsibility of delivering an education to his 900 students. Moreover, he explained: "The car park was covered in several feet of snow and finding space for 90 or more cars could have been a problem." As well as this "many of [the] staff live some distance from the school and would be unable to get into Hereford".

Ultimately, ensuring the safety of students takes top priority and the decision made by the headmaster was fundamentally the best option in a difficult situation. Snow days across the UK have been a major issue in the early months of the year, but as they become more common, schools can be expected to improve their efficiency on these difficult days.