

**Policy Essential Information**

**Title:** Emergency School Closure Policy

**Date Approved:** May 2014

**Date Last Reviewed:** July 2018

**Status:** Statutory

**Delegation:** Head Of School

**Responsibility:** SBM H&S

**Review Frequency:** Annually

**Policy Locations:** Website/Staff Shared Drive/Hard Copy

**Next Review Date:** July 2019

# Emergency School Closure Policy



## 1 Aims

The aims of this Policy are to:

- provide a learning environment that is safe during adverse conditions and to take appropriate actions when it is not.
- ensure that the decision to close the School is understood by and communicated to students, staff, parents/carers and Governors.
- take into account the needs of parents and carers by working with our main partner schools.
- keep to a minimum the amount of time the School is closed during adverse conditions.

## 2 Introduction

Primarily, it may be necessary to close the School for a variety of reasons including:

- severe weather including snow, flooding or storms
- disruption to transport, for example through petrol or diesel shortage
- accommodation and utility problems, for example loss of power supply, heating failure or fire damages

The School will, however, endeavour to remain open where possible. School Contingency Plans will be passed on to staff, parents/carers and students when appropriate.

In rarer circumstances (e.g. during a national pandemic, civil unrest, major industrial action etc.) a specific Business Contingency Plan will be prepared and published based on National, Government or Local Authority guidelines issued at the time.

## 3 Closure before the start of the school day

The decision to close the School will normally rest with the Head of School or in their absence the Executive Headteacher in consultation with the School Business Manager and will be confirmed with the Chair of Governors or, if they are unavailable, the Vice Chair.

The decision shall be made where possible before 6.00 am and on the basis of information received from:

- the Media about the weather, condition of the roads and paths and public transport

- on the spot observation, either personally or from staff members (e.g. Site Team) better placed to make such observations
- through appropriate external agencies such as the Met Office

Factors involved in reaching the decision to close the School are likely to be:

- access to the School, i.e. road conditions (obstructions, snow, ice, flooding etc).
- breakdown of School essential services (heating, electrical services, water, storm damage etc.)
- consultation with the other Headteachers from the main partner schools so that there is a consistent approach
- specific advice received from the Local Authority, Police etc.

The Head of School will advise staff and Governors through the emergency telephone tree.

Parents/carers and students are recommended to check the School Website Homepage where further information specific to the School will be made available.

The whole School Community, including any contractors, shall be made regularly aware of this procedure as incidents can occur with little or no warning.

#### **4 During School Closure Guidance**

On occasions it may be necessary for the School to close during the School Day i.e. if the weather is deteriorating and there is doubt as to whether students can be returned home later in the day. In such cases the School will ensure that:

- the School uses the texting service to parents/carers, advises local radio and uses the School Website to inform of early closure
- students who have no access to home remain in School until either collected or until parents/carers contact the School with alternative arrangements

#### **5 Staff Attendance**

Although it is recognised that severe weather conditions make it difficult for some staff to get to and from work, the expectation is that staff will present themselves for work unless advised to the contrary by the Head of School. The Head of School, with the Senior Leadership Team, will assess whether there are sufficient staff present in School for:

- School to be opened/remain open safely
- curriculum delivery to priority groups (in order of priority Y11, Y10, Y9, Y8, Y7).

In the latter case, it may be necessary to partially close the School to specific year groups. The decision and communication process will be as described in section 3 and 4 above.

## **6 Clearance of Snow**

Within the School site, the School is responsible for snow clearance and the clearing of approach paths is the specific task of the Site Team. When severe weather is forecast, the Site Team will be tasked to lay salt and grit on arrival. The clearance of public roads is the responsibility of the Highways Department. If there is any question of students' safety being at risk, the School has a responsibility in inclement weather to keep the students indoors.

## **7 Public Exams**

In the event that there is extreme weather during a public examination period the exam session will go ahead if there are sufficient members of staff / invigilators present in School so that the exam conditions comply with the regulations of the examination boards. If the School has suffered power or heating failure and / or the conditions are such that to attempt to get into School would be dangerous for both students and staff the exam session will not go ahead and the School will contact the appropriate examination board.

The School will endeavour to contact all affected students in the event of cancellation of a Public Examination. The School Website will be maintained with emergency closure details and any alternative examination arrangements.

Any students who are unable to attend an exam session due to adverse weather conditions must contact the School at the earliest opportunity to inform them of the absence. (see also the School's Exam Policy)

## **8 In the event of school being closed**

If the School is closed it is the responsibility of the Head of School to ensure that the following events happen:

- Decision ratified with the Chair or Vice Chair of Governors
- Activate telephone tree to inform staff
- Update the School Website
- Chair of Governors to deal with relevant media enquiries e.g. local papers, radio etc
- Amend School office answer phone to a short closure message with signposts to other sources of information e.g. School website.
- Inform parents via School Communication system
- Arrange transportation for some students (where appropriate).
- Place notices on School entrances advising visitors, parents/carers and students that the School is closed
- Notify all building users including contractors on site to say school is shut
- Business Manager to contact insurers if needed
- The Head of School is kept updated during the day of the condition of the site and the likely consequences for the next School Day.
- The Head of School to consider longer term alternative accommodation if required and any further action as deemed necessary

- To communicate school is back open using communication channels

These tasks do not all have to be completed by the Head of School, although they have the overall responsibility for ensuring each has been carried out.

The decision for the School to remain closed will be reviewed by the Head of School on a daily basis and agreed and communicated as in section 3 above.