

Policy Essential Information

Title: Emergency Closure Policy

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Status: Non- Statutory

Delegation: Headteacher

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Date of next review:	January 2020		Name of owner:	Head of Operations

Emergency 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 strikes, or petrol/diesel shortages;
- accommodation and utility problems, for example loss of power supply, heating failure or fire damage.

The school will 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.) the school will follow its Business Continuity Plan.

3. Closure before the start of the school day

The decision to close the school will normally rest with the Headteacher in consultation with the Head of Operations and will be confirmed with the Chair of Governors or, if they are unavailable, the Vice Chair.

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

- the media, especially local 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. public transport disruptions and road conditions (obstructions, snow, ice, flooding etc.);
- breakdown of school essential services (heating, electrical services, water, storm damage etc.);
- consultation with Headteachers from local schools so that there is a consistent approach;
- specific advice received from the Local Authority, Police etc.

The Headteacher will advise SLT and Line Managers. Line Managers will advise their staff. Either the Headteacher or the Chair/Vice Chair of Governors will advise the rest of the governing body.

The Headteacher will post a notice on the school website and on social media (Twitter and Facebook) by 7am if possible.

The school answerphone message will be updated with closure details.

Parents/carers and students are recommended to check the School Website Homepage regularly. Parents/carers should always assume the school is open unless they specifically hear otherwise.

The whole school community, including any contractors, will be made aware of this procedure and reminded regularly, as incidents can occur with little or no warning.

4. Closure during the school day

On occasions it may be necessary for the school to close during the school day, for example 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:

- parents/carers are contacted by ParentPay email;
- the school website is updated with the closure information;
- social media is updated with the closure information;

Students who are unable to get home will be supervised in school until either collected or until parents/carers contact the school with alternative arrangements. The school will advise parents/carers to discuss with their child/ren how they should get home if local transport is disrupted.

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 Headteacher.

The Headteacher, 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 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 above.

6. 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. Where examinations cannot proceed, the necessary arrangements will be made with JCQ to avoid any student being disadvantaged.

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 updated 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.

7. In the event of school being closed

If the school is closed, it is the responsibility of the Headteacher to ensure that the following events happen:

- The decision is ratified by the Chair or Vice Chair of Governors.
- Staff are informed as per Section 3, above.
- The school website and social media are updated as soon as possible.
- The Head of Operations will deal with relevant media enquiries e.g. local papers, radio etc.
- The school answerphone message is updated to a short closure message with signposts to other sources of information e.g. school website.
- Parents are informed directly via ParentPay.
- Transportation is arranged for some students (where appropriate).
- Notices are placed at the school entrance advising visitors, parents/carers and students that the school is closed.
- All building users on site, including contractors, are notified to say the school is closed.
- The Head of Operations will contact insurers if needed.
- The Headteacher is kept updated during the day of the condition of the site and the likely consequences for the next school day.
- The Headteacher will consider longer term alternative accommodation if required and any further action as deemed necessary.

- The Headteacher will communicate that school is back open using the communication channels described above.

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

If the Headteacher is unavailable, e.g. due to sickness, decisions relating to school closure will be taken by the Deputy Headteacher, in consultation with the Chair of Governors and SLT.

The decision for the school to remain closed will be reviewed by the Headteacher on a daily basis and agreed and communicated as above.