



SCHOOL CLOSURE
at short notice or
as a result of unforeseen
circumstances

July 2014

EVENTS COVERED BY THIS POLICY

Storms

Winds forecast in excess of 70mph or storm force 8 could represent a potential danger to some buildings, trees, other structures and people.

- The Meteorological Office provides a regional weather forecast
Email: www.metoffice.com
Phone No: 0845 300 0300

Safety Issues

- Safety of pupils, staff and visitors take priority. Lessons may need to be disrupted and school movement kept to a minimum.
- Consideration needs to be given to movement outside of school buildings due to the risk of falling tiles, masonry, fencing etc.
- It is likely to be necessary to cancel outside play and other activities. Consideration must be given over the likelihood of pupils being blown off their feet.
- Pupils should not be allowed to cycle home – parents would need to be advised over this possibility.

Floods

Sudden flooding may result in local problems within school, making some rooms uninhabitable. However, of greater significance in terms of health and safety is the potential impact on transport arrangements.

Cold Weather

This may be a problem due to the low temperature in some buildings or may be complicated by heavy snowfalls making access difficult or dangerous.

- The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 set a standard of 18C in teaching areas and 15C in the hall/ gymnasium, corridors, cloakrooms and toilets where the external air temperature is 1C or above.
- Failure to reach these temperatures is a maintenance issue, but if there is a breakdown which puts the heating system out of action for any length of time consideration needs to be given as to whether the building can be heated with emergency heating and continue to be occupied.
- Any plans to provide emergency heating, including how these can be obtained and where they can be safely deployed, should be outlined as part of the emergency plan.
- Adverse weather conditions may result in difficulties for some staff in reaching school resulting in pupil supervision issues. In such circumstances the overriding priority will be the safety of pupils.

Disruption to the School's Water Supply

Provided sufficient notice that the water supply is to be disconnected is received, it will be possible to make a decision on whether or not to keep the school open. This decision will be based upon

- the duration of the disruption;
- the capacity of the water storage tanks which will generally enable toilets to be flushed.

EMERGENCY CLOSURE PRIOR TO THE START OF THE SCHOOL DAY

It is the policy of the school to make every effort to remain open whenever possible, however in certain situations it may be appropriate in advance to decide that the school should not open. This will generally be as a result of a difficulty where there is advance notice. This could include a planned disruption to water or energy supplies. In such cases, parents will be given as much notice as possible and informed of either a confirmed date when the school will re-open or advised on how this will be communicated. This will be through the school website and school answer phone.

In other situations, weather conditions may worsen dramatically overnight. In such circumstances it will be important that decisions over closure reflect:

- intelligence over the weather conditions in the school's catchment area;
- the likelihood of a sufficient number of staff being able to reach school to make it safe to operate;
- the timing of any decision, taking account of the travel arrangements of the school.

When the Headteacher decides, in consultation with the Chair of Governors as appropriate, that severe weather warrants school closure s/he should:

a) Inform staff, using a cascade system

b) inform parents by:

- emailing EmergencySchool.Closure@cambridgeshire.gov.uk quoting DfE number and password to record the closure on the Cambridgeshire County Council Website. This information will be displayed to the public via the schools directory on the CCC website: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk or direct link www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/education/schools/schoolclosure/
- contacting local radio stations:
BBC Radio Cambridgeshire 01223 287003
Heart 103 and 102.7 01223 623830 and Cambridgeshire.News@Heart.co.uk
Star 107 FM Radio 01223 305107 (option 2) and Ryan.Taylor@star107.co.uk
who will broadcast details of the closure
- Post a message on the school website (senior teacher)

c) inform any transport contractor who might otherwise collect children and bring them to school:

d) inform Chris Meddle, Education Adviser on 01223 715956.

e) inform the Chair of Governors, Alan Ball (If the Chair was not involved in the decision making process)

f) ensure that local staff are able to be at the school to inform any parents or children who may not have received the closure message.

g) Inform CCS 01223 * Add name

The school will make all practicable efforts to keep parents informed as to the situation with the school during adverse weather conditions. However parents are expected to check the website and/or make themselves aware of the radio broadcasts when it is clear that a closure is a possibility.

The school appreciates that during bad weather children may arrive later than normal; parents should endeavour to contact the school to let them know they are on their way if likely to be delayed. It is important that if a parent feels it is unsafe to travel they should not attempt the journey, but must inform the school of their decision.

The school recognises there will be isolated instances where families are cut off, even where the clear majority of children can get into school. In such instances parents should inform the school of the circumstances of this exceptional situation. Parents acting on the assumption that the school

would be closed without gaining confirmation, risks their child being registered as an un-authorised absence.

Where the school is officially closed, all absence is counted as authorised.

Health and Safety

In the event of snow some pathways will be cleared and salted. Staff, parents, children and visitors will be made aware that pathways, even where cleared, remain dangerous. Children will also be reminded of this in assembly.

Parents are responsible for ensuring their children do not slide on the school playground.

In icy conditions staff will clear/ salt affected areas of the school site.

Where necessary, essential pathways will be maintained as clear as possible throughout the day.

During adverse weather conditions, the playground may be out of bounds to children during the school day if the Head Teacher decides it necessary..

In the Head Teacher's absence the Senior teacher on site will assume responsibility for making all decisions relating to these procedures.

SENDING PUPILS HOME EARLY

In some exceptional circumstances, a review of the local situation may lead a Head to decide that the school, or part of the school, should be closed early. Such a decision should not be taken without first consulting appropriate persons, including the Chair of Governors, and Paul Walker Education Adviser. Such temporary and emergency closures do not count against the requirement for a school in the maintained sector to meet the minimum number of sessions each year.

A number of factors will be considered in making this decision including:

- It may often be safer to keep pupils in certain parts of the school rather than send them home early.
- Contacting a large number of parents/carers, especially during the day.
- Changing transport and school meal arrangements at short notice (free school meal pupil)
- Any decision over sending pupils home early must also include an informed assessment over their safety.

In the event of the school having to close during the day parents will be contacted by phone and also by email to be asked to collect their child/ren.

COMMUNICATION

- Staff, pupils and parents will be made aware **in advance** of contingency arrangements.
- Emergency arrangements will be posted on the school website.
- A staff communication 'cascade' is used to inform members of staff if school is closed before the start of the day.
- Any alteration to travel arrangements of children will be informed to parents.
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SCHOOL CLOSURE FOR ANY OTHER REASON- In the event of a school closure for any reason the Education Advisor for your school needs to be informed.

The number of school sessions required is laid down in Regulation 3 of the Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999 and requires that every school day in a school maintained by the LEA in England is divided into two sessions. These must be separated by a break in the middle of the day unless exceptional circumstances make this undesirable. With the exception of nursery schools, each school must meet for 380 sessions a year.

The DfE guidance on the teaching hours for schools applies on all days when schools are open. Parents can reasonably expect schools to maintain their normal hours on each of the 190 days that schools are open, unless adverse weather or other emergency makes this impracticable for one or more sessions. Under any such exceptional circumstances the Headteacher of a maintained school will need to liaise with the Education Adviser for the school.