



## **UNFORESEEN SCHOOL CLOSURES POLICY** **(INCLEMENT WEATHER, ETC.)**

### **AIMS**

This policy and procedure document aims to set out the considerations and procedures to be followed if school closure is being considered.

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

1. Alexandra Infants' School has a duty to be open to pupils on all the days that have been published at the beginning of the school year so that the children can have access to education.
2. All school staff have a duty to take all reasonably practicable steps to get to school during adverse weather in order to fulfil their contractual obligations.
3. The School has a duty of care towards and responsibilities for all its pupils, staff, parents and visitors to the school.
4. There have been and will be occasions in the future when school closure may have to take place.
5. School closure will only take place if no other safe and appropriate option is possible.

### **PROCEDURES IN THE EVENT OF ADVERSE WEATHER**

- On arriving at school the school Janitor must inform the Head or Deputy of any problems at the school which could affect the opening of the School, e.g. heating, power, water, damage to the building, or safety of the school grounds due to snow or ice.
- Staff at Alexandra Infants' School should make all reasonably practicable efforts to get to school even if they will arrive late. Staff must leave a message on the school answer phone or contact the Head or Deputy by no later than 7.45 a.m. regarding any delay in their attendance at school.
- By no later than 8.15 a.m. the Head, Deputy or senior member of staff (**who, where possible, must be at the school**) will make a decision to:
  - a. Open the school
  - b. Delay the opening until a specified time.
  - c. Close the school to pupils only.
  - d. Close the school.
  - e. If a senior member of staff is not at the school, the decision must still be made by a senior member of staff based on the evidence provided by staff members who are at the school.

- The decision regarding the opening of the school should be based on:
  - a. Health and safety considerations.
  - b. Sufficient numbers of staff being present to safely supervise pupils at the normal opening time or at a later time.
  - c. The weather conditions and weather forecast, e.g. worsening or improving weather.
  - d. The ability to provide school meals.
  - e. Any other circumstances that would severely affect the safe running of the school.
  
- The School will stay open for the full day unless the weather conditions deteriorate so badly that the safety of pupils and staff is likely to be jeopardised by remaining open.
  
- In the event of the School closing; delaying opening or closing early the Head, Deputy or senior member of staff on the school site must ensure that :-
  - a. Signs are displayed at the school entrances regarding closure so as to prevent parents and children from entering the school site.
  - b. Children are not left outside the school by parents/carers unless the school will be open.
  - c. Efforts are made to inform parents. (Including the use of the Text Messaging Service; School Website; Radio Stoke and Signal Radio; LA Website – \*see below)
  - d. Staff not yet arrived at school are informed as soon as possible.
  - e. The Chair of Governors is informed.

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**RADIO STOKE AND SIGNAL RADIO**

When informing the radio stations they will ask for a password that is known only by the Head, Deputy, Bursar and Janitor.

Tel Nos:        Radio Stoke: 01782 208008

                  Signal Radio: 01782 441300

                          - select ③ for Newsdesk

                          - select ① for Reception (not open until 9.00 a.m.)

This Policy will be reviewed annually.

Reviewed 9/10/13 – Version 2

## **SCHOOL CLOSURE PROCEDURE INCLEMENT WEATHER AND OTHER EMERGENCIES**

Schools need to be aware of the process to be followed if the school is to be closed due to extreme weather conditions or other emergencies. Ultimately, it is the Governing Body which is answerable for the actions taken by the Head Teacher and it is, therefore, important that a robust process is in place so that parents and staff, as well as the general public and the LA, understand why and when schools have to close. Governors are asked to approve a process on school closures for Head Teachers, staff and parents, based on the guidance from the City Council.

a) When a school has to close for an unexpected reason, that decision is made by the Head Teacher or, in his/her absence, a designated member of staff. The following need to be informed and a detailed log kept:

(i) the Chair of Governors;

(ii) the LA by entering the closure details on the following website;

<http://public.klp.rm.com/establishments/8610000/SchoolClosureNotification/Pages/default.aspx>

Relevant LA colleagues are notified of any closures logged by schools of this site so do not need to contact the Local Authority in addition. Local radio stations and The Sentinel also use this site as a primary source of information. It is at the discretion of schools if they wish to update radio stations and The Sentinel directly.

(iii) any affected staff or contractors' staff (including catering and cleaning and PFI staff). Useful contacts include:

PFI BBW Helpdesk telephone 233030

Louise Weaver – Schools Catering telephone 236467

George Moyes – Schools Cleaning telephone 236456

**For emergency school closures due to service failures e.g. flooding, electricity, gas and water supply, heating etc. please refer to section (f) below.**

b) The decision to close a school is the responsibility of the Head Teacher or a designated member of staff. The prime concern is the well-being and safety of pupils and staff.

c) When the school is in session and affected by poor weather conditions, the key question is whether pupils would be safer leaving early. Consideration must be given to the age of the pupils and, for younger pupils, whether parents will be at home. For pupils who can walk between school and home, it is perhaps safer to close at the normal time but to leave the responsibility with the parent to collect their own child earlier, if they wish to do so. For pupils using public transport or a school bus, then advice should be sought from the company and, if pupils are to be released earlier, parents need to be informed.

d) When, because of weather conditions, the question arises about closing the school rather than normal opening, the following procedure should be in place:

(i) the decision is made by the Head Teacher or a designated senior member of staff and the Chair of Governors. Consideration should be based on the condition of the site and the surrounding area and the supervision of pupils. School closures can now be logged on the closure website prior to the day affected if the decision has been made to close the school providing more flexibility for schools and an early as possible update for parents and carers. Each school closure should be logged on a daily basis after reassessment of conditions of the site and the surrounding area and the supervision of pupils.

(ii) if the Head Teacher decides to close the school, the people designated in (a) should be informed. It should be made clear to parents that schools will be open unless it states the opposite on the closure website (see above URL address).

(iii) it is the assumption of the City Council that its employees will report for work. Some employees, however, have chosen to live some distance from their place of work and that can cause them difficulties. It remains the view of the Council that employees should not expect to be paid when they do not work because, by choice, they live where they do.

The guidance for school staff under the control of Governors remains as follows:

- Schools Remaining Open – staff failing to report for duty should not be paid.
- Schools are Closed to Pupils only – staff failing to report for duty should not be paid. Staff who reported for duty but undertook reduced duties should be paid as normal.
- Schools are Closed – where staff were informed that they would not be required to attend for duty they should be paid as usual.
- Casual Employees – it is suggested that, where casual employees arrived or departed early due to the inclement weather, they should be permitted to make up the hours lost at a later date in order to minimise loss of pay.

#### e) Safety of the Site

The Governing Body needs to ensure that a gritting policy is in place to minimise the dangers of slipping on frost, snow and ice in outside areas and on access routes. Pedestrian walkways should be clearly marked to encourage visitors, parents and pupils to walk on these “safer” areas. The gritting policy should state the quantity of grit and/or antifreeze to be held in stock. Caretakers/Site staff need to keep abreast of the latest weather forecasts and perhaps be required to attend school in advance of normal start time to ensure the safe routes are established before the arrival of staff and pupils.

f) Service Failures – examples include floods, loss of electricity, gas and water supply, loss of heating etc.

(i) Inform BBW Helpdesk on 233030 as soon as any service failure is apparent, recording this as “Category A” service event that is threatening school closure. A BBW operative will attend the school within 1 hour.

(ii) In the event of a potential school closure, please consult your PFI Monitor Mike Sproston tel. 235560 or 07900135662; Tony Bridge tel. 235614 or 07717714281; or Premises & Client Team tel. 235509 or 07717714264

The latest information on rectification of the service will be made available to the Head Teacher from the PFI management team that will allow an informed decision to be made.

(iii) If the Head Teacher’s decision is to close the school then the BBW Helpdesk (233030) must be advised. In the case of partial closure unique space reference numbers for those rooms affected will be required to be notified.

(iv) The process of notification as outlined in (a) above should then be adopted.