

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 Headteacher / Principal 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 Headteachers / Principals, 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 Headteacher / Principal or, in his/her absence, a designated member of the senior 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://www.stokeschoolclosures.org.uk>
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:
 - o PFI ENGIE Helpdesk telephone 233030
 - o Louise Weaver – Schools Catering telephone 236467
 - o Keighley Holliday – Schools Cleaning telephone 237883

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 Headteacher / Principal 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 Headteacher / Principal 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 Headteacher / Principal 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: <http://www.stokeschoolclosures.org.uk>
 - (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 the ENGIE Helpdesk on 233030 as soon as any service failure is apparent, recording this as “Category A” service event that is threatening school closure. An ENGIE operative will attend the school within 1 hour.
- ii. In the event of a potential school closure please consult your PFI Monitor

John Appleyard tel. 232753 or 07976901566; or
Mike Sproston tel. 235560 or 07900135662; or
Tony Bridge tel. 235614 or 07717714281

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

- iii. If the Headteacher / Principal’s decision is to close the school then the ENGIE 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.