

# School Closure Policy

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<b>Adopted</b>	January 2018
<b>Last review date</b>	January 2018
<b>Next Review date</b>	January 2021
<b>Review Cycle</b>	3 Years

# SCHOOL CLOSURE POLICY

## Purpose:

- *to give guidance and instruction to decision makers, parents and carers and the communities served*

## Background and Context:

1. This policy applies to all schools within the multi-academy trust
2. Each school is a separate unit and therefore if one school is forced to close the other schools in the MAT are unaffected by its decision.
3. The responsibility for the closure of each school is with the Head Teacher of each institution who should seek confirmation from the Executive Head Teacher whose responsibility is to ensure that this closure policy has been diligently applied.
4. The best intelligence should be sought, whenever and wherever, possible at a local level but this intelligence should not necessarily determine whether the school closes or not and should never be the only determinant.
5. Once the decision has been made it is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to ensure that it is effectively communicated to all parties.
6. It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to provide the Chair of the Board with a written statement within three days, accounting for the closure which should include the reasons, the elements affecting the decision, the time the final decision was taken, those consulted and how the decision was communicated to all parties and at what time. If it is appropriate the pros, cons and consequences of the decision should be included.
7. Normally a decision to close would be made on a daily basis. If a longer period of closure is needed then the express written consent of the Executive Head and CEO is required and at that point the written account of the closure is the responsibility of the Executive Head/CEO.

## Criteria for Closure:

*The health and safety of children whilst the school is responsible for them (in locus parentis) is the only criteria for judgement.*

It is likely to trigger closure if one or more of the following circumstances apply:

1. The inability of the school to be able to meet the sanitary or physical needs of the children because of the endangering breakdown of sewage, water or heating systems or a planned or accidental curtailment of electrical supplies that, in themselves, prevent these needs to be met.
2. The inability of the school to provide a proper, statutory level of supervision, for all its children
3. All access to, and exit from, the building(s) is impossible.
4. An illness that constitutes a public health hazard and specific medical advice is given in writing to close
5. A national instruction to close

## **ADVICE ON POLICY (not part of the policy)**

### **Interpreting the Criteria by way of scenarios:**

1.
  - *The school may partially lose some of its toilets but not all – serious consideration should be given to using the available toilets for all or only closing for those pupils directly affected.*
  - *All water supplies will be unavailable from lunchtime onwards then the school may only need close for the afternoon*
2.
  - *There is heavy snow over the weekend but may be a later start on the Monday is more appropriate than automatic closure. It gives staff longer to undertake the journey to work and anyway some staff may live close enough to school to walk in and supervise until those living further away arrive.*
  - *Many staff are struck down by an illness – it may still be possible to keep part of the school open*
3.
  - *Road works means the usual way into school is precarious – every attempt should be made to challenge contractors and see if alternative ways onto the site are safe and achievable.*
4.
  - *Large swathes of pupils experience a sickness bug – advice should be sought.*
5.
  - *An extraordinary national event leads to a national proclamation from an appropriate authority that should be adhered to.*

### **OPTIONS FOR CLOSURE**

***School leaders can apply different levels of closure to reflect the circumstances they are dealing with:***

1. **FULL CLOSURE** – the circumstances for this must be very strong bearing in mind that it deprives children of a day of their legal entitlement to education. It can be challenged in the courts and there needs to be evidence that all efforts have been made to avoid it.
2. **PARTIAL CLOSURE** – an approach often used to cope with industrial actions but it may offer advantage if a building is partially unheated or the whole school is to lose one or all utilities for part of the day. This can apply to time, space or groups of pupils.
3. **LATE STARTS/EARLY ENDS** – often helpful in weather bound circumstances or when an emergency repair is underway.

### **Policy For Employees:**

1. All employees are expected to attend each day as stated in their contract of employment. Failure to do so will be accounted for and the absence will be represent either sickness, leave (if applicable), permitted absence (authorised according to employment criteria) or unsanctioned absence (which is likely to be unremunerated).
2. If the school is closed in whatever way, attendance is expected; failure to attend, unless due to sickness or permission, will be dealt with accordingly.
3. Permissions are at the discretion of the Head in consultation with the CEO and must form part of the report submitted to the Chair of the Board. The Head has discretion to give permission for a member of staff to attend at another SSMAT school if it is closer to the member of staff's home than the usual place of work.

## **ADVICE ON POLICY (not part of the policy)**

- *It is important to understand the goodwill that staff give to their schools but the circumstances of staff cannot and should not influence decision making. If a Head takes a view that we should close because staff will find it difficult to get to work the decision is being made on the wrong grounds. If this is an important element it might be best thought about in terms of a later start to the day which shows a recognition of a reality. Essentially, an employee chooses where to live and has to accept responsibility for that decision in fulfilling their contractual responsibility.*
- *The option of directing staff to other SSMAT establishments is useful but they must be closer or no greater than the distance that an employee would normally travel.*
- *Giving permission requires the Head to be clear in the decision making process undertaken whether granting, or refusing, that permission.*

### **Policy Regarding Closure Communication**

***Head Teachers are responsible for communicating decisions on closure with all parties. The key parties are employees and parents/carers.***

#### **Parents/Carers**

1. The school's electronic communications systems should be engaged including the school's website.
2. Telephone numbers should be used to ensure that all are covered
3. The first notice should be given when it is known that a decision is made and this should contain a request with a given time when the decision will be confirmed, preferably on the general platform of the school's website and on a radio station if that option is available.
4. A member of staff who can undertake this posting should be named annually whilst the responsibility for the posting is always the Head's.
5. If closure is the result of dangerous weather conditions ,speed and clarity will be the priority posting both advanced and confirmatory notice.
6. Each Autumn parents should be reminded of these procedures at least twice in relation to closure due to bad weather conditions.

#### **Employees**

1. Staff email communication should be used and contain exactly the same detail as the parents have.

**This policy does not preclude the use of more innovative approaches as long as exactly the same detail is given to all.**

**ADVICE ON POLICY (not part of the policy)**

- *All parties need to know as soon as possible but this should not lead to a decision being made prematurely consequently it is advised that when a strong likelihood of closure is faced then the following message is communicated .....*  
*“ because of ...reason ..... it is likely that **XXX** school will be closed on .. **DATE** .. however a final decision will not be made until later and that final decision will be posted via text/website from 6.30am tomorrow morning ..**DATE**”*
- *This gives opportunity for non-closure or a late start rather than full closure and allows parents, carers and employees to undertake emergency planning and keeps the options for the school, open.*
- *If the emergency manifests itself at the last moment then this interim step is rendered unnecessary.*

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