

Closing your school in an emergency



A guide for headteachers and school staff

This document outlines the agreed procedure which all schools must follow when it is necessary to consider closing in the event of an emergency (eg snow, flooding, no water or heating, public health, etc).

A copy of this document should be held by the Headteacher, Secretary, Chair of Governors and Caretaker; with each having a copy at the school and at home. You should also include this in your school's Emergency Procedures Folder.

Be Proactive!

Agree your procedure

It is important that all schools have an agreed procedure that will be followed in the event of a closure, and that this is communicated to all staff and parents / carers. Many schools provide a free text service which immediately informs all parents of the school's decision to close; however, we strongly recommend that all parents / carers are advised to listen to updates on BBC Radio Cornwall, Goldmine FM, Heart FM or Pirate FM during periods of inclement weather, as well as checking relevant social media channels.

Maintain and inspect your property

The main reason for schools to close is as a result of property damage caused by bad weather eg roofs, boilers and pipes. It is important that you maintain your school to an acceptable level, and that you are fully aware of your school's maintenance issues - a copy of your school's Condition Survey may assist you with this.

If temperatures fall below freezing, someone from the school (perhaps the caretaker) should undertake a daily inspection of the property's boilers, radiators and water heaters.

For a copy of your Condition Survey, or for advice on how what to look for during your inspections, please contact your Building Surveyor and / or Mechanical Engineer.

Free De-Icing Salt

NB This service is available to LA maintained schools only

In the Autumn Term each year, the Transport Team send a communication to all LA maintained schools offering free de-icing salt; the only condition being that the school holds a suitable receptacle / bin. We strongly recommend that schools take up this free offer, as all further salt supplies will need to be sourced externally to the Council and at a cost to the school.

Who to contact

If the decision is made to close, schools must follow the agreed procedure (on the following pages) and notify the Local Authority **by email**.

A copy of your notification is automatically forwarded to relevant officers; however, in some circumstances, you may wish to seek further advice. **Please note that we are no longer able to notify the local radio stations as part of the auto forwards.**

Whilst the contact details below are to assist you, these may be busy or unavailable when a large number of schools are closing at the same time (usually as a result of snow).

Emergency contacts

	08.30-17.30 Office hours	17.30-08.30 Out of hours
General advice		
Education Effectiveness	01872 322222	07968 892850
Radio Stations		
BBC Radio Cornwall (103.9, 95.2 and 96 FM)	01872 475263	01872 475263
Goldmine FM (DAB)	01209 240320	01209 240320
Heart FM (105.1 and 107.0 FM)	01392 354231	01392 354231
Pirate FM (102.2 and 102.8 FM)	01209 314314	01209 314314
Transport		
Transport Coordination Service	0300 1234 222	0300 1234 222
	01872 323562	07791 536018 07968 892569
Maintenance (for LA maintained schools)		
Building Surveyor / Engineer	0300 1234 100	

Useful websites

- **Cornwall Snow Advice**
www.cornwall.gov.uk/snow
- **Met Office**
www.metoffice.gov.uk
- **Environment Agency**
www.environment-agency.gov.uk
- **Devon and Cornwall Police**
www.devon-cornwall.police.uk

Social Media

- **Facebook**
www.facebook.com/TFFCornwall
- **Instagram**
www.instagram.com/TFFCornwall
- **Twitter**
www.twitter.com/TFFCornwall

Procedure: Considering Closing Your School?

Before School Starts

Undertake a Risk Assessment

- You must undertake a risk assessment to determine whether it is safe for children and staff to travel to school; and if so, what subsequent risks could arise once they are in school.
- During bad weather, you should be aware of weather forecasts and take into account local road conditions. Similarly, if the school has no water / heating. You should base your assessment around the estimated resolution time.
- Where it is safe to do so, you must do your utmost to open your school. To facilitate this, you may wish to consider opening late or closing early, and / or varying the school's activities – e.g. bringing classes together, reducing the extent to which children have to move between buildings, and / or ending the school day early.

During School Time

- Your priority must be to ensure that all children within your care are kept safe and warm.
- All subsequent actions must take this overriding view into account.
- You must undertake a risk assessment, using common sense to determine whether it is feasible for children and staff to remain in the school; and if not, what subsequent risks could arise by sending them home. During inclement weather, you should be aware of weather forecasts and take into account local road conditions. Similarly, if the school has no water / heating, you should base your assessment around the estimated resolution time.
- Where it is safe to do so, you must do your utmost to keep the school open. To facilitate this, you may wish to consider varying the school's activities e.g.- bringing classes together, reducing the extent to which children have to move between buildings, and/or ending the school day early.

Make Decision and Seek Governor Approval

Having assessed the risks, it is the Headteacher's responsibility to make the final decision whether or not to close. Where possible, the Governing Board should authorise this decision. If your Chair of Governors is not contactable, you should contact your Vice Chair or other Governing Board members to ratify your decision.

Before School Starts

During School Time

Inform the Local Authority and Radio Stations

To confirm your closure of your school, an e-mail (from any e-mail account) **must** be sent to: schoolclosures@cornwall.gov.uk

The 'Subject' of your e-mail **must** read: **School Name / 4-Digit DfE Number / Closed or Opening Late or Closing Early**

NB if you are closing more than one school in a multi academy trust you must send an email for each school separately

Your e-mail should contain a brief explanation of your reason(s) for closing. You will be sent an automated reply confirming receipt. Please note however that **emails which do not comply** with the agreed format **will not** be accepted, and **will not** be published on the Cornwall Council on website at www.cornwall.gov.uk/schoolclosures or the social media feeds. This measure is in place to verify legitimacy and prevent hoaxes.

Providing your e-mail complies with the agreed format, a copy will automatically be forwarded to all relevant Council departments, including the Transport Coordination Service. **Please note that we are no longer able to automatically inform local radio stations.**

Transport will receive a copy of your e-mail; however, it is essential that each school informs its own provider(s) of their decision to close, open late and / or close early. Please note, the ability to meet alternative times rest solely with each transport and catering operator; schools must appreciate that providers may be unable to adjust timetables due to commitments elsewhere.

Inform Parents

We recommend that you inform parents directly, and include on your social media feeds.

Providing it safe to do so, a member of staff should be at the school gate at the usual start time to inform parents who may not have heard or received the closure notification.

We recommend that you inform parents directly, and include on your social media feeds.

Your priority must be to ensure that all children within your care are kept safe. A member of staff **must** remain at the school until all children have been collected.