

# EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSURE PROCEDURE



OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL

To: Headteachers of all Schools, Academies and Free Schools      September 2020

This matter is being dealt with by: Nicola Jones      Direct Line: 07768400436

## **EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSURE PROCEDURE 20/21**

From the **1<sup>st</sup> April** 2019 there will be a new way for Maintained Schools, Academies and Free school to report school closures into Oxfordshire County Council.

This guidance is for Headteachers and Principals of all Maintained Schools in Oxfordshire. In addition, this is sent to Academies and Free Schools with a request that information about school closures is provided to the County Council both to ensure it can be communicated via the Council website and also to ensure that the Council can provide the Department for Education (DfE) statistical data in the event of multiple closures.

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

The decision to close or partially close a school can only be made by headteachers who have knowledge 'on the ground' of their schools, in consultation with their Chair of Governors wherever possible. The decision should be based on access to essential services (heating, water etc), staffing levels, transport safety, and site safety. In particular the decision making process should take account of:

- The health and safety of pupils, staff and volunteers which should always be paramount
- The basic entitlement of 190 'pupil days' which should be offered if at all possible
- Consideration should be given to closing the school to just some year groups and/or changing the opening and closing time if either will avoid complete closure
- Consideration should be given to offering a reduced curriculum (or even non-curriculum) provision as an alternative to closure

Information about emergency and planned school closures is published on the County Council website <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/schoolclosures> . This is the main source of up to date countywide information about school closures and is a key resource especially in times of widespread closures, for example, as a result of severe weather. Information on the website is also circulated to key staff within the County Council. **It is therefore critical that the County Council is notified as soon as the decision to close a school has been taken. It is also important to confirm the date of reopening when known.**

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## 2 INFORMING THE COUNTY COUNCIL

### The preferred method is by Email

You should email [schoolclosed@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:schoolclosed@oxfordshire.gov.uk) as soon as possible with the full details of the closure, or proposal to close.

In your email please provide the reason for the closure and any specific text you would like to be displayed on the OCC public Website.

For partial school closures do not name individual teachers just the class name and or year group and any further information that may be required.

Email's should be sent from a school email address. No personal email address should be used.

If you need advice or are unable to report a closure from an OCC email address, you can telephone the Family Information Service (FIS) with details of the closure; 01865 323332. FIS staff will inform other County Council staff about the closure and arrange for the information to be placed on the County Council public website.

You can also use the website to check the details held by the County Council about your school closure. Any inaccuracies should immediately be reported using the above contact details.

**Preferred method; Email [schoolclosed@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:schoolclosed@oxfordshire.gov.uk)**  
**Telephone; 01865 323332**

**Closures of more than 1-day duration:** Unless advised otherwise it will be assumed that the school is reopening the next school day. This is particularly important during periods of severe weather or multiple closures. Unless you advise us that the school remains closed the County Council website will show the school has reopened the next day.

## 3. COMMUNICATING THE CLOSURE

Local radio plays a key role in transmitting school closure information rapidly to parents. In the event of a closure you should contact the countywide radio stations; Radio Oxford, Heart (Thames Valley) and Jack FM. You may also choose to contact further local radio stations (see attached radio station contact details). If there are a large number of school closures the local radio stations will often refer listeners to the County Council web site as the main public source of school closure information.

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In passing information to the radio stations be brief and keep the message simple. Quote the school name, location, type of school, and **CODE WORD**. The current code word is ...... Always use this, even when leaving a message, as it reduces the chances of a hoax call being successful. Try to listen to the information being broadcast and contact the radio station immediately to correct any inaccuracies.

Ensure that all pupils and parents are advised to listen to local radio stations and check the Oxfordshire County Council Website. Advise parents not to ring the radio station but to stay tuned for further details.

Ensure that local radio stations are informed if the school remains closed - give details of the proposed reopening date (if known).

Consider methods of communicating the school closure at a local level, particularly during severe weather, for example updating the school website or providing a recorded message on the telephone system.

#### **4. TRANSPORT OPERATORS**

Schools must make sure all coach, minibus and car operators are informed of the decision to close.

Transport operators are responsible for deciding if transport can be provided according to weather conditions etc. The Council is unable to accept any responsibility for unauthorised use or hire of alternative transport.

#### **5. GENERAL PROCEDURES**

Make arrangements to receive pupils who are unaware of the closure and ensure that during office hours the school telephone is staffed as far as possible even if the school is closed. This is especially important with regard to dealing with enquiries from parents.

Headteachers should ensure that governors are kept informed of school closures so that measures can be taken to suit local needs.

Contact the County Council's Procurement Team, if there is any difficulty about oil supplies which cannot be resolved with the supplier email [corporateprocurement@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:corporateprocurement@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

#### **Property and facilities**

A new helpdesk number for all property and facilities enquiries is available 24/7, 365 days a year.

If you need to report an emergency issue, such as a water leak, loss of power or heating, or staffing and supply issues, call the helpdesk on **01865 792 422**.

You can also contact the helpdesk via email at [CECCommunities@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:CECCommunities@oxfordshire.gov.uk) or [visit the intranet](#) for more information.

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If you require **urgent** County Council assistance out of office hours please telephone Oxfordshire Fire Service Control (01183) 589333 and ask for the Duty Emergency Planning Officer (DEPO). The DEPO will telephone you to assess the support required and then contact the appropriate County Council Directorate.

Copies of this guidance document, the contact details for radio stations can be found <http://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/school-emergency-closure-procedure>

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