

## **School closures as the result of a pandemic.**

1. Schools *may* have to close because insufficient appropriate adults are available to ensure the safety of pupils *or* because of a central decision to close all schools in a region.
2. There is, of course, nothing new in the former. Schools have always had to be ready to respond at short notice to the need for emergency closures for one reason or another. The difference is that the frequency, length and significance of these episodes may be greater than previously experienced.
3. The consequences of large scale school closures are significant given the knock on effect for parents/guardians who would otherwise be at work. Closure should always be regarded as a last resort and schools should be clear about what to do if closure becomes necessary.
4. Local decisions about whether or not to close schools should be based on the number/suitability of available adults to ensure that the health and safety of pupils is not compromised. In extremis, delivery of a normal curriculum should not be regarded as the priority. Judgements about how many adults are needed to ensure the safety of particular numbers of pupils will need, as ever, to be made on the ground, taking account of the nature of pupils concerned and the number of adults available.
5. Schools should alert parents, in advance, to the circumstances in which there might be closure and the process for notification of it.
6. Schools should be in a position to notify parents and the media quickly about imminent closure and, in due course, opening. All of this is very much 'bread and butter' activity for schools and should not cause too much difficulty.
7. A reminder of the process to be followed when notifying the media of schools closures may be found via the following link and, at the time of writing, remains as 'normal'  
<http://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/school-emergency-closure-procedure>
8. If all schools are required to close the local authority will of course arrange for widespread public dissemination of that fact but schools should continue to keep their parents informed at a local level.
9. If closure is necessary, schools should do what they can to provide appropriate work for pupils to do at home, taking full advantage of electronic and other mechanisms for exchange of work between school and pupils wherever possible and appropriate.

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