

# SCHOOL CLOSURE PROCEDURE



To: Headteachers of all Schools, Academies and Free Schools

November 2024

This matter is being dealt with by the Schools Improvement Team

## **SCHOOL CLOSURE PROCEDURE 2024-25**

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 (OCC) both to ensure it can be communicated via the Council website and to ensure that the Council can provide the Department for Education (DfE) statistical data in the event of multiple closures.

**IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SCHOOL TO INFORM OCC.**

### **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. 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 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 unplanned 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.**

**To prevent hoax calls, this document must not be displayed in areas where it may be seen by pupils or the general public.**

## 2 INFORMING THE COUNTY COUNCIL

**The method to notify us is by using our OCC School Closure online form.**

You should complete the closure request form as soon as possible with the full details of the closure, or proposal to close.

This will be located on the School Intranet page for closures or alternatively, you can save it as a favourite on your internet browser for even quicker access.

In the form it will ask for the following.

- Your name and Job Title, email address & contact number,
- Name of school,
- Reason of closure and if this is full or partial,
- Closure details,
- Date of closure,
- Expected reopening date,
- The school closure CODE word – listed below

Some of the information above will be publicised on the OCC school closure webpage.

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.

The current **CODEWORD** is ..... Always use this on the form or when emailing, as it reduces the chances of a hoax requests being successful.

If you need advice or are unable to report a closure using the above form, you can email [schoolclosed@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:schoolclosed@oxfordshire.gov.uk). OCC 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.

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.

**Preferred method: via [Schools Intranet page](#) to access form**

**Email: [schoolclosed@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:schoolclosed@oxfordshire.gov.uk)**

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**Closures that are realised to go beyond the Expected Reopening Date:** Unless advised otherwise, it will be assumed that the school is reopening as stated in the original request form. You should complete another request form if you believe your school will exceed past the Expected Reopening Date.

### **3. 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.

### **4. GENERAL PROCEDURES**

Plan 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 regarding 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)

#### **Contact details for property and facilities**

Property and facilities enquiries are 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 Facilities helpdesk on **01865 897 251**.

You can also contact the helpdesk via email at [Fmservicedesk@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Fmservicedesk@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

If you require urgent County Council assistance out of office hours, please telephone County Council's Emergency Planning Team; 01865 323765 (24/7).

If the incident requires the school buildings to be evacuated and pupils are not able to either return indoors promptly or be sent home the Emergency Planning Team holds a list of locations that can be made available to house those evacuated if needed and can also access transport providers should evacuees need to be transported. For further advice the Emergency Planning Team can be contacted on the above telephone number or by email; [emergencyplanning@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:emergencyplanning@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Copies of this guidance document, can be found here:

<https://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/school-emergency-closure-procedure>

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