



EXCEPTIONAL CLOSURES - CHECKLIST FOR GOOSTREY COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

To be reviewed Spring 2019

It is the policy of Goostrey Community Primary School to remain open unless we are forced to close because there is a risk to the health and safety of children and staff – *statement by the Governing Board March 2017.*

School understands that closing is inconvenient and disruptive to families and staff. The decision to close will never be taken without careful consideration. School will always endeavour to make the best decision in the circumstances at the time.

It is statutory that school is open for pupils 190 days a year. If a school closes then legally it could be required to make that time up. The time will then have to come off an existing holiday time.

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS:

In an exceptional closure we will endeavour to communicate with parents in the following ways:

- School website – front page
- Twitter - @goostreyprimary
- Texting
- Email
- The following radio stations:
 - [Silk FM 106.9fm](#)
 - [Signal Radio 102.6fm](#)
 - [Canalside Community Radio 102.8fm](#)
 - [Cheshire FM 92.5fm](#)
 - [Imagine FM 104.9fm](#)
 - [BBC Radio Manchester 95.1fm](#)
 - [BBC Radio Stoke 94.6fm](#)
- Notices on the reception area door – junior site

An exceptional closure is unplanned, and is due to unforeseen circumstances such as adverse weather conditions, power failure, or situations which affect the safety of pupils and staff.

In times of extreme weather, such as a heavy snowfall, we should consider this checklist as far in advance of closure as possible – the night before closure if circumstances allow - and, if necessary, decide to close the school the next day.

This will allow early communication with parents and staff and ensure that parents are informed quickly. While it may not be possible for school to make such a decision the night before, going through the checklist will help to focus on the key issues to be considered and enable them to come to a decision as early as possible. Decisions the night before can only be taken when all the indications are that adverse conditions will continue overnight. If there are doubts, school should defer decisions until early morning.

Local conditions will determine the decision of the Headteacher (or an agreed deputy such as the Chair of Governors or a senior teacher), who will consider a number of agreed criteria for closure.

Issues to consider

The following should be considered in coming to any decision to close for exceptional reasons.

- Can pupils and staff access the school building safely?
- Can pupils and staff be evacuated in an emergency?
- In an emergency, could the Emergency Services access the school?
- Transport – can buses, meal deliveries, etc., reach the school, particularly if the unforeseen circumstances affect a large proportion of pupils?
- If a limited number of staff can attend is the school able to function at a safe level
- Have local weather forecasts and road conditions, including those for areas from which staff will be travelling, been considered?

If a decision is made to close

Communication

- School will use the texting / email/website / Twitter/radio stations /notices on front door of school to inform parents and staff
- If possible, School will update parents/staff at a later time in the day with a view to the “next day” so that all have time to make suitable family arrangements.
- Staff should keep the school updated on their position (2- way communication is vital.)

HEALTH AND SAFETY

SEVERE WEATHER WARNING – SAFETY GUIDELINES

The decision to open a school during periods of severe weather is dependent upon the Headteacher carrying out a risk assessment.

The risk assessment requires to be thought out in advance of any severe weather so that, when it is required to be undertaken then it is a relatively straight forward process.

This guidance is set out in order to assist the Headteacher in deciding whether it is safe to open and continue school during severe weather or whether the school should close.

The following points require to be taken into account when preparing a plan to deal with a possible exceptional closure due to severe weather.

Does the school have contact details for all parents/guardians, pupils and staff?

Does the school have contact details for the relevant LA officers?

Are the contact details updated regularly? Do they include Mobile Telephone numbers?

Where fuel oil is required. ensure that fuel level is checked regularly and appropriate levels maintained.

Set a minimum fuel level for a re-order of supply.

Check fuel level frequently during severe weather periods.
Ensure that heating, lighting and water services are regularly maintained.

Consider operation of fire alarms and emergency lighting, especially relevant in power cuts.

Maintain sufficient supplies of salt for application to footpaths and driveways.

Order supplies before the onset of winter.

Have the salt suppliers' telephone numbers available

Have grounds maintenance contractors out of hours numbers available to arrange heavy gritting of driveway/paths

Maintain stocks of Safety Signs and Hazard Warning Tapes for cordoning off hazardous areas.

Order signs which prohibit access to hazardous areas.

Maintain a system for communicating with all staff members

What parts of the school or routes are most susceptible to the effects of severe weather? See gritting plans for both sites.

Avoiding slips, trips and falls at access points into the school building.

Maintain adequate supplies of mops etc

Increased vigilance from staff to ensure points of access are kept in safe condition.

Prepare and maintain local contact details for the following services:

- Meteorological Service
- Water
- Road Service
- Utilities
- Cheshire East
- Department of Education

Contact details for the above services are in the school's Critical Incident Plan, which all staff members and governors have a copy of. Paper copies are in staffrooms and School Business Manager & Headteacher's offices.

Points to consider when deciding to open the school

The decision to open the school or to continue to operate the school is dependent upon the Headteacher carrying out a risk assessment. The risk assessment needs to be reviewed and updated in the light of changes in the weather and circumstances.

The following points are key considerations when determining whether to open or close the school. They also form an integral part of the risk assessment process and will allow the Headteacher to prepare a school specific risk assessment.

Consider the relevant point above, and then in addition;

Is the school building accessible?

What are the forecasted long-term weather conditions?

Are there any areas within the school locality especially impassable or dangerous in times of extreme bad weather?

Consideration should be given to getting to and from the school. There may be locations on the journey where snow/ice is known to cause early closure of roads or rail.

Alternative routes where possible should be identified prior to extreme bad weather to help the traveller to decide their route. Are vehicle routes into the school grounds passable?

Is there means to improve access prior to staff attendance?

Is access to the school and parking possible?

Are pedestrian routes on the school grounds passable and safe?

Are there enough staff to operate safely?

What would be the threshold of staff numbers in respect to expected pupils?

Is the school appropriately heated?

Note: there is no prescribed minimum or maximum temperature in health and safety legislation but the temperature in classrooms should normally be at least 18 degrees DfE March 2014. If an area falls below 15 degrees provision will be reviewed.

Are fuel supplies adequate?

Are water/fire/emergency lighting systems working appropriately?

Can the level of heating be maintained throughout the school day/week?

Is frost protection installed and utilised?

Can people movement be minimised between school buildings, if access is made externally?

If pupil numbers are low, can classes be grouped together?

If conditions are not dangerous outside play may be possible. However supervision may have to be higher.

Could play or breaks be staggered to ensure appropriate supervisory levels?
If any snow or ice is present prohibit running?

Pedestrian walkways should be a priority, over vehicle parking, but in the long term parking areas inside the school should be treated, or cleared of snow. Persons who have parked in the school grounds should be aware of the priority and told to take care in this area. Signs could be placed to remind these persons.

Maintenance should be a priority where pedestrian walkways also coincide with vehicle areas.

Monitor the weather situation locally and through the media.

Can similar provision be assured for the following day(s)?

Salt/grit spread on walkways or other areas at the end of the day could limit icing. This could also prevent a further snowfall from taking a foothold and re-icing.

Slush or water from thawed snow/ice should be cleared as much as possible to prevent re-icing. Iced slush could be more dangerous than the initial fall as surfaces may be uneven and more slippery.

The Headteacher will establish what would constitute appropriate supervision through dynamic assessment on the day

The emphasis should be on how to operate safely, not whether a full and normal curriculum could be followed.

Constant heating throughout periods of known cold snaps to prevent frozen pipes.

Maintenance of water systems, for example prompt repair of leaks and drips.

Maintenance staff to ensure heating and water systems are working well.

If the school premises cannot be heated or provision of water for sanitary use or drinking cannot be made within school hours then the school may have to close.

No use of external areas, when snow/ice cannot be easily removed or reduced.

Certain areas could be cordoned off and managed through salting/gritting prior to releasing for use.

Melted snow/ice can refreeze so continued attention may be needed.

The supervision level should be higher and running prohibited.

Any areas of snow/ice remaining should be avoided and managed.

Pupils should be informed of restrictions.

Headteacher to continually monitor the weather conditions

Communication with parents is vital; school considers closing a school a very serious action to take and will endeavour to keep parents informed as relevant decisions are made in challenging circumstances. This will be through the texting service and through the website, if it is accessible at that time.

Exceptional Closures when the closing of the school is outside the control of the school, are for example;

- potentially health threatening external factors
- the death of a teacher or pupil at the school
- flooding or burst pipes
- electricity failure
- an exceptionally heavy snowfall