

Unavoidable School Closure

Circumstances may arise from time to time when it is necessary for the Head Teacher to temporarily close or partly close the school.

Legal Position

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, Section 38, provides that the conduct of the school shall be under the direction of the Governing Body and that the Head Teacher is responsible for the management of the school. The Local Education Authority also has certain responsibilities in Community and Voluntary Controlled schools. The position is more complex in voluntary aided schools where the governors, in consultation with the appropriate Diocesan/ Church Authorities, have further specific responsibilities. There is, therefore, a shared responsibility between the Head Teacher and Governing Body.

For practical purposes, however, a decision to close or partly close the school lies with the Head Teacher. The decision to close should take account that this is a shared responsibility to be exercised wherever possible after consultation with the various parties. The Head Teacher must secure the agreement of the Chair of Governors, or in their absence, the Vice Chair, unless, owing to the emergency nature of the situation or for any other compelling reason, such agreement cannot be secured. If after due consideration the school is deemed to be unfit to receive pupils, then it would clearly not be possible for the school to meet as intended. Assuming the Head Teacher acted reasonably, this should not place the Governors or the LEA in any breach of their obligations.

What the Head Teacher will do

- Establish the nature of the problem
- Consider whether the whole of, or part of, any school should close
- Take immediate necessary action upon closure
- Arrange necessary follow-up action

Establish the Nature of the Problem

Whatever the possible problem for unavoidable closure, the Head Teacher should consult as quickly as possible with the appropriate County Council Officer, and, as appropriate Diocesan/ Church Authority representative. Advice should be sought to ascertain whether the problem can be resolved, avoiding closure, or to ensure that any closure is as brief as possible. Where there is any doubt concerning the health and safety of pupils and staff, then the Head Teacher will err on the side of caution.

In the event of a major incident, the LEA should be contacted. A 24 hour facility is Available and the LEA Officer Contact telephone numbers are at the back of the policy.

Possible Reasons for Closure

It is not the purpose of these policy guidelines to give a full and comprehensive list of possible reasons for closure but they fall into the following main and sometimes inter-related categories as recommended by the LEA:

Premises Related Issues

- Breakdown of equipment
- No electricity
- Heating failure
- Fire
- Flood
- Major damage/vandalism
- Safety
- Moving
- Contractual delays

Environmental Health

- Epidemics
- Pollution
- No water

Emergencies

- Adverse weather
- Bomb alert
- Police action

Personnel

- Excessive staff absence
- Industrial action
- Funerals
- Post accident/ Incident trauma

School Information

- District number 14
- School number 162
- DFES number

Staff Guidance

In the event of school closure, or it is unsafe to travel due to severe weather conditions, staff will be notified by telephone. If staff cannot safely get into school then they must notify the Head Teacher and can complete school work at home e.g. Appropriate lesson planning, evaluations, notes on the children etc.