



St Monica's Catholic Primary School

Emergency School Closure

Status	Recommended
Last reviewed	Spring 22 (update of WBC key person info Autumn 24)
Date approved by Governing Body	15.2.22
Published on school web site	Spring 22
Term of next review	Spring 25

WBC School Closure Protocol:

The decision to close a school is inevitably a significant and rare one.

Ultimately, the decision lies with the Headteacher in consultation with the school's Chair of Governors. School closure should be avoided where possible but in making the decision the Headteacher and Chair of Governors should take account of the welfare and safety of pupils and staff. Where it is appropriate, partial closure may be considered and arrangements must be in place if parents / carers are unable or delayed in getting to school to collect a child.

It is appreciated that such decisions may need to be made swiftly. However, the Headteacher is advised to contact the LA to discuss the issue, before closure, following the same process as for a critical incident.

In the first instance, contact should be made with Louise Atkin, Head of Service – Quality Education 07815992559, Kate Guise - contact for critical incidents 01925 442759 07747 840944.

Alternatively contact may be made with Theresa Whitfield at the Community Safety & Resilience Team on 01925 442657 07730 075836, or emergencyplanning@warrington.gov.uk.

However, circumstances in which closures MAY be necessary are likely to include:

1. Adverse weather conditions
2. Building defects (including heating / plumbing / electrical defects/ inadvertent exposure of asbestos/ positive Legionella sample)
3. Critical Incidents

Advice on closure due to severe weather

School closure contingency plans should be prepared well before the bad weather season so that all staff, parents / guardians and pupils understand them.

When should a school close?

The decision to close a school will normally rest with the headteacher, on the basis of weather forecasts and on-the-spot observations.

NB: When radio stations advise people to avoid non-essential travel, it is directed at travel that could quite easily be deferred or cancelled altogether. It does not mean that travel to school or work is unnecessary.

Closure guidance

It may sometimes be necessary for schools to close during the day; for example, if the weather is deteriorating and children may not be able to get home later. If the Council receives a severe weather warning this will be communicated to schools by e-mail. This does not mean that your school has to close. The decision to close must be assessed individually by each school. For example a school where children live within walking distance may decide not to close, whereas a school where most pupils travel by public transport would close. The Met Office website home page www.metoffice.gov.uk gives details of any current severe weather warnings. If you take the decision to close the school please inform the local radio station and the local authority as soon as possible. Parents will be contacted by a text message followed up by regular website updates. Pupils will be retained in school, under the care of school staff, until parents arrive to collect them. Updates will need to be provided on a daily basis. Schools need to consider the risks to children and parents of closing during the school day. Roads may be hazardous and extra traffic may increase the danger.

Where the decision is taken to close the school during the day, pupils should not be sent home unless the headteacher is confident of their ability to make the journey safely, gain access to their homes and be safe there. **If parents have not previously been advised that the school is closing, pupils may be at risk. The school must ensure that all pupils will be safe if they are sent home early.**

Staff attendance

Although it is recognised that severe weather conditions make it difficult for staff to get to and from work, all staff are expected to come in unless they have permission to be away from work for other reasons. Transport problems, which may be caused by snow or other factors, do not alter that obligation. This obligation applies equally to all staff and is not affected by where they live. When adverse weather conditions make travelling difficult or dangerous, staff should conduct their own risk assessment and inform the headteacher. The headteacher may then authorise staff not to attend school.

Coding for school registers for pupil absence during severe weather

Under the revised Pupil Registration Regulations 2006 and the national absence codes introduced in September 2006, schools should record absences using:

Registration Code: Y