



Emergency Closure Policy

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1. Introduction

At Higham Primary School we make every effort to keep the school open, even if only limited numbers of pupils can attend. The school may, however, have to close if certain conditions apply, which usually means health and safety reasons. The most usual reason for this is severe weather conditions. The school follows Kent County Council's Severe Weather Guidance and takes steps to prepare when severe weather is forecast.

2. Assessing the situation

Before deciding whether to close, we will consider a range of factors such as:

- Whether there are on-site hazardous conditions that cannot reasonably be mitigated (for example the pathway to the school entrance or where pupils have to move around the site during the school day)
- Will there be enough staff to supervise the number of children likely to be present?
- Can a reasonable temperature be maintained in the building or parts of the building where children and staff are likely to be?
- Is water available and are sufficient toilets working satisfactorily?
- Can meals be provided?

The guide is that if children can get safely into school and they can remain safely inside; the temperature is right; toilets and taps are functioning; meals can be provided; and the headteacher is comfortable with the levels of supervision, the school should stay open. If the decision is taken to close the school, it is essential that all children are collected prior to total school closure. Throughout the whole procedure, the health, safety and welfare of all staff, visitors and pupils will be the overriding factor in making decisions.

3. Announcing school closure or partial closure

If health and safety conditions are satisfied, then the school will remain open. During severe weather the headteacher will review daily whether or not the school should be closed early to enable pupils and staff to travel home in safety or before the light fails. The decision to close or restrict attendance is taken by the headteacher or in her absence by the most senior member of the teaching staff available.

Once a decision is taken to close, then the usual arrangements for making public announcements using the Kent Closures website will be made, following the Kent County Council Severe Weather Guidance, and parents will also be informed by text message. A message will also be placed on the school website and the school Facebook page. Other agencies will be informed of the school closure as necessary, e.g. specialist teachers, outside clubs.

4. Early closure

If the school closes early, under no circumstances will children be allowed to leave without an adult. Only parents or someone listed as an emergency contact will be allowed to collect a child, unless parents notify the school that they have given permission for another person to do so. Parents will be notified by radio announcement and text message.

Staff will be allowed to leave in priority order. Those with the most difficult journeys will go first. The last person in the building must be a member of the leadership team. At no time will staff be allowed to leave, regardless of their journey, if this means there will be a lack of appropriate supervision for pupils. The school will not close completely unless the headteacher is certain that no child will show up.



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5. Implications for staff

The decision regarding expectation of staff arrival will be based on closeness to the school, and consideration will be given to disability, nervous/new drivers, four-wheel drive and other things that affect ease of journey. Staff cannot be directed to drive in conditions they consider to be dangerous, but they should be able to demonstrate that they have considered all other travel options. They need robust reasons not to turn up but ultimately the decision is their responsibility. If staff remain at home they should have evidence of work-related activity, or offer future cover.

If the school remains open understanding will be given to staff with school age children who would need to make arrangements for child care if their children's school is closed, if their child's school is still open or if their child's school operates an early closure. The teacher (parent) will liaise with the Headteacher to make appropriate arrangements for their children. According to circumstance the teacher (parent) may need to arrange for their child to accompany them to school. Likewise, if the teacher's children's school is closed or has an early closure the teacher (parent) will be granted permission to leave school to collect their child/children from their school. This will be carried out in agreement with the Headteacher who will ensure adequate supervision is still in place at Higham School for any remaining pupils. If public transport becomes affected and this impacts on a teacher's own children then the teacher can also liaise with the Headteacher to put arrangements in place to collect their children.

If possible, there should be arrangements for staff to accommodate each other locally in severe conditions if return home is impossible.