



## SCHOOL CLOSURES IN EMERGENCIES

1. The decision to close a school, either partially or totally, lies with the headteacher. These guidelines are intended to help in making that decision. Wherever possible, such decisions should be made in consultation with the chair of governors and the local authority.
2. There is a statutory duty to provide education for pupils for 190 days of the year. It is only in exceptional circumstances that provision can be less than this. It would have to be clearly demonstrated that a closure which resulted in providing less than 190 days of education was unavoidable and could not be foreseen.
3. There are many reasons why it would be appropriate to close a school. Some of these are highlighted in this document, but it should be noted that these are not prescriptive nor are they exhaustive. Each situation must be considered on its own merits and any decision taken in light of the prevailing situation and conditions.
4. Whenever a decision is taken to close a school, it is important that all those who will be affected, both within the school community and beyond, are informed and kept up to date of the situation.
5. Examples of situations where it may be appropriate to consider closure include:
  - Loss of utilities
    - Electricity – Loss of heating or lighting
    - Gas – Loss of heating
    - Water – No drinking water or inability to flush toilets
    - Sewerage – Inability to flush toilets
  - Severe weather
    - Inability of staff or pupils to attend school
  - Lack of staff for supervision of pupils
    - Through bad weather, flu epidemic, civil unrest etc.

- Structural Damage
    - Fire, storm or flooding damage, or failure of structure etc.
  
  - Major Emergency
    - Flooding, toxic fumes from nearby fire etc.
  
  - Critical Incident
    - Incident or emergency affecting the school
  
  - Other
    - Use of school for other purpose, e.g. rest centre in a major emergency.
6. Whatever the situation, a reasonable assessment of the situation must be made supported by a risk assessment. Clearly, any assessment which identifies a risk to the health or safety of anyone, pupils or staff must take precedent. Before any decision to close is undertaken, consideration should, however, be given to alternative strategies to remove or reduce the risks whilst still maintaining the service provision.
7. Headteachers who live some distance away from their school should check on local conditions for the school by contacting a member of staff who lives near to the school before taking any decisions.

### **Decision to Close**

8. In the event of an emergency, or where a partial or full closure is being considered, headteachers should wherever possible telephone the authority's helpline on **01482 392999** so that a corporate decision can be made and agreement reached about who will deal with any emergency steps to be taken. The helpline is staffed at the following times-

Monday to Friday	8.00am – 5.30pm
Friday	8.00am – 4.30pm

At all other times, there is a voicemail facility for you to leave messages and details of any school closures.

When a decision on closure is made early in the morning and home to school transport is affected, you can inform the Transport Section on 01482 395444 from 8.30am.

9. However, there will be exceptional circumstances which will prevent the normal practice of prior consultation with the Authority. Breakdown of services in the

early hours and at other times of the day will necessitate a local judgement having to be made about closure and alternative strategies required to be taken, e.g. alerting services, announcements, remedial action. The strength of these local initiatives is very significant and, in many cases, ensures a speedier return to normality. In this case, however, you must still contact the above telephone number as soon as is practicable to inform the local authority of the situation.

10. Local radio should be informed of any school closures so that they can broadcast the details and alert parents. The radio station should be informed as early as possible, and preferably before 7.00 am, to allow parents time to make childcare arrangements.
11. Contact details for the main local radio stations are included as appendix 1 to this guidance so that they can be kept in a prominent place. When contacting the radio stations, you will be asked to provide your school's DfE number and a password to confirm the authenticity of the call. Passwords for each of the radio stations are emailed direct to each school.
12. Even in the event of a closure, a contingency plan will be needed to cater for those pupils whose parents have not heard the announcement and turn up at school.
13. If an emergency arises during the day, the normal arrangements for pupils to be met and cared for may break down and the situation is aggravated in bad weather. It may, therefore, be necessary to allow some pupils to go home before the normal dismissal time but, where possible, pupils should be retained in the school. Special factors to consider are transport arrangements, where applicable, and the need for primary aged pupils to remain under supervision until the time that school would normally close, unless parents can be contacted and are available to accept responsibility for their children. Headteachers may wish to consider releasing staff on a staggered basis, depending upon travel distances and possible difficulties of journeys.
14. It is vital that ALL sections of a school are kept informed of emergency steps, including kitchen staff, cleaning and caretaking, as well as teaching colleagues.
15. When the local authority is informed of a school closure, a number of council services are informed so that they are aware of the situation and can take appropriate action such as cancelling school transport, visits to the school, meals etc. Details of the services informed of a school closure are detailed in appendix 2. Information on school closures is also posted on the Council's website which is updated several times each day.

16. When it is possible to re-open the school, it is important that everyone who was informed of the closure is also informed of the arrangements for re-opening the school, this includes the media and the authority's helpline so that council services can be reinstated.

## EMERGENCY CONTACTS SCHOOL CLOSURES

**East Riding of Yorkshire Council Helpline**

**Monday to Friday 8.00am – 5.30pm**

**Friday 8.00am – 4.30pm**

**At all other times, there is a voicemail facility for you to leave messages and details of any school closures.**

# 01482 392999

Radio Station	Contact Details
<b>BBC Radio Humberside</b> <b>Updated Oct/Nov 2015</b>	01472 340959/225959 <b>radiohumberside@inbox.com</b> All emails must start with the correct password at the beginning of their message <b>Password: CHALLENGE</b>
<b>Viking Radio</b> <b>Updated Oct/Nov 2015</b>	<b>01482 325141</b> <b>Password: RIBBON</b>
<b>BBC Radio York</b> <b>Updated Oct/Nov 2015</b>	<b>01904 622033</b> <b>northyorkshire.news@bbc.co.uk</b> <b>Password: SNOWMAN</b>
<b>Minster FM</b> <b>Updated Oct/Nov 2015</b>	<b>01904 486598</b> <b>01904 481234</b> <b>Password: ALASKA</b>
<b>KC FM</b> <b>Updated Oct/Nov 2015</b>	<b>01482 333999</b> <b>enquiries@kcfm.co.uk / studio@kcfm.co.uk</b> <b>Password: STAR</b>
<b>Yorkshire Coast Radio</b> <b>Updated Oct/Nov 2015</b>	<b>01723 588995/581700</b> <b>Password : SNOWBALL</b> <b>07834 333620 Chris Sigsworth,</b> <b>Managing Director, Yorkshire Coast Radio</b>

**SERVICES INFORMED OF SCHOOL CLOSURES**

School Improvement  
Schools Music  
Adult Education  
Education Welfare Service  
Vulnerable Children Education Team  
SEN Section  
Educational Psychology & Behaviour Support Service  
Early Years and Family Support  
Youth and Family Support  
School Transport  
School Meals  
Building Cleaning  
Building Facilities  
Road Crossing Patrols  
Despatch & Courier Service  
Human Resources  
Finance Accountancy  
Health & Safety  
Emergency Planning  
Supplies  
Special Projects (PFI)  
Housing & Public Protection  
Environmental Control  
Library Service  
Safer Communities  
Community Use  
Web Team  
Press Team  
Customer Service Centres  
IT Support