

CLOSING A SCHOOL

Communications guidance



This note offers advice to Head Teachers and Governing Bodies on the actions needed in the case of school closures including shut downs due to severe weather conditions.

Decisions concerned with school closures are made on an individual school basis by the Head Teacher to reflect local circumstances.

If the Head Teacher is not available, the school should ensure that a pre-agreed nominee is familiar with this process and can act on the school's behalf.

1. School closure (including extreme weather conditions)

In the event of multiple school closures, the Assistant Director for Education, Participation and Skills in the Council will liaise with the Civil Protection Unit, Emergency Services and other Council departments to offer advice to Schools' Emergency Management Teams.

If this advice is to recommend that schools in general close, this will be given out by local radio stations and communicated via the council's official social media pages to help parents.

2. Closure assessment criteria

Head Teachers, in consultation with their Chair of Governors if possible, should assess the situation when taking account of the following:

- The safety and accessibility of the site and surrounding area
- The availability of heat, light, power and water
- Availability of staff
- Availability of meals

3. Communication of decision

The decision to close a school should be taken at an appropriate time. This should allow for adequate communication to parents and pupils. **Parents should be asked not to call the media as this may impede communication between schools and the radio stations.**

In the event that weather conditions deteriorate overnight, the Head Teacher should liaise with their Site Services Officer/Caretaker to check out the conditions against the above criteria.

Head Teachers are asked to set up an email distribution list that includes all the relevant people to inform when a decision to close a school is made (see table below).

You may want to ensure that a few nominated people save this distribution to email accounts that can be accessed either from the school or from other locations if it's not possible to issue emails from the school itself.

Remember to inform any scheduled visitors to the school of the closure in addition to those on the distribution list.

Who	Why	Email
Education Team and Communication Team (Council)	This will be the main source of information for updating the Council website and ensuring accuracy	schools.closures@plymouth.gov.uk
School Transport Team (Council)	The team will inform transport operators	school.transport@plymouth.gov.uk
CATER ^{ed} / School Meals Provider	To inform staff that the school will be closed	catering@catered.org.uk
Heart FM BBC Radio Devon Radio Plymouth Radio Cornwall	They will alert listeners about the closure of your school	news.devon@heart.co.uk radio.devon@bbc.co.uk news@radioplymouth.com radio.cornwall@bbc.co.uk

Only in emergencies where emails are not available should schools call those on the distribution list. The numbers to use are listed below:

Assistant Director for Education, Participation & Skills	01752 307465
Communications	01752 307816
Heart FM	01392 354230
BBC Radio Devon	0845 3011034
Radio Plymouth	01752 389539

When your email has been received, it will be broadcast on local radio and published by the Council's corporate communication team at website page address below:

www.plymouth.gov.uk/schoolclosures

Please also make sure that parents/carers are aware of the Council's official social media channels as information will also be provided here.



Twitter <https://twitter.com/plymouthcc>



Facebook www.facebook.com/PlymouthCityCouncil

4. For staff

If conditions prevent your staff getting to school, they should call the Head Teacher.

5. Special school transport

If conditions deteriorate during the school day, any decisions made should be shared with the Assistant Director (Education, Participation & Skills), who will notify anyone relevant within the Council. Equally, the Council will share information with schools that may affect them, for example, transport provider updates will be shared with schools to enable local decisions to be taken.

Email template to send to distribution list

PLYMOUTH SCHOOL CLOSURE EMAIL

School name:

Address of school:

DfE school code number:

Date of closure:

Expected date of re-opening:

Person making the request:

POSITION HELD WITHIN THE SCHOOL:

