

December 2018
Management Circular No. 10

To Heads of all Establishments

Emergency Closure of Schools and other Educational Establishments

From time to time circumstances arise which can lead to the emergency closure of schools or other educational establishments. Examples of such circumstances include severely inclement weather, abnormal temperatures, burst pipes, disruption of fuel, power or water supplies. The length of closure may vary between an early closure for a brief period with a return to normal on the following day to a closure for one or more full days. Parents/Carers should be advised by letter, and through standard advice in the school handbook, that there may be occasions when emergencies make it necessary for children and young people to be sent home prematurely and that in these circumstances parents/carers should have advised their children of where they should go.

Early Closure

1. Early closure should be considered only when the circumstances are such that it is impossible to continue to make reasonable provision for children and young people. Heads of Establishment should make every effort to provide education for as long as possible and for as many children and young people as possible. Consideration should be given where feasible to partial rather than full closure.
2. When considering early closure Heads of Establishment should regard the health and welfare of children and young people as paramount. All arrangements should ensure a standard of care for each and every child or young person as would be expected of a prudent parent/carer. Arrangements should take account of age, ability and capacities (physical and mental) of the children and young people concerned; the location of the school in relation to childrens' and young peoples' homes and to road traffic and other hazards; the home circumstances of the children and young people and any other emergency arrangements.

No primary aged children should be sent home without ensuring that an adult's presence is available. In the absence of parental/carer acknowledgement or consent to the amended time of dismissal, or acceptance of responsibility for the reception of the child or young person by an adult nominated by the parent/carer as an emergency contact point, supervision and care will have to be provided in school until such arrangements are made or until normal dismissal time.

3. If early closure is being considered because of abnormal temperatures, Appendix 1 to this Management Circular should be consulted.

Action required

If after considering all of the above factors the Head of Establishment still feels that there is no alternative to early closure the Head of Service should be consulted in advance other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Where the Head of Service agrees that the proposed early closure should take place the Head of Establishment should take the following action:

1. Any alterations to transport arrangements should be agreed with the operators (see Appendix 2).
2. Where appropriate, arrangements should be made to provide school meals as on a normal day.
3. Advise any after school care scheme which involves children at the school.
4. A note should be sent home to parents/carers informing them of the reason for closure and when children and young people should return to school. If contact with the media is required the appropriate action will be taken by Education Services.
5. **Heads of establishment should not make direct contact with the media or with Public relations and Marketing, Chief Executive department.** The Head of Service and Estates Team within Property and Land Services section will liaise with the press office to manage communications around the closure.
6. Consideration should be given to the health and welfare of staff, though Education Services expects staff to remain in school wherever possible. In all cases every effort should be made to retain during normal school hours a nucleus of staff including senior staff to look after children and young people for whom alternative arrangements cannot be made, to deal with enquiries and to maintain contact with the office.

Full Day or Extended Closure

1. In more extreme circumstances than those which might lead to only an early closure it may be necessary to consider the closure of a school for one or more days.
2. The possibility of a full day or extended closure can arise when emergencies such as fire, burst pipes or heating or power failure occur outwith normal school hours with the result that unless immediate remedial action is taken the school will be unable to open.
3. In such cases it is essential that immediately the emergency is discovered, contact is made with the City Building (Glasgow) LLP 24 hour service on **0800 595 595** or in the case of PPP managed schools, the 3ED (Amey) Helpdesk 0800 316 6115. This contact would normally be made by the Janitor or the Head of Establishment or for PPP managed schools, any authorised school Helpdesk user. Heads of Establishment and Janitors should keep emergency contact phone numbers readily available. If City Building (Glasgow) LLP/3ED (Amey) are unable to take steps to allow the school to open they will contact Education Services, or other nominated officer who will agree with the Head of Establishment what action will be taken in accordance with the procedures outlined in Section 7 below.
4. Closure for one or more days may also require to be considered in situations such as abnormally severe weather conditions or disruption to fuel supplies. Such circumstances could affect large numbers of schools at the same time.
5. It is possible that some emergency situations such as fuel shortages can be anticipated and that their effect can be minimised by careful forward planning. Heads of Establishment are asked to undertake contingency planning to meet such emergencies and to review these plans each session.
6. Where large numbers of schools are affected an emergency team will be established at Education Services level. This team will co-ordinate efforts to re-open schools and to keep all interested parties informed. Office phone numbers of key members of the team are recorded in Appendix 3.

7. The role of the Head of Establishment in ensuring that disruption to education is kept to a minimum will, however, be crucial when faced with serious emergency situations of whatever nature which might lead to closure of the school. Heads of Establishment should note the relevant sections of the following procedures:

i. **Disruption to Fuel Supplies**

Heating and fuel levels should be monitored to ensure that existing stocks are being used sensibly and that early and accurate information about fuel levels can be given to the Estates Team within Property and Land Services section. It is likely that requests for information about existing supplies and future needs will be made to schools as soon as there is any indication of any emergency situation arising. Heads of Establishment should, however, ensure in any event that in times of **disruption to fuel supplies the Estates Team within Property and Land Services section is informed when there is fuel to provide only four days normal burning.**

Heads of Establishment should not make direct contact with fuel companies.

On the basis of the information provided by schools the Estates Team within Property and Land Services section will consult City Building (Glasgow) LLP about what action should be taken. Between November and March where delivery cannot be guaranteed and where there is fuel only to provide three normal days burning, the Head of Establishment will be advised that the school should be closed and placed on frost firing. Details of frost firing have been included in Janitors training courses and information should be available in every educational establishment.

Maximum use should be made of any part of the school heated by a fuel which is not in short supply. In some cases it may be possible to provide alternative forms of heating to accommodate staff or part of the school population.

ii. **Access to Schools**

Janitors must keep stocks of salt and gritting material available. As soon as treacherous conditions develop, gritting and/or salt scattering should be carried out.

Heads of Establishment should check that access for fuel deliveries and for pupils and staff is not made impossible by snow or ice. Where the Janitor is unable to keep access open the Property and Land Services should be informed without delay.

iii. **Communication with Parents/Carers**

Heads of Establishment should consider how best to ensure good communication with parents/carers. Heads of Establishment should make every effort to advise parents/carers in writing using group call and text messaging of the reasons for closure and indicate the methods by which they will be informed of the date for the re-opening of the school. These methods will normally include school communication channels, social media, local radio and the press. Heads of Establishment, however, should not make direct contact with the media or with Public Relations and Marketing, Chief Executive Department. Arrangements for this will be made through the Estates Team within Property and Land Services section. Heads of Establishment should also inform parents/carers of the school phone number and where possible the hours during which parents/carers may phone the school for information.

The importance of good communication with parents/carers and the general public cannot be over-emphasised and Heads of Establishment should use every means at their disposal (e.g. normal school communication channels, and if the closure is for a longer period of time, notices in local shops, community venues, announcements in chapels/churches, etc. to back up the messaging via council communication channels) to ensure that the

community is aware of the up to date situation at the school. It is essential that Heads of Establishment regularly update information about child or young person emergency contacts as part of a school communication policy.

iv. **Attendance of Staff**

The arrangements for staff attendance will depend on the situation in each educational establishment. While the welfare of children and young people and the requirement to maintain the maximum possible educational service remain paramount, responsible consideration must be given to the welfare of staff. Where conditions allow, staff should be asked to attend and work as normal a day as possible. It is important that teaching and non-teaching staff be treated equitably. Where it is impracticable for all members of staff to attend, a nucleus of staff should be at the school during normal working hours to deal with enquiries and maintain contact with Education Services. At the very least every effort should be made to ensure the presence of a senior member of the teaching and janitorial staff. If it is not possible for the switchboard to be manned or for the school to receive or make phone calls, phone numbers at which the Head of Establishment or his/her representative and a member of the janitorial staff can be contacted should be provided to the Estates Team within Property and Land Services section.

As part of the school's contingency plan the Head of Establishment should consider how staff who are not expected to attend or who for some reason are prevented from attending can best be kept in touch with the day to day position at the school. Staff are expected to report to their nearest Glasgow City Council educational establishment if a journey to their normal place of work is totally impracticable.

v. **Transport**

Heads of Establishment should maintain close contact with transport operators about the needs of the school (see Appendix 2).

vi. **Contact with Education Services**

It is essential that education services be kept fully informed of the up to date situation in each establishment. Heads of Establishment or their representatives should phone daily to report their position. Such calls should be made before 0900 hours and the information provided will form the basis of any report which will then be passed to the media. In large scale emergencies additional lines or a voicemail service will be provided to ease communication between establishments and Education Services.

vii. **School Meals**

Where possible arrangements should be made to ensure school meals are available at least to those who are entitled to free meals. It may be possible to make arrangements for meals to be provided in a neighbouring school if the need arises. Special arrangements should be considered particularly in areas of need.

viii. **Alternative Accommodation**

If the emergency situation appears likely to last for more than a day or two, Heads of Establishment should consult the Estates Team within Property and Land Services section on the use of alternative accommodation for staff and children and young people such as neighbouring schools, church halls or other suitable buildings. Where necessary ex gratia payments will be made after the emergency is over for the use of buildings. Additional transport costs will also be met by agreement with Education Services.

In the case of secondary schools it will be particularly important to make alternative arrangements for senior pupils.

The use of alternative accommodation is a matter which Heads of Establishment may wish to keep under constant review so that possible options are already known in advance of emergency situations arising.

ix. **School Lets**

The Community Letting section (phone 0141 302 2814/2815) should be kept up to date by the Head of Establishment of the situation at the school. It may be possible for the Community Letting section to relocate lets in alternative accommodation in accordance with any guidance which is issued at the time of the emergency.

Inclement Weather

In present times when children are better protected, than in past years, against heavy rain the need for early closures due to inclement weather should only occur infrequently particularly in urban areas. Where, however, exceptional conditions arise due to ice, snow, fog or flooding, a decision to close the school earlier than normal may be justified on the grounds that the decision was necessary and expedient in the interests of the health of the children and young people. In such circumstances Heads of Establishment are authorised to grant an early closure.

Heads of Establishment are asked to note that care must be taken to ensure that;

1. School meals are provided as on a normal day;
2. Any alterations to transport arrangements are notified to the operators;
3. The necessary steps are taken to ensure a standard of care for each and every child or young person as would be expected from a prudent parent/carer. These steps would include considerations of the age, ability and capacities (physical and mental) of the children and young people concerned; the location of the school in relation to the childrens' and young peoples' homes and to road, traffic and other hazards; the home circumstances of the children and young people and any standing emergency arrangements;
4. An early closure for children and young people does not necessarily mean an early closure for staff.

When an early closure on account of severe weather conditions occurs the Head of Establishment must inform the Head of Estates Team within Property and Land Services section in writing of the circumstances immediately after the closure and make the appropriate entry in the log book.

General Points

1. After an emergency closure of whatever length, Heads of Establishment should confirm in writing to Education Services the action which was taken. The report should include:
 - i. the dates on which the school was affected and why;
 - ii. whether the closure was full or partial;
 - iii. dates and times where staff were dismissed before normal hours;
 - iv. any alternative arrangements to accommodate staff or children and young people;
 - v. any alterations to normal travel arrangements;
 - vi. days on which meals were not supplied;
 - vii. any special initiatives taken;
 - viii. any specific problems experienced.

2. Recording of attendance

Details of procedures for recording attendance in emergency situations are given in Management Circular No. 49.

3. Log Book

The decision to close in emergency situations and the action taken should be noted in the school log book or other official record.

4. Establishments other than schools

While the information contained in this Management Circular refers specifically to schools the same general principles should be applied as appropriate to other establishments.

I am sure that all Heads of Establishment will share my desire to maintain as full an educational service as possible in times of emergencies and that the interests of children and young people will be their first consideration. I know that Heads of Establishment and their staff have in the past shown considerable initiative and made great efforts to keep their schools open in the face of adverse circumstances and I hope that the terms of this Management Circular will allow our emergency procedures to operate quickly and efficiently.

Maureen McKenna
Executive Director of Education

Abnormal Temperatures

1. School heating systems are designed to standards which should ensure that room temperatures reach the levels indicated below when the outside air temperature is at freezing point.

Type of Accommodation	Temperature
Medical inspection room, shower and changing room, bathroom	18.5 °C (65.3 °F)
Teaching space, dining room, nursery room, common room and staff room and school office	17 °C (62.6 °F)
Assembly area, lecture hall, toilets, theatre and cinema	15.5 °C (59.9 °F)
Sickroom	14.5 °C (58.1 °F)
Cloakroom and corridors	13 °C (55.4 °F)
Gymnasia	13 °C (55.4 °F)
Games Hall	10 °C (50 °F)

2. On the relatively infrequent occasions when outside temperatures are below freezing point in the morning - and the indoor temperature is correspondingly lower - this should not in itself be regarded as a reason for sending children and young people home. Normally temperatures will rise during daylight hours.
3. Where there is a complete breakdown in the heating system or where the temperatures have not risen to those indicated in the above table by one hour after the start of the school day, Heads of Establishment should inform the City Building (Glasgow) LLP 24 hour service on **0800 595 595**, or in the case of PPP managed schools the 3ED (Amey) Helpdesk 0800 316 6115 of the fault (if the Janitor has not already done so) and should then act in accordance with this Management Circular.
4. From time to time the temperature in some parts of the school may rise above a maximum tolerable temperature limit. Temperature in itself is not an index of discomfort but other factors such as humidity, radiation, ventilation and length of exposure must be considered.

Where teaching staff have taken in advance of the situation, which can normally be anticipated, all reasonable precautions such as opening windows and doors, drawing curtains or blinds where available, it is recommended that when a temperature of 27°C (80.6°F), in the shade, has been experienced for a minimum of one hour, children and young people and staff can be withdrawn from that room. If the temperature rises considerably in excess of 27°C, evacuation should take place within a shorter period.

Early Closure of Schools in an Emergency

Provision of School Transport

The following arrangements, which have been agreed with Strathclyde Passenger Transport, should be implemented whenever the early closure of a school is rendered necessary by emergencies such as exceptionally severe weather or disruption to fuel supplies.

The Head of Establishment should phone their transport contact within Education Services headquarters who will make the necessary arrangements with the transport provider to arrange provision of transport at an earlier hour than that specified in the contract.

Phone Numbers of Officers to be contacted in an Emergency

Name of Officer	Designation	Phone Number
Maureen McKenna	Executive Director of Education	0141 287 4551
Jim Wilson	Area Head of Service North West	0141 287 4086
Gerry Lyons	Area Head of Service North East	0141 287 4561
Donnie MacLeod	Area Head of Service South	0141 287 4561
Colin Crawford	Head of Children's Services	0141 287 4561
David McClelland	Head of Resource	0141 287 4086