



School Closure Policy

November 2021

Approved by the Governing Body Strategy Group 18/11/21

**This Policy is due for renewal in Term 2
2023–24**

SCHOOL CLOSURE POLICY

OF

GODINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

The majority of this policy refers to the management of school closure for reasons other than those relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the past 18 months, the pandemic has had a significant impact on the opening of the school to all pupils. Further details relating to school closure due to Covid-19 are outlined in section five.

SECTION ONE – RATIONALE

Every effort will be made to keep the school open at all times, providing there is no threat to the health and well-being of any individual in doing so, and even if the facilities and resources available will only allow for the supervision of the pupils and are not sufficient to provide the normal level of education. The school is mindful of the effect which closure has on the ability of parents to attend their own places of work and the effect which school closure consequently has on other areas of society.

The school follows the advice of the Department for Education that: *“Schools should, wherever possible, stay open... They play a key role in their communities and by staying open help both their pupils and parents.”*

SECTION TWO – REASONS FOR SCHOOL CLOSURE

2.1 General Reasons for Closure

At all times every endeavour will be made to keep all or part of the school open to pupils. However in cases of events such as flooding, lack of water or heating, bad weather , industrial action taken by staff or National issue such as the impact of Brexit, the opening of the school may be compromised and closure of all or part of the school considered necessary. This decision will be made by the Headteacher or in their absence, by the Assistant Headteachers.

The school, or parts of the school will close if:

- Normal hygiene levels cannot be maintained. This will include if the school has no running water, or has no use of toilets or washing facilities for any other reason.
- It is impossible to ensure that all individuals can move around the site safely.
- It is impossible to maintain an acceptable temperature within the buildings.
- Insufficient staff can attend the school to ensure the health and safety of the pupils, particularly in the event of an emergency such as a fire.
- Industrial action or regional issues (e.g. significant traffic disruptions or road closures) means that there is insufficient staff to operate the school safely.

2.2 Risk assessments

The Headteacher will complete risk assessments in order to ensure all safety issues have been considered and alternative operational measures implemented. Only when this has been done will a decision be made to keep the school open or what extent of closure may be required.

Risk assessments will consider, amongst other factors:

- Can the Headteacher ensure enough teaching and/or supervisory staff to operate safely?
- Is the school building and site accessible?
- Where is the hazard located?
- Are heating and water systems working appropriately?

During the day, the Headteacher will review their risk assessment. It is expected that the school will remain open until normal time for the end of the school day. However if the revised risk assessment indicates that circumstances have changed to such an extent that the Headteacher believes conditions are now unsafe, early closure may be necessary.

The school will never be left completely unstaffed unless the Headteacher is certain that no child will present his/herself. A member of school staff will remain on site in case any children or staff arrive at the school after it has announced it is closed.

2.3 Bad Weather

The school takes proactive measures to ensure that it is prepared for operation during winter months of potential bad weather and to minimise the risk of closure. This includes long term planning:

- Ensuring that stocks of salt/grit/sand are adequate for the time of year and foreseeable weather;
- Ensuring water, boiler and heating systems are regularly maintained;
- Regularly maintaining the premises, car park and entrances;
- Assessing potential disruptions to staff journeys to work in the event of bad weather;

And shorter term measures:

- Regular checking of the weather forecast;
- Leaving heating on low settings overnight;
- Closing curtains and blinds night to retain heat;
- Closing doors between areas of differing temperatures;
- Keeping radiators clear of obstruction;
- Use grit or similar on areas prone to being slippery in frosty/icy conditions;
- Diverting pedestrians to less slippery walkways and barrier off existing ones;

- Restricting the movement of pupils and staff around the school grounds;
- Making alternative parking arrangements for staff.

The school will not direct a member of staff to drive in severe weather. However, the expectation is that staff will make every effort to attend school during severe snow and ice except in the most extreme cases where they can demonstrate a high degree of risk or by virtue of distance or terrain and absence of transport that it is simply not possible for them to attend.

The school may have to close, wholly or partially during periods of bad weather, if insufficient numbers of staff are unable to attend for it to operate safely and for children to be appropriately supervised.

SECTION THREE – PROCEDURE FOR SCHOOL CLOSURE

3.3 Procedure for Closure of the School due to Bad Weather

In advance of the winter season, the Headteacher will notify all parents of the school closure process in a newsletter. Parents will be informed that the Parent Mail system will be used to alert them to school closures and that they can go online to see if the school is closed at www.kentclosures.co.uk. The Kent Closures website offers the opportunity for parents to sign up for SMS or email alerts regarding school closure (SMS is a chargeable service). It will also display closures for a number of services including libraries, nurseries and Children's Centres. School closures will also be announced on KMFM, BBC Radio Kent and Heart FM.

On the morning of a day of severe weather, the caretaker will assess the school site to see if it is accessible. Staff will be expected to contact a member of the Senior Management Team by 7.00 a.m. if they are unable to safely attend school. If having completed a risk assessment, the Headteacher believes that an inadequate number of staff will be able to access the site to satisfactorily supervise the children, then the school will either close in entirety or will partially close. This decision will be taken by an Assistant Headteacher in the Headteacher's absence.

In the event that the school, or part of the school will be closed, parents will be notified at the earliest opportunity by ParentMail. An alert will also be put on the school website and on the Kent Closure website (this will trigger radio announcements).

Staff will also be alerted by ParentMail and be advised about the procedures being implemented. Those who are unable to attend school will be expected, where possible to complete work at home.

The Headteacher will also arrange for other stakeholders to be notified such as the After School Club, Nursery, Adult Education or club / activity providers.

Providing that the site can be accessed then the caretaker will place notices at all entrances to the school, informing parents of the closure. Local staff will attend the school and will supervise any children who are left unaccompanied, whilst arrangements are made for them to be collected. No child will be left unaccompanied at the school.

If the school is required to close early, parents will be advised as to the arrangements for this.

3.4 Procedure for Closure of the School due to Premises Issues

If the school suffers an overnight flood, loss of water, damage to the premises or loss of facilities the caretaker will inform the Headteacher straight away. The Headteacher will attend the school and decide on whether closure is required. If it is, the closure procedure will be initiated as outlined in section 3.3.

SECTION FOUR – INDUSTRIAL ACTION

In the event of proposed industrial action, the Headteacher will complete a risk assessment. This will aim to clarify whether sufficient staff will be in school in order for the school to operate safely. Dependent on the results of the risk assessment the school may be required to close or only open to specific classes of children. In the event of this, the Headteacher will take appropriate steps to ensure that parents are fully informed about any closures. The risk assessment will also outline steps to be taken on the day of industrial action in order to ensure that children are adequately supervised and that health and safety requirements (such as first aid provision) are met.

SECTION FIVE – OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MAY IMPACT ON SCHOOL OPENING

In all other circumstances in which the opening of the school may be compromised, the Headteacher will complete a risk assessment as outlined in section four above.

5.1 Covid-19

The ongoing Covid-19 situation has had a significant impact on the opening of the school to all pupils. The school will adhere to all National or local guidelines on the opening of the school to all pupils or to groups of pupils ‘bubbles’ in relation to Covid-19. This includes the management of the following (please note this list is not exhaustive):

- Which pupils may be able to attend school (vulnerable pupils, children of key

workers etc)

- How children may be required to remain in consistent groups of ‘bubbles’
- Which wider aspects of school life are able to operate and under what restrictions e.g. Breakfast club, extra-curricular activities
- The remote learning requirements for pupils
- The risk assessment requirements as outlined by the Government
- The expectations of staff working from home
- Information to be shared with parents

In some situations, staff absence due to Covid-19 may impact on the ability of the school to open to all classes if suitable cover options cannot be found.

Further guidance is provided to school in the DfE’s Operational Guidance to schools due to Covid-19.

5.2 Brexit

There is still uncertainty of the impact of Brexit on local roads, transportation, goods and services. To address these situations, the school has completed a risk assessment which highlights potential difficulties including contingency provision for waste collection and food supplies in order to ensure that the school can be as fully operational as possible.

Severe weather arrangements as outlined in section 3 will be implemented in all situations when school opening is compromised by staffing issues.

SECTION SIX – POLICY MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy is reviewed every two years. Policy review takes into account DfE guidance and the KCC document ‘Winter Planning Guidance for Schools in Kent’.

SECTION SEVEN – EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND RACIAL EQUALITY (Refer also to these specific policies)

At Godinton Primary School, we are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all members of our school community irrespective of race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy or maternity, marriage and civil partnership or socio-economic background. We are determined to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the school feel proud of their identity and ability to participate fully in school life.

We tackle discrimination through the positive promotion of equality by challenging stereotypes and by creating an environment that champions respect for all. At Godinton Primary School, we believe that diversity is a strength that should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit us.

All school policies have an explicit aim of promoting equality and will be reviewed in terms of their contribution and effectiveness in achieving this aim.