

January 2010

# **Enforced Closure of Schools and Children's Centres**

## **Guidance for Headteachers and Centre Managers**

In the majority of circumstances the Headteacher/Centre Manager will be the person best placed to judge whether a school should close or not depending on, for example, the severity of weather or any other significant impact on the school.

While it is expected that staff should make all reasonable efforts to get to work, without jeopardising their own safety, schools and children's centres should plan to have a range of learning and family activities for use when the normal timetable has to be disrupted.

Schools and children's centres are expected to stay open if at all possible – closure should take place only if health and safety is compromised, for example where staffing levels fall below a level to manage pupils or children's centre services effectively.

A school or children's centre can remain open even where the majority of children, customers and staff are unable to attend at all or cannot arrive at the usual time.

The fact that some or all of the school buses are cancelled is not in itself a reason for closure.

Where the Local Authority has information to suggest that the circumstances are so severe that it is unreasonable to remain open then the Local Authority may make a decision to close a group of schools/centres, or all schools/centres. This would be communicated to schools/centres by email and telephone.

## Recommended Procedure

1. If considering closure part way through the school/centre day, consult nearby Headteachers/Children's Centre Managers in an attempt to ensure consistency and co-ordination of action, particularly with regard to transport.
2. In the case of schools, the Headteacher should consult the Chair of Governors or Vice Chair and seek approval of their recommendation to close.
3. Schools must inform the Local Authority of your decision, by e-mail via XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX as soon as the decision to close is made. If you cannot send an e-mail please telephone XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. If your call is out of hours it will be diverted to the duty officer's mobile telephone. If your diverted call cannot be answered immediately, you will be able to leave a voice message.

Children's centres must contact the XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

4. If considering closure part way through the school/centre day, it is essential that you take appropriate action to ensure that information is circulated so that a parent/carer or a responsible person is available to receive the child(ren) at home. If you cannot contact any parent/carer it is vital that arrangements are made to care for the child at the school/centre.
5. Use all the means possible to communicate the closure of the school/centre and, when known, the date/time that the school/centre will reopen. Use of local radio stations is particularly effective, as well as use of the school's website, e-mail, or text alert system.

Radio stations will broadcast closures and re-openings on air regularly and update their own websites with information.

### **Your Confidential 'PIN' and Password**

A degree of security is necessary to ensure that radio stations only accept and broadcast details of closures/opening from an authorised source. To ensure this, the Headteacher/Centre Manager (or their approved substitute) must provide the radio station with:

- a four digit 'PIN', which is XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.
- In addition, schools and children's centres will need to give a password. The current password is: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

Needless to say, knowledge of these security details must be kept confidential to the Headteacher/Centre Manager and as few other staff as is absolutely necessary.

The contact details for the radio stations are:

Radio Wyvern	xxxxxxxxxxxxx	96.7/97.6/102.8 FM
Radio Hereford & Worcester	xxxxxxxxxxxxx	94.7/104/104.4/104.6 FM 738/1584 AM
Sunshine Radio	xxxxxxxxxxxxx	106.2/107/107.8 FM

6. Schools should contact the school meals service on XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX to inform them of the decision and contact them again when a date for reopening is known.
7. As soon as a date for reopening is known, this must be e-mailed to XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. If you cannot send an e-mail please telephone XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.
8. As soon as is practicable, complete the Enforced School Closure Form and send it to the address on the form.

### **Serious Incident out of normal hours**

If an emergency or a serious incident occurs out of office hours and you require access to an on-call duty officer, then please telephone XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. Your call will be diverted to an operator who will have access to all senior managers' out of hours contact details.