Planned School Closures

Guidance

January 2016
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1. **Background**

   This guidance is intended for headteachers and governing bodies. It provides details of best practice in planning and implementing additional school closure days.

   This guidance does not apply to emergency school closures as a result of extreme/adverse weather, fire, flood, failure of utilities, pandemics, epidemics or infestations, security alerts or any other event that warrants an emergency closure. Details of what to do in the event of an emergency closure are set out in Guidance for Schools for Emergency Closure.

2. **Legal Requirements**

   Governing Bodies and Head Teachers are reminded that the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the associated Regulations (The Education (School Day and School Year (England) Regulations 1999 (No 3181) require that schools should meet for not less than 380 sessions (190 days) for pupils.

   The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, Section 38, provides that the conduct of the school shall be under the direction of the Governing Body and that the Head Teacher is responsible for the management of the school. Therefore, the decision to close rests with the Head Teacher and Governing Body, but schools must consider the South Gloucestershire Council guidance and should liaise with the Local Authority (and for denominational schools, the appropriate Diocesan Authority).

3. **Possible Alternatives to Closure**

   Reasonable alternatives to closures should be considered and might include the use of one or more training days to ensure continuity of educational provision, the partial closure of a Key Stage or the use of alternative accommodation (e.g. in the church hall or another local school).

4. **The Process**

   There are some exceptional circumstances that may arise when it is necessary to plan additional school closures. The decision to close should not be taken lightly. Where there is any doubt concerning the health and safety of pupils and staff, then the Headteacher should take appropriate action. A process for achieving this is set out below.
The headteacher should:

(i) Seek advice from relevant professionals to ascertain whether the closure can be avoided. You may wish to discuss your plans with the LA in the first instance. Details should be emailed to Susannah.Hill@southglos.gov.uk.

(ii) Undertake a site specific risk assessment.

(iii) Discuss the proposed closure day(s) with the governing body and following this contact the Local Authority.

(iv) If, after due consideration, the school is deemed to be unfit to receive pupils, the headteacher to send details of the proposed closure day(s) to all parents and enable all interested parties to comment on the proposed change and specify:

• the alternative childcare arrangements made by the school;
• a suitable programme of work for pupils during closure or details to parents about how the lost teaching day(s) will be made up over the course of the academic year;

(v) Headteacher and governing body to consider any comments made and decide whether to implement the proposed change, with or without modification;

(vi) Headteacher to inform the LA and parents of additional planned school closure days at least three months before the planned closure. Details should be emailed to Susannah.Hill@southglos.gov.uk.

(vii) The Head Teacher/Chair of Governors should ensure that the closure is reported at the next full meeting of the Governing Body. In receiving the report on the closure, the Governing Body should ensure that:

• the circumstances giving rise to closure have been resolved.
• arrangements made by the school in the event of unavoidable closures are reasonable and satisfactory in respect of pupils, parents/carers, staff and the school community as a whole.
• steps have been taken to fulfil the requirements relating to the attendance of staff and pupils at the school in the academic year.

Note

Closures for Pre-Programmes Elections: The use of school premises for predictable or pre-programmed elections is not to be regarded as an acceptable reason for planned closure. The dates of elections should be built into the staff training (INSET) days. General and European elections The ‘Representation of the People Act 2000’ regulates such matters, for example, requirements to close all or part of the school, use of separate entrances etc. For details of whether your school is required as a polling station please contact the Electoral Services on 01454 863030 or email electoral.services@southglos.gov.uk.