

Reay Primary School

Emergency School Closure Policy

It is the policy of Reay to make every reasonable effort to remain open whenever possible. We recognise however that there are circumstances in which staying open would pose an unacceptable risk to pupils, staff, parents/carers or visitors. In such circumstances, the school may need to close partially or fully.

1. Unexpected events which could lead to possible temporary closure:

Environmental – examples: adverse weather (snow, ice, hurricanes); extreme heat; flooding; earthquake.

Utilities – e.g. a loss of power, water supply, no heating, gas leak

Infestation – e.g. rats

Disease – infectious diseases such as Covid, when they might be public health advice from the UK Health Security Agency

Building works – unplanned over-running of building works to the school premises

Critical incident – e.g. bomb threat, fire, terrorist threat (when the school would be advised by the police); this could be in a nearby location.

2. Decision making process

The decision to close the school rests with the head teacher and the Chair of Governors, or their deputies if they are not available.

The decision will be based on conducting a **full risk assessment** and **ascertaining the risk** to the welfare, health and safety of children, staff and parents.

The head teacher will also liaise with the local authority, although, as a Foundation School, the decision rests with the Governing Body.

3. Key factors to take into consideration

- a) The ability to maintain a safe staffing ration
- b) Consideration of staff health conditions
- c) Conditions on the school site
- d) Conditions affecting access to the school site.

4. Options short of closing the school

The head teacher will always consider options which can prevent closure. These include:

- Opening at an earlier or later time;
- Shortening the school day;
- Opening for vulnerable pupils, where attendance is essential to meet safeguarding, educational or welfare needs;
- Shortening breaks and lunch-time;
- Cancelling extra-curricular activities;
- Allowing children to come without uniform and to wear sun-cream (e.g. in heat wave).

5. Communication

If the decision is taken to close the school, parents/carers will be informed immediately, ideally the evening before closure, or as soon as possible, by:

- Email
- Text (SchoolComms)
- The school's website
- Potentially Class WhatsApp groups

In addition the school will communicate the situation to:

- Governors
- Staff (including those absent)
- Local Authority
- Suppliers/contractors due to visit the school during the period of closure.

If the school closes for more than one day, the head teacher will update parents daily on the situation and give as much notice as possible for the return to school.

In some cases, where it would not be dangerous, the school may take the decision to allow vulnerable children on site even when the school is officially closed. By 'vulnerable' this means children with EHCPs, children for whom the school provides critical care or where the school is the primary source of speciality care, or the pupil has other complex needs. In this case, parents are contacted individually.

Parents will also be informed about wrap-around care, planned excursions and what to do in the case of an emergency at home – e.g. the L.A. safeguarding team.

For clarity and to avoid confusion, school staff will be given clear instructions as to the situation, and parents will be informed to whom they should direct questions.

In the case of a critical incident, the police may demand that children leave the site before this is possible. In this case, children will be accompanied by staff to our partner school –

Van Gogh Primary. The headteacher and the premises officer will stay on Reay's site if required to by the police.

6. Absence reporting

Where the school closes officially pupil absence will be reported as authorised and marked with a Y4 code.

7. Returning to school

Before reopening, the Headteacher will ensure:

- The site is safe;
- Essential services have been restored;
- Any required inspections have been completed;
- Staff are informed of any revised procedures;
- Parents are notified of reopening procedures.

8. Review of the incident

Following any emergency closure, the Head Teacher and Governing Body will review:

- The reasons for closure;
- Effectiveness of communication;
- Lessons learned;
- Any amendments required to the policy.

9. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Governing Body or sooner following any emergency closure or significant change in statutory guidance.

Appendix: Blank risk assessment form.