

Schools Unavoidable Closure Guidance

1. Where a Headteacher makes the decision to close a school on the grounds of exceptional circumstances the major determining factor must be the safety and welfare of the children and employees. Under the terms of the relevant School Regulations, such a decision may only be made by the Headteacher and would have the status of an “unavoidable closure”.

Where at all possible schools should endeavour to speak to the LA before making a decision to close or partially close, however we recognise this is not always practical.

2. Typical school closure situations may include the following: -
 - Severe weather conditions or other emergency which makes staffing ratios unsafe.
 - Heating system failures (Boilers, flooding after leaks etc.)
 - Snow and ice (affecting access, egress, or movement around the building)
 - Public transport failure (resulting in staff and pupils not being able to get to work)
 - Flooding
 - Critical incidents (which may lead to a school closure)
 - Traumatic death or serious injury of a pupil or staff member on the premises
 - Outbreak of a serious communicable disease or disorder
 - Fire damage.
3. When an “unavoidable closure” is reported to the Tameside Council Education team an immediate decision will be made as to whether the incident constitutes a critical incident and needs an emergency response. In the context of a critical incident, a Tameside representative will liaise with the Headteacher, Governors and the staff of the school to provide the appropriate level of support.
4. Unavoidable school closures must be reported by the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher to Tameside MBC Education team who will log each school closure and the reason for this. You should report your school closure at the earliest opportunity by contacting school.liaison@tameside.gov.uk or by phone to Phil Mellen 07718277282 or the School Liaison Manager 0161 342 3246

If you are making a decision to close out of hours between **7pm** and **7am** please contact the Council’s Emergency Control Service on 0161 342 2222.

5. When reporting a closure please provide the following information.
 - Reason for closure
 - Whether whole or partial closure
 - Expected re-opening date.
 - A mobile phone contact number.
6. Where a closure results from weather, health, safety, or mechanical failure or threat, Headteachers should consider whether a partial or full closure is needed. The Headteacher must take all reasonable steps to alert parents and carers that the school will be closed. Such steps may include letters to parents, social media, information through local newspapers or radio stations, website notice, announcements on notice boards, letters or messages via siblings attending other local schools or, where practicable, contacting parents and carers by phone/text messaging service.
7. Children (including secondary school children) should not be sent home unless parents, carers or official contacts have been notified and it is clear that they are aware of the arrangements. It is better for children to be kept in school whatever the circumstances, rather than to be at potential risk.
8. Where possible, facilities should be made available on site, or elsewhere, to accommodate pupils whose parents/carers have not received the message, or who for some other reason have

sent a child to school. Such pupils should be appropriately supervised and where practicable the facilities for the provision of school meals should be available.

9. Schools should seek advice from HR services regarding the arrangements for staff as a result of closure. Dependent on the reason for the school closure and subject to a risk assessment, there may be work activity that can still be undertaken by staff within the workplace or at home.
10. Where practicable and appropriate, subject to a risk assessment, arrangements should be made available for staff to continue to carry out their duties and responsibilities. With regard to teaching staff, any such time may be treated as “gained time” under the terms of the section 133 Regulations of the Education Act 2003 and may be directed by the Headteacher.
11. When seeking advice on preparations for the anticipated impact of serious weather conditions Headteachers should alert staff of the need to make appropriate arrangements to ensure that they are in school at the normal start times. Access / egress / playground areas should be prepared in order to ensure the safety of pupils and staff and headteachers should make the necessary arrangements to have grit/salt supplies on site, to be distributed by school site maintenance staff. Grit supplies should be pre-ordered, or if you require a gritter to clear the school grounds / access routes, please contact jessica.henderson@tameside.gov.uk or call 0161 342 3978 or by completing the on-line request form on the ‘Winter Gritting’ page of TMBC website.
12. Where staffing allows, schools closed or partially closed should implement a remote learning offer for pupils who are not able to attend.

Tameside MBC Emergency Control – out of hours	0161 342 2222	
Phil Mellen Head of Education Improvement and Partnerships	07718277282	phil.mellen@tameside.gov.uk
Joanne Rendell School Liaison Manager	0161 342 3246	joanne.rendell@tameside.gov.uk