

## Schools Closures - Guidance for Schools - 2009

In the event of an emergency occurring, or in severe weather conditions, the decision about whether to close the school is made by the Headteacher in consultation with the Chair of Governors. It is policy on the Island not to declare a blanket closure. It is based on local conditions, and often depends on whether enough teachers have been able to get to the school to ensure pupil safety. Some might be able to open, others nearby might be forced to close. Where members of teaching staff are unable to get to their own school, they should telephone the nearest school to their home address to offer what help they can.

### What happens during severe weather?

When a school decides to close, the Headteacher telephones one of the following LA officers:

John Brocklehurst – 863681 or 07970 009769; or

Josie Clark – 520331 or 0775 2468911.

Alternatively, from 8am, depending on conditions, a member of staff should be available at County Hall on 823099 Ext 6441.

It is vital the local authority is informed of a decision **at the earliest possible opportunity and no later than 7.30am**. Schools are required to **always** contact the local authority (using the contact numbers above) and provide information on the status of the school, **even if the school is remaining open**.

Once the report of a school closure has been notified, the information will be passed to the Council's Communications Team, who will contact the local media and will regularly update a school closures list on the [www.iwight.com](http://www.iwight.com) website. Because there are numerous media organisations based on the Island and in the south region, it is vital you do not contact the media. This is to ensure correct and up to date information is broadcast in a coordinated and consistent manner and eliminates the situation where one media outlet will be broadcasting differing information to the official school closure list or other media outlets, which creates confusion and misinformation. Parents should be instructed to tune into Isle of Wight Radio for the latest information, but also advised that the [www.iwight.com](http://www.iwight.com) website can be used as a source for quickly checking the status of schools.

Headteachers should also arrange for a brief note to be written, giving their reasons for the closure, to be forwarded to the Director of Children & Young People as quickly as possible.

### Who else needs to be informed?

It is the Headteachers responsibility to inform the head of the school kitchen or supplying kitchen (Jo Ewell – 07970 009593) and the County Transport Manager (Jonathan Lamb – 823710) if school transport is involved.

### What if a building emergency arises?

In respect of any building emergency that may arise, contact should be made to either:

Barry Cook, Head of Property Services – 823266 (office) or 07976 009291; or

David Watts, Corporate Buildings Manager – 823294 (office) or 07970 009772; or

### **What if the school needs to close whilst in session?**

In the event of an emergency or inclement weather occurring whilst the school is in session, it is for the Headteacher to decide whether and when, in the interests of safety and welfare of children, it is necessary to close the school and make arrangements to get the children home. Headteachers should consider alternatives to closure before sending all pupils home. It may be the case that only those pupils travelling by bus or those living in rural areas and areas more seriously affected by adverse weather, need to be sent home early or, in the event of staff absence, those pupils whose parents can collect them.

In addition, if the Headteacher feels that there is no alternative but to close the school, the following factors will need to be borne in mind:

- The safety and welfare of children must be the prime consideration.
- Only in very exceptional circumstances should a school be closed before children have taken their mid-day meal.
- Heads of primary and middle schools in particular will wish to satisfy themselves that no child is sent away from school to an empty home.
- It is the Head Teacher's responsibility to inform the head of the school kitchen or supplying kitchen and the County Transport Manager (Tel: 01983 823710) if necessary.
- An attempt should be made to contact any expected callers.

Once a decision is taken to close, a member of school staff should call the Local Authority (on one of the numbers listed above) to advise of the decision. The Local Authority will inform the media and arrange for the information to be added on the [iwight.com](http://www.iwight.com) website.

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