

Rationale

The procedures outlined in this policy are designed to ensure that in the event of a critical incident or a situation that requires the closure of the school:

- All members of staff know what to do in the interest of pupil and staff safety / well being
- Appropriate actions are taken to manage the situation
- Appropriate support (emotional or practical) is given, if needed, to any pupils, staff or parents affected by a critical incident
- Effective steps are taken to ensure that normal school operations are resumed as soon as possible.

This policy is written in accordance with 'Emergencies in Schools Central Bedfordshire guidance 2014.

Risk Management

No plan or set of procedures can predict or plan in detail for every possible incident that could take place. The school, in conjunction with the Governors however, will regularly review this protocol and the basic agreed procedures agreed in the light of new situations or updated LA advice.

School closure due to adverse weather

Although the policy for all schools in Central Bedfordshire is to remain open whenever possible, the school has a duty to care for the safety of children and staff. The Headteacher, in consultation with the school Governors, may decide to close the school in extreme weather if the weather conditions are so severe that it is dangerous for children and staff to travel safely to, or from, school. The three FARM schools in the Alameda pyramid - Firs, Alameda, Russell and Maulden work closely together and follow these agreed procedures:

a) Scenario One. Extreme weather conditions at start of the school day

The Headteachers from all four schools will consult before the start of the school day, if they judge that it may be a risk for children and staff to travel to school. (The chair of Governors in each school will be kept informed). Where possible, a joint decision will be taken on whether to close or not. (Sometimes the individual situation for the different schools may make a joint decision impossible). Official announcements will be made once a decision has been taken (see below).

The school will endeavour to inform parents of a school closure before 8:00 am.

b) Scenario Two. Closure during the school day.

If insufficient numbers of staff report to school and the school is unable to operate safely, then it may be necessary to contact parents, so that a sizable majority of children can be sent home.

If the weather deteriorates significantly during the day, Headteachers from the four schools will consult one another and if possible, reach a joint decision on whether to stay open or close. (The Chair of Governors will be kept informed). Again, differences in individual circumstances may mean that different decisions are taken for the three schools. Official announcements will be made once the decision has been taken.

A skeleton staff will be maintained on-site to supervise children awaiting collection. **No child will be released early from school until a parent or carer has collected him or her.**

The Firs Lower School School Closure Protocols

There are other scenarios which could lead to a school closure e.g. fire, flood, failures of heating/water systems etc. which might be individual to one school and in this event, the same methods of informing parents will be followed.

The agreed methods of informing parents and staff are;

- **School website:** www.firslower.co.uk
- **Email:** The office holds all parent email contacts and all staff have a school email account
- **Central Bedfordshire School Open Status web page:** The school will update the SOS system and regularly share access details with parents so that they can check on line to see if the school is open or closed. <https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/webapps/sos/>
- **Local radio stations:** BBC Three Counties Radio 95.5FM 01582 637444 and Heart Radio 97.6FM 01582 676240– (The Education Emergency Code word will be required).
- **SMS:** Additionally parents who have agreed to participate in the text messaging system will receive a text message on their mobile phones. (This method will also be used for staff)
- **Staff WhatsApp account:** Majority but not all staff participate - to be used to back up other methods listed here.

(In other circumstances where the school needs to close e.g. flu outbreak, building related issues etc. the same procedures will be followed)

Other Critical Incidents

1) Evacuating the site/lockdown procedures

In the event of a major emergency during school hours, ensuring the safety and well being of children and staff should take precedence over all other considerations.

If the need for evacuation arises, the school will follow its Emergency Plan procedures

2) Flu and Pandemic Outbreaks

The school will follow guidance from the DfE and Central Bedfordshire LA in formulating a response to pandemics or other infectious diseases. For detailed information on the procedures the school would follow the 'Pandemic Protocols'.

Media Communication

If the school is approached by journalists seeking information about a critical incident / emergency situation, they will be referred, in the first instance, to the Central Bedfordshire council Press Office (0300 300 8701 or out of hours 07825034787).

Only once advice / guidance has been obtained from the Press Office will the school issue any form of public statement to parents / press, following an emergency situation / critical incident.

Any statement will be released jointly by the headteacher (or next most senior member of staff available) and Chair of Governors (or Vice Chair).