



The **GALLERY TRUST**

A community of special schools

Emergency School Closure

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Introduction

Within the limitations set out by statutory guidance and health and safety legislation and wherever possible, Springfield School will remain open during the school day to deliver education to its pupils. However, the Head Teacher [or an Deputy/Assistant Head in their absence] is authorised by The Gallery Trust Board of Trustees to make the decision to **declare an emergency closure when exceptional circumstances make it absolutely necessary and in the best interests of the pupils.**

The Head Teacher will inform the Gallery Trust immediately of any emergency closure. The health and safety of pupils and staff will always be paramount in decision making. Decision making will be based on a full and detailed risk assessment and will include consideration of what options are available, for example full or partial closure, changing opening and closing times etc.

Emergency closure of the school

The following factors will be considered in coming to any decision to close Springfield School for exceptional/emergency reasons. These include:

1. Health and Safety Requirements (including adverse weather conditions):

key questions for consideration include:

- Can enough staff attend the school to ensure the safe and efficient running of the school?
- Have local weather forecasts and road conditions, including those for areas from which staff will be travelling, been reviewed to assist in planning for potential staff absence?
- Can pupils and staff access the school building safely?
- Can pupils and staff be evacuated in an emergency?
- In an emergency, can the Emergency Services access the school?
- Is the area designated for disembarkation from transport safe for pupils?

2. Pupil/Teacher/Support Staff Ratios: key questions for consideration include:

- If a number of staff cannot attend, is the number of staff available for work acceptable to run the school efficiently and safely given the needs of pupils?
- Does the pupil staff ratio indicate that there could be a partial school closure or a full school closure?

3. School closures as the result of a pandemic (for example COVID -19)

- Schools *may* have to close because insufficient appropriately trained and specialist staff are available to ensure the safety of pupils *or* because of a central decision to close all schools in an area. Schools have always had to be ready to respond at short notice to the need for emergency closures for one reason or another. ***The difference is that the frequency, length and significance of these episodes may be greater than previously experienced.***
- Local decisions about whether or not to close schools should be based on the number of appropriately trained staff available to ensure that the health and safety of pupils is not compromised. Judgements about how many staff are needed to ensure the safety of particular numbers of pupils will need, as ever, to be made locally, taking account of the nature of pupils concerned, including their medical, behavioural and pastoral needs, and the number of staff available.
- The consequences of large-scale school closures are significant given the consequences for parents/carers who would otherwise be at work. Closure will always be regarded as a last resort and the school is committed to following guidance from the Department for Education and Public Health England.

There will be some circumstances where both sites are required to close and some where only one site may be affected e.g. no access to water or heating.

Communicating the decision to close the school.

The Head Teacher [or Deputy/Assistant Head in their absence], will carry out a risk assessment and the decision to close will be made wherever possible by 7:15 am or at the earliest possible opportunity and communicated to the school's Integrated Transport provider, and parents via Parentmail. In the event of a whole school closure BBC Radio Oxford, Heart FM and Jack FM will also be informed. The school's website will also be updated with information to parents and where possible when the school is likely to be reopening.

Information about emergency and planned school closures is published on the County Council website <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/schoolclosures>. This is the main source of up-to-date countywide information about school closures and is a key resource especially in times of widespread closures, for example, as a result of severe weather.