



Policy No: 20c(5)

## OUR LADY'S ABINGDON (OLA) EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSURE POLICY

*This policy, which applies to the whole school, is publicly available on the school website and upon request a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from school.*

### Document Details

Information Sharing Category	Public Domain
Version	1
Date Published	September 2021
Authorised by (if required)	Governing Board
Review / Update Date	September 2022
Responsible Area	Head and leadership team

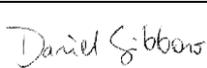
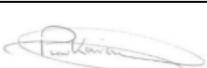
We comply with the Government guidance and regulations, currently in force, regarding COVID.

**Availability:** This policy applies to all activities undertaken by the school, inclusive of those outside of the normal school hours and away from the school site and is inclusive of all staff (teaching, support and agency staff), pupils on placement, contractors, the Chief Executive Officer, the Advisory Board and volunteers working in the school. All who work, volunteer or supply services to our school have an equal responsibility to understand and implement this policy being required to state that they have read, understood and will abide by this policy and its procedural documents and confirm this by signing the *Policies Register*.

### Monitoring and review:

- This document will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Head.
- This policy was last reviewed agreed by the Governing Board in September 2021 and will next be reviewed no later than September 2022 or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Signed:

Head	Chief Operating Officer (COO)	Chair of Governors
Mr Daniel Gibbons	Mr Prav Karian	Freddy El Turk
Signed: 	Signed: 	Signed: 

### 1. Aims

To achieve a smooth and efficient closure of OLA should it be necessary in an emergency. The Head is authorised to make an emergency closure when exceptional circumstances make it absolutely necessary and in the best interests of the pupils.

The following will be considered in coming to any decision to close OLA for exceptional reasons:

- Health and Safety Requirements
- Pupil/Teacher Ratios
- Weather and Road Conditions

Examples of situations where OLA might consider closure might be: breakdown in the heating; frozen or burst pipes; inaccessibility of roads and/or the site due to very heavy snowfall or other adverse conditions. Decisions will be made on the

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basis of information received from the media about weather, supplemented by on-the-spot observation, either personally or from staff members better placed to make such observations, and through appropriate external agencies such as the Met Office and Oxfordshire County Council. The decision to close or partially close OLA can only be made by the Head who has knowledge 'on the ground' of OLA, in consultation with the COO and Chair of Governors wherever possible. The decision should be based on: *access to essential services* (heating, water etc), *staffing levels*, *transport safety*, and *site safety*.

The decision-making process should consider:

- The health and safety of pupils, staff and volunteers which should always be paramount
- The option of closing the school to just some year groups and/or changing the opening and closing time if either will avoid complete closure
- The option of offering a reduced curriculum provision as an alternative to closure
- advice from the police and other agencies about travel conditions and conditions around the school;
- advice from the local authority, as appropriate;
- access to the school site for pedestrians, drivers and emergency vehicles and safety of the site;
- availability of staff.

Red warnings are issued by the Met Office where exceptionally severe weather is forecast and a danger to life exists. Where a red warning is issued, it will be difficult to justify opening a school and careful thought will go into any decisions.

The Head and members of the Leadership Team, in consultation with relevant staff eg COO, Health and Safety Officer will:

1. Identify the hazards posed by different possible situations.
2. Decide who might be harmed and how.
3. Evaluate the risk and determine the precautions.
4. Record and communicate findings.
5. Review and revise as necessary.

## **2. Overview of procedures for closure**

- The decision to close OLA (or part of the School) in an emergency rests with the Head and Chief Operating Officer (COO), or, in the Head's absence, the Deputy Head, or, in their absence, a member of the Leadership Team.
- The Leadership Team will convene, either in person, or by phone, to assess the information and make a decision.
- The Head will confirm the precise information that is to be given to staff and parents/guardians.
  - The Assistant Head (Pastoral and DSL) is responsible for informing Heads of Section, who in turn inform Form Tutors and Form teachers (in Lower School).
  - The Deputy Head will inform all other teaching staff.
  - The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is responsible for informing all non-teaching staff.
  - The Head will notify parents using one of the four lines of communication ( website, parent portals, iSAMS and social media).
  - If the internet has been affected by the emergency situation, parents will be contacted by iSAMS SMS Messenger.
- Reasons for the closure, and any other decisions or plans, will be clearly but briefly outlined, with the guidance received from the Head.
- Where a closure is anticipated, (e.g. in the event of extreme weather conditions) a decision will be made, if possible, before 6.15 am.
- In all circumstances, information will be available on the website, the parent portals, through iSAMS and social media.
- Members of LT will come to School, where possible, to assist with organisation and will telephone other staff if more help is needed, e.g. to supervise any pupils who may arrive.
- Following the emergency closure of OLA, the Head will set in motion a similar procedure for informing parents/guardians when it will re-open, if this was not already established, or an alternative procedure communicated when the original messages were sent.

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### 3. Closure during the school day

Closing the school during the school day creates numerous issues. Therefore, the Leadership Team monitors weather forecasts and other factors, such as planned cessation of public transport. If severe weather disruption is likely to occur during the day, OLA will consider closing the school before the normal start time even if the current conditions are acceptable. On occasions, it may be necessary for OLA to close during the school day, ie if the weather is deteriorating and there is doubt as to whether children can return home safely later in the day, or due to health and safety considerations.

The safety of pupils is important. Those who cannot be sent home will require supervision until such time as they can be collected. However, the health, safety and welfare of staff is equally important. It is therefore unreasonable to expect all staff to remain on site to supervise pupils and staff should also be enabled to leave the premises as soon as reducing pupil numbers allows. This should be done on an assessment of relative risk, e.g. to determine who is at greatest risk to safety, such as those with the longest journeys or disabled staff. Staff who will remain to ensure the safety of pupils are identified before any adverse weather event as part of the planning for adverse weather.

Local conditions can vary widely in adverse weather events and OLA will have plans in place to send staff and pupils home during the day if it becomes apparent that risks to safety are increasing at their home location even if conditions around the School are acceptable.

In cases of closure during the school day, OLA will ensure that children are collected from school and the following process will be actioned:

- **All pupils will be asked to go to their form rooms to receive any notices about the closure** and to collect any books and materials they might need for remote learning.
- **The Business Manager will contact the bus providers to:**
  - a) Seek advice on the state of the roads in the case of deteriorating weather
  - b) arrange an earlier bus service, if possible
- **Communications to parents will be sent** in some or all of the following ways:
  - iSAMs e-mail communication
  - iSAMs SMS Messenger (in the event of a internet outage)
  - notification on the parent portal and website
  - notification via Classcharts
- **In the case of deteriorating weather, staff will assist pupils** in making their way to the Barton Field pick-up point
- **Staff will be assigned to supervise pupils** whose parents are unable to pick up immediately
- **A 'closed' sign is put up on the OLA main gate** once the school is closed.

### 4. Closure overnight with school not open in the morning:

In cases of closure before the school day starts, the following process will be actioned:

- **The Head or COO will contact the Business Manager** to inform about the decision to close
- **The Business Manager will contact the bus providers to:**
  - c) Seek advice on the state of the roads in the case of deteriorating weather
  - d) Cancel any morning bus services to pick up points and afternoon pick up from OLA
- **Communications to parents will be sent** in some or all of the following ways:
  - iSAMs e-mail communication
  - iSAMs SMS Messenger (in the event of a internet outage)
  - notification on the parent portal and website
  - notification via Classcharts

Where a closure is anticipated, (e.g. in the event of extreme weather conditions) a decision will be made, if possible, before 6.15 am.

- **Announcement of the closure will be posted** on the OLA website, parent portal etc

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- **Staff and/or a notice will be posted at the school gates** to help prevent pupils from being left by parents at the start of the school day if possible.
- **OLA will ensure that the site is appropriately staffed** to deal with any pupils who arrive at school unescorted until parents or emergency contacts can collect the pupils;
- **OLA will do its best to ensure that during office hours the school telephone is staffed** as far as possible even if the school is closed. This is especially important regarding dealing with enquiries from parents. However, we cannot guarantee that reception will be staffed or the phone will be answered.
- **A 'closed' sign is put up on the OLA main gate** once the school is closed.

#### **5. Safeguarding precautions on closure**

No pupil will be allowed to leave the OLA site unless the school is aware that an identified adult will be available to supervise him/her at their destination. It may be that a parent who collects his/her children offers to give shelter to other children. The agreement of the parents of these children must be given before pupils are released in this way. We will ensure that adequate supervision by members of teaching staff will be made for those pupils who cannot go home or to their emergency destination immediately and therefore have to remain at school.

#### **6. Covid-19 and adverse weather**

Covid-19 risk assessments must not be varied or virus precautions reduced due to adverse weather conditions. Indeed, it may be necessary to conduct a review and/or rewrite the existing risk assessment.

#### **7. Continuity of learning**

In the event of school closure, OLA will set in motion its remote learning arrangements. Work will be set on Teams for each lesson and a link will be sent to pupils for any live taught parts of the lesson through either a Teams meeting or a Zoombot meeting. All pupils will need to abide by the *Remote Learning Responsible User Agreement*. Other relevant documents are OLA's *Remote Learning Policy*, *Remote Learning FAQ's* and *Remote Learning 10 Point Consistency*. Some lost lesson time will be inevitable due to travel time for pupils. Attendance expectations will be clearly set out to parents and pupils in any communications related to the emergency closure. Attendance in lessons will be recorded in the usual way through iSAMs. If the emergency closure happens during the school day, pupils will be encouraged to take any relevant books and lesson resources home with them from their lockers.

#### **8. Travel to and from school**

Parents should be aware that it is their responsibility to make sensible decisions on behalf of their children when weather conditions are severe. Parents are responsible for the safety of their children to and from the school. OLA must make sure all coach, minibuses and car operators are informed of the decision to close. Transport operators are responsible for deciding if transport can be provided according to weather conditions etc

#### **9. Emergency contacts**

Parents must give OLA an emergency contact point. Data Check sheets are distributed annually to all parents. Parents are required to complete and return the forms promptly. If the forms are not returned the previous year's form will be annotated as such and kept on file. Information on emergency contacts is held securely within iSAMs. It is essential that parents keep the school up-to-date with any change in their contact details.

#### **10. Staff attendance**

Although it is recognised that severe weather conditions make it difficult for staff to get to and from work, unless advised to the contrary by the Head, then the expectation is that staff will present themselves for work, if they can do so safely. Therefore, if the school is open as usual, staff should make all reasonable efforts to get into work. This means assessing the availability of public transport or, if they normally drive to work and are unable to do so, considering the feasibility of walking to work if they live relatively close and are fit and able to do so. There is no expectation that teachers will walk miles in severe conditions to get to work. Catering and Cleaning Staff also need to be advised of any emergency requirements.

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If there are severe weather warnings in the area in which the teacher lives and the police and other agencies are advising people not to travel, teachers affected will need to contact their head to discuss the situation. It may be that OLA is open but some pupils and staff are unable to get into school. The Head will need to assess the staff-to-pupil ratio to ensure that they are able to operate safely. It may be that they will need to advise that some groups of pupils remain at home. The Head conducts a health and safety risk assessment.

#### **11. Clearance of snow**

Within the school site, OLA is responsible for snow clearance and the clearing of approach paths is the specific task of the facilities team. When severe weather is forecast, a member of the facilities team should be tasked to lay salt and grit on arrival. The clearance of public roads is the responsibility of the Roads Service.

#### **12. Break and lunch times**

If there is any question of children's safety being at risk during break-time and lunch-time whereby the outside area is deemed unsafe, OLA has a responsibility in inclement weather to keep the children indoors.

#### **13. Services**

All of the service providers who will be affected by the closure will be informed as soon as possible, once families and staff have been contacted.

#### **14. Monitoring and review**

The Head will monitor implementation of this policy. OLA Emergency Closure Policy will be evaluated and reviewed in line with any new Department of Education Guidelines/Reports and in keeping with any additional practices and procedures.

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