

13. Emergency Closure

Statement of intent

Whilst we will endeavour to maintain a full service and cause the minimum disruption to our Playschool provision, we may from time to time be forced to close the Playschool due to circumstances beyond our control. The decision to close the Playschool is not taken lightly and will be based on the assessment of a number of factors and information. This may include weather and travel, access to and conditions of the Playschool, infection outbreaks and availability of appropriate levels of qualified staff. Ultimately, the decision to open or close the Playschool will be made by the Manager/Committee Chair and every effort will be made to contact all parent/guardians and staff as soon as is practicably possible.

Aim

Polesden Lacey Playschool will aim to remain open. When this is not possible, we will communicate relevant information to parent/guardians and staff effectively and efficiently using the contact details held by the Playschool.

Practice

An emergency closure is an event or circumstance which happens with or without warning that causes or threatens injury to people, disruption to Playschool operations, or damage to property or the environment. The following procedures will be followed wherever possible:

- If a decision to close is made before the day of closure or before 7.00 am on the day of closure, all parent/guardians will be emailed and sent a WhatsApp message accordingly at the time of the decision;
- In addition, we would endeavour to place a notice on the front gate of the school advising parents of the closure.
- If a decision to close is made on the day of closure after 7.00 am, all parent/guardians will be contacted by WhatsApp or telephone accordingly.;
- The decision for ongoing closures will be assessed on a daily basis;
- Ofsted will be consulted and kept informed of all emergency closures;
- If we are required to temporarily relocate during a Playschool session due to an emergency, we will inform parent/guardians by WhatsApp or telephone accordingly;
- In the event of prolonged closures, we will use every means at our disposal e.g. notices on the Playschool/school door, website, email, WhatsApp, Facebook page, to ensure that the community is aware of the up to date situation.
- An up to date record of emergency contact details for each child and staff member will be kept in the Playschool and on SharePoint.
- The Surrey Early Years Effectiveness Team will be advised.

We may implement the emergency closure of the Playschool under the following circumstances:

- fire damage
- flood
- power cut
- snow and ice
- high level of sickness among staff and/or children
- pandemic
- burglary
- lockdown due to an intruder
- death of a child or adult in the setting
- terrorist attack

Fire damage

Depending on the level of fire damage, the Manager will need to inform parent/guardians as to whether the setting will remain open, whether it is necessary to temporarily close the setting or whether temporary alternative accommodation can be arranged. Any fire which results in suspension of normal working activities for more than 24 hours should be reported to the Health and Safety Executive under RIDDOR requirements. An incident report will be filled out and filed within the risk assessment file.

Flood

Flooding can be caused by an internal plumbing problem, a pipe bursting for instance, or by an external problem such as a burst water main or severe weather conditions. Should an evacuation of the premises be necessary during the day because of flooding, we would follow the fire procedure and take the children to a place of safety. Children and staff should not return to the setting until all areas and equipment have been thoroughly cleaned and restored to their normal condition.

Power cut

There may be a loss of electricity due to external problems such as damage to power lines caused by bad weather or vandalism. To be prepared in the event of a power cut, we use a mobile phone, and emergency contact numbers where staff can easily access them. The children and staff will only be evacuated if there is a risk of harm and loss of heating.

Snow and ice

The Manager will assess the risks to staff and children and make the decision whether to close. When the decision to close has been made we will follow the above procedure. It is possible in the event of snow to predict and prepare parents for potential closures in advance. This is done by announcing our procedure for closure and informing parent/guardians. Should there be a heavy snowfall during the day; parents will be contacted and the request made for them to collect their children early. This should provide time for parents, children and staff to get home safely.

High levels of sickness among staff and children

Infections can spread easily when young immune systems are still developing, children are sharing activities and play closely together. Although most cases of illness in the setting will be minor, some infections have serious health implications. In all cases, infections need to be managed effectively by the setting to prevent an outbreak. This may mean short term closures. The Manager will monitor the length of the outbreak and decide when to safely restart suspended activities. This will help us to identify recurring patterns in illness and identify whether the illness is new or a continuation of a previous outbreak. Closures may also be necessary if staff become ill and there are not enough practitioners to maintain ratios determined by The Early Years Foundation Stage (2024) Statutory Welfare Requirements.

Pandemic

It is possible during a national emergency, such as a pandemic where an illness spreads quickly throughout the country infecting large numbers of people, that the government will decide that it is in the best interests of the welfare of adults and children for schools and childcare settings to temporarily close. A plan for responding to a pandemic is in place and our local authority keeps us up to date with any national guidance for planning an emergency response as it is released. On all occasions, the Playschool will follow government guidelines.

Burglary

Children will be kept away from the area and once police give permission, the damage should be repaired. Where there is extensive damage or disruption to the premises, it may be necessary to temporarily close the setting while repairs take place. If this is the case, parent/guardians, staff

and Ofsted should be informed as soon as possible. An incident report should be completed and filed in the risk assessment folder.

We consider the security of the setting when carrying out risk assessments of the premises. There is a burglar alarm and security lights around the building to deter break-ins. Doors, windows and gates are well maintained and staff always ensure all doors are secure before they leave. School keys are kept with the school caretaker and the school bursar.

Intruder lockdown

An intruder lockdown may take place where there is a perceived risk of threat to the Playschool. Please see Lockdown Policy for more information.

Death of a child or adult in the setting

When an unexpected or sudden death occurs in the setting it is extremely distressing for the staff and children.

If a child or adult dies unexpectedly in the setting, the staff should call 999 immediately and follow the advice of the emergency services; moving the other children and adults to a place of safety. The police will normally inform the individual's next of kin. We would follow the instructions of the police while they collect evidence and carry out their investigation, and would check with the police as to what information can be given to the staff and families at this time. When carrying out an investigation into the circumstances of the death of a child, the police will work closely with Surrey Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

The Manager should report any deaths that occur in relation to their work activities to Health and Safety Executive and Ofsted as soon as possible, and comply with their investigations and any actions they advise.

Coping with the shock and grief following a sudden death will be difficult for all at the setting. The Child Bereavement UK provides advice on ways to support children and adults who have been affected by death and can be contacted on 01494 558900.

A terrorist attack

In the event of a terrorist attack, where staff and children are at the scene of the incident they should stay together and follow the advice of the emergency services at the scene, who will be working to evacuate the area and treat the wounded or injured. If on an outing, the outing leader would contact parent/guardians to advise them of the situation.

Should we be asked to vacate the premises the children and staff will be moved to the bottom of Oakdene Close.

An incident form should be completed and filed in the risk assessment file.

Policy Review

As part of Polesden Lacey Playschool monitoring of emergency closing this policy will be subject to periodic review.

Policy adopted by: Ellie Pragnell (Chair), Caroline O'Leary (Manager)

Date: September 24

Policy Review Date: September 25