



SCHOOL CLOSURE GUIDANCE

This policy will be reviewed annually or in response to changes in legislation		
Created	December 2022	Head of Compliance, COO
Last Review	November 2023	Head of Compliance, COO
Approved	December 2023	Operations Board, Education Board

This Policy applies to all Thomas's Schools.

Thomas's London Day Schools operates as a united group of schools with a similar ethos and values and as such is referred to as a singular body.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with Thomas's Health and Safety Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Whole school closure during severe weather conditions, such as extreme heat, flooding, storms, or snow will only be undertaken as a last resort. Every effort will be made to keep the school open during periods of severe weather. However, there may be occasions, in the interests of health and safety for staff and pupils, where the school site is closed temporarily.

These could include, but are not limited to, unavailability of facilities due to significant damage (storm damage, flooding, frozen or burst pipes, breakdown in heating etc.), large scale staff absence or extreme weather conditions.

The school will remain open unless conditions are so difficult that the majority of staff and pupils are unable to get to school or it is considered a health and safety risk to have or to keep pupils in school. The decision for school closure rests with the Head who will consult with the COO and Proprietor before making a final decision.

2. PROCEDURES

2.1 Making a decision to close the school

Decisions to close will need to take into account an individual school's particular context i.e. distance staff have to travel; site-specific issues regarding safety, supervision and access to teaching spaces. It may be useful for Thomas's schools to liaise before making a decision but each school's circumstances will differ considerably.

In considering closure the following will be taken into account:

- advice from police, the local authority and other agencies about travel conditions and whether it is safe for significant numbers of pupils and staff to travel to and from school;
- access to the school site for pedestrians, drivers and emergency vehicles;
- statutory requirements related to supervision ratios;
- whether it is possible to re-organise timetables to provide education safely. This might involve partial closure, late opening or early closure as an option. Transport issues will need to be taken into account.

Schools are not responsible for the journeys which pupils have to undertake on their way to or from school. This is a parental responsibility and should not inform decision making. Schools will consider safety regarding the need for an early school closure.

2.3 Closure where severe weather conditions are known in advance

Where it is known or evident that conditions are too poor for the school to open and the school is aware of this the day before, all parents will be informed of closure before the end of the school day. Announcements and updates will be made on TomCom and posted at the earliest opportunity or at the latest by 3.30pm.

Regular updates will then continue to be posted and notice will be given to parents advising them when the school will reopen.

2.4 School closed in the event of poor weather overnight

Where weather conditions deteriorate overnight, the site will be inspected as early as possible and a decision whether to open or close the school will be communicated via TomCom as early as possible and by 7am at the latest.

If bus pick ups have commenced, the pupils will be taken to the school and staff onsite will make arrangements for the safe supervision of pupils until they are able to return home. Parents will be communicated with directly regarding arrangements put in place for their child.

A member of staff should be present at school to advise any arrivals who have not received the message.

Regular updates will continue to be posted and notice will be given to parents advising them when the school will reopen.

2.5 Closure during the school day

If weather conditions deteriorate during the school day and there is a need for early closure parents will be informed on TomCom at the earliest opportunity with clear instructions about dismissal arrangements.

If parents are not able to collect their child at the dismissal time, arrangements will be made to look after them until they are able to do so.

Regular updates will then continue to be posted and notice will be given to parents advising them when the school will reopen.

2.6 School open but limited attendance

If the school is open but not all staff and pupils can travel, the school will endeavour to operate a normal timetable.

It may be necessary to operate a collapsed curriculum for those pupils in school or a form of hybrid teaching. Timings of the school day may be altered depending on the weather conditions.

Announcements and regular updates will be given on TomCom.

2.7 Remote education in the event of school closure

Should it be required to close the school site due to severe weather, remote education will be made available for pupils.

2.8 Educational Visits

Where Educational visits are planned for days that are forecast to be affected by severe weather, the Trip Leader and EVC should consider the additional journeys that need to be made, as well as the destination and any activities involved before deciding whether it is appropriate for the visit to go ahead. It may be necessary to check for disruptions to public transport or to confirm with coach operators that they are happy to undertake the planned journeys, and to check with any venues or activity providers that they still expect to be able to operate normally in the existing or forecast conditions. Parents may be asked to provide additional clothing for their children.

3. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This Policy bears due regard to the following statutory guidance and other advice: DfE Emergency Planning and Response for Education, Childcare and Children's Social Care Settings (May 2023)