Emergency Closure Policy

2026-2027

Executive Headteacher: Julia Hyde

Reviewed: September 2026
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Introduction

Within the limitations set out by statutory guidance and health and safety legislation and wherever possible, Orion Academy will remain open during the school day to deliver education to its pupils.

However, The Gallery Trust's Deputy Chief Executive Officer (DCEO) Mrs Harry Paget-Wall Collins, together with the school's Executive Director and Executive Headteacher, are authorised by The Gallery Trust 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 decision-making process will always take account of the health and safety of pupils and staff which will always be paramount in any decision making and look to exploring what options are available to a full closure and whether closing the school to just some classes and/or changing the opening and closing time if either will avoid complete closure.

Emergency closure of the school

The following factors will be considered in coming to any decision to close Orion Academy 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 considered?
- Can pupils and staff access the school building safely?
- Can pupils and staff be evacuated in an emergency?
- In an emergency, could the Emergency Services access the school?
- Is the area designated for disembarkation from transport safe for pupils?
- Are services functioning? Such as electricity and water (including hot water)

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

- If a number of staff cannot attend due to illness or other, is the number of staff available for work acceptable to run the school efficiently and safely given the needs of our 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) or other wide-spread illness

- 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 a region. There is, of course, nothing new in the former. 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 and 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 on the ground, taking account of the nature of pupils concerned, including their medical and pastoral needs, and the number of staff available.
- The consequences of large-scale school closures are significant given the knock-on effect 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.

Communicating the decision to close the school

The Executive Headteacher (and / or the Executive Director) will carry out a risk assessment, and the decision to close or partially close the school will be made wherever possible by 7:15 am. This decision will be communicated to the school's Integrated Transport provider and our parents via telephone, email and text.

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**.**