



**Northern House
Academy**

Northern House Academy Emergency School Closure Policy

Policy written
Policy review date

October 2023
October 2025

Role	Signature
Head of School	
Chief Executive Officer	
Chair of Rapid Improvement Board	

Introduction

Within the limitations set out by statutory guidance and health and safety legislation and wherever possible, Northern House Academy will remain open during the school day to deliver education to its pupils. However, the Headteacher Ricky Stevens, together with the school's Head of School, Bex Holmes, are 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 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 Northern House 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 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?
 - **Has the school considered reallocating all available staff to support pupils (e.g. moving site and office staff to classrooms to support)?**
 - 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.

Communicating the decision to close the school

The Headteacher or Head of School 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 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.