



British Embassy School Ankara Closure Policy

Background

Wherever possible, the British Embassy School will remain open in accordance with the published term dates. Exceptions to this will be made on the basis of safety.

Reasons for Closure

- **Adverse weather conditions** – where the weather is so bad that it is deemed unsafe for the school to be open. For example, heavy snowfall may make road travel treacherous.
- **Structural matters** – where inadequacies in the infrastructure of the school would make attendance unsafe. For example, in the event of a heating failure during cold weather conditions.
- **Security** – where security concerns suggest it would be safer for children, parents and staff to stay away from school. For example, in the event of a credible terrorist threat or a breakdown in law and order. This latter case may require a long term closure, which is not the focus of this policy.

The Decision to Close

Responsibility for the decision to close the school on a short term basis (i.e. less than one week) rests with the Head. Closure due to adverse weather conditions will usually follow advice from the Ankara governor; closure due to structural matters will usually follow advice from the School Business Manager whilst closure due to security concerns will usually follow advice from the British Embassy. In each case, the final decision rests with the professional judgement of the Head.

Communication

It is vital that communication with parents is timely and effective.

A letter setting out the school's procedures in the event of adverse weather (the 'snow letter') will be sent to all parents at the start of winter (suggested text below).

In the event of a closure, parents will be notified by group SMS and by email. In addition, notification will be posted on the school website and on the school Twitter feed.

Suggested SMS/Twitter/website text: "Due to XXXXXX, BESA will be closed on [date]. We will inform you when we can open again."

Suggested email text: "Due to XXXXXX, BESA will be closed on [date]. Whilst we recognise the inconvenience this may cause, we are sure you will understand that safety is our first priority. We will keep you informed by SMS and email regarding the re-opening of the school. This will also be posted on the school website and on our Twitter feeds."

If possible, the message will be sent out the previous evening, albeit at the risk those conditions might change.

If the closure extends beyond one day, parents will be kept informed by SMS and email as well as the school website and Twitter.

Suggested SMS/Twitter/website/email text: "BESA remain closed due to XXXXX. We will inform you when we can open again."

On reopening:

Suggested SMS/Twitter/website/email text: "BESA will reopen on [date]. See you then!"

Practical Steps

Once a decision to close has been made, and communication has begun, the school will react in the following ways:

CLOSURE IN SCHOOL TIME

- The Head will establish the safest way to achieve the sending home of children bearing in mind local conditions. This will mean things such as cancelling buses, clubs etc. The contacts for these services will be contacted by the school.
- Some members of staff (at least two) will remain until all children have safely left the premises.
- Bearing in mind their personal safety, travel conditions and children of their own, staff members will also need to be permitted to leave once those children in their care are able to be passed on to others who can be made responsible for them.
- The School Business Manager will be responsible for drawing up with the caretakers and any other available professional advice a plan of action to get the school open again at the earliest opportunity. To the extent that it does not put them at personal risk, the caretakers will be asked to stay behind to implement the plan for as long as practicable.
- In the event that children are unable to be reached in school, they will be cared for first on the premises and if necessary taken to the apartment of a member of staff with parents' knowledge and written permission (eg via the fax or email or if necessary a phone message).
- The building may need to be evacuated if unsafe. No member of staff should put themselves at risk. In these circumstances, we will activate our evacuation procedure.

CLOSURE OUTSIDE SCHOOL TIME

- The group SMS and email systems will have been activated as early as possible (before 7:00am) in order to give parents sufficient notice
- Some staff members may need to come to school if the reason is related to structural matters. These will normally include the Head and School Business Manager. It will also depend on the need for workmen to repair the building.
- Staff will not be expected to attend, and will be encouraged to stay away, but may voluntarily come in to work.
- Teaching and other staff as necessary will be expected to make themselves available to operate distance learning.

Distance Learning

The school has developed a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) distance learning platform which will enable lessons to be given via the internet to pupils. In the event of school closure for more than one day, efforts will be made to send work electronically for pupils to complete. Pupils and their parents will be able to communicate with staff. For this purpose, teaching staff will keep details of the home emails of pupils at their homes in order to facilitate this work.

Extending the School Year

Depending on the circumstances and practicalities, the Governing Board reserves the right to extend the school year to make up for lost school days where these exceed three days in any year. They will earmark a week in the calendar when such an extension could be proposed, and notify staff accordingly.

Policy adopted: 2006

Revised 2011

Review date: 2013

Revised: 2015

Review date: 2017

Suggested Text for 'Snow Letter'

Dear all,

With winter having arrived and snow apparently on the way, we would like to clarify what we do in the event of heavy snowfall.

Children, parents and staff need to be able to make the journey to and from school in safety. Sometimes, wintry weather can make road conditions particularly treacherous such that making that journey could be seen as taking an unnecessary risk. If that is the case, the school will be closed. At BESA, we will base any decision to close the school on that of the Ankara governor. If Ankara schools are closed because of the weather, we would typically be closed too. If Ankara schools are open, we will most likely be open too.

If the school is to close, we will try to give as much notice as is reasonably possible and will communicate the decision in these ways:

- by email;
- by SMS;
- on the BESA website (<http://www.besaturkey.org>)
- on the school's Twitter feed (@BESATURKEY, @BESAHEAD)

We will use the same methods to inform you of the reopening of the school. Please ensure we have the correct email address and phone number.

During any closure, teachers will set work for the children via the VLE, with the intention of minimising any disruption to learning.

Of course, over-riding all this is your own parental discretion. **If you consider the road conditions too treacherous, it is right you don't make the journey even if the school is open.**

When there is snow on the ground and the school is open, please do send your child with suitable clothing. Playing in the snow with friends is the stuff of cherished childhood memories and is an opportunity not to be missed!

