



British Embassy School Ankara

CLOSURE POLICY

Background

The British Embassy School Ankara (BESA) has long held to the principle that we should only close the school in the most serious conditions. In the last few years it has only been necessary to close for a handful of days in total. Usually closure is due to adverse weather conditions such as snow. However, we also need to recognise that the school may be affected by other internal problems related to the building, illness or the situation in the embassy or by external factors in Ankara and beyond. Lately we have also become aware of the effect that 'Pandemic Flu' could have on our school.

Reasons for Closure

The most likely reason for closure is connected to weather conditions in Ankara or an emergency in the buildings. The winter often brings heavy snowfalls: these have a serious effect on local transport, and the school can suffer from potentially dangerous ice. Changes in the weather mean that we sometimes need to make decisions at short notice, including during the course of a school day.

Another reason relates to the buildings. We have some problems with the older parts of the infrastructure which mean that things such as the water or heating systems may fail.

We are also at some risk from terrorism. This could mean longer closure, albeit on a temporary basis. Because this is far more problematic, it is not this form of long term closure which is referred to in the detail of this policy. However, we will make provision for some form of education to continue in any long term closure by means of distance learning.

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. They will consult widely, with the governors, but the decision ultimately rests on their professional judgement. Closure is essentially based on a duty of care to both staff and children, where the health or safety of both groups may be at risk. The decision to close may lead to difficulties for the collection of children and the cancellation of school buses, but safety is the paramount issue for closure.

Communication

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

- In the event of a decision to close, the emergency telephone tree will be activated by the Head, who will notify both the Governors and the school secretary will begin to contact the parents via SMS message. Once all parents have received the SMS message the school will send confirmation of, and reasons for, the closure to parents, staff and governors by a website message and email.

If the closure goes on beyond one day, the Head will inform parents via SMS message on a daily basis. If possible, the message will be sent out the previous evening, albeit at the risk those conditions might change. Update will also be sent out on a daily basis by email and be placed on the website.

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 Bursar 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 and go to the Ambassador's residence.

CLOSURE OUTSIDE SCHOOL TIME

- The SMS message will have been activated.

- Some staff members may need to come to school if the reason is related to the buildings. These will normally include the Head and Bursar. It will also depend on the need for workmen to repair the building.
- Staff will not be expected to attend, 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 which will enable lessons to be given via web access to pupils. In the event of school closure for more than one day, efforts will be made to send work by email and through the school website 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

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