

**Services to People Directorate**

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**All Headteachers** 27/11/2020

**Re:** **Managing Critical Incidents - School Closure**

Dear colleague

During these incredibly challenging times, we would like to express our sincere thanks for the numerous ways in which you have worked tirelessly to ensure the children and young people of Stockport are able to access the education opportunities you are making available to them. In addition, the support you have given to your staff, both teaching and non-teaching to help sustain all our efforts in keeping schools open. We would like to reassure you that our aim is to continue to support you in this as much as possible.

Notwithstanding this, however, and despite everyone’s best efforts there may be times when your ability to sustain full school opening may be affected and you reach a point where you are considering whether to close the school.

As you are aware, the final decision regarding closure rests with you as school leader and we have every confidence that any decision you reach will be made having considered all the relevant factors and the likely impact on the ongoing welfare of pupils, staff and families in the community.

We recognise that any decision made by school leaders (in agreement with Governing Boards), to close a school is never taken lightly, but please be assured that members of our team are happy to help.

I am sure you will appreciate that in line with Government guidance in respect of schools remaining open and offering full-time education, local authorities are under increased scrutiny to show how they are supporting schools, and to monitor and record school closures. In order to support you in this we will be asking you to provide us with information about the Critical Incident considerations or Managing Medical Needs guidance you have followed prior to contacting us, and prior to your decision. This will help us to keep a clear record of your reasons for closure and will aid Members understanding of the wider position across Stockport schools.

If you are thinking about school closure it is essential that you refer to the relevant policies, procedures and guidance you have considered, and I would like to reassure you that you can contact the team for support if you feel it would be helpful.

A few points to remember:

* You can refer to the Critical Incident guidance and / or the Managing Medical Needs policy, as well as any references to health and safety guidance.
* Your main reference point should always be with your ongoing risk assessments as these are live documents and ever-changing in line with the impact of the pandemic.
* Staff ratios can be affected. This information needs to be very specific re: numbers of staff. We are happy to discuss these with you depending on your individual circumstances and may be able to offer alternative solutions.
* Consider Safeguarding issues, particularly if your Designated Safeguard Lead is off premises as well as any first aiders.
* Consider additional factors such as Free School Meals support and remote learning provision.
* Governing Boards should always be involved in your decision-making.

As stated above and linked to the points raised, it will be helpful to talk with you about your reasoning for closing the school. It would also aid matters if the following information was available.

* Is this a full closure?
* Is this in response to staff ratios?
* Have you considered alternative organisation to prevent full closure?
* What parental comms have you considered with your Chair?
* Have you contacted any neighboring schools to inform them, particularly those who have siblings at your school?
* At what point are you informing parents and, where applicable SEND transport?
* Will staff be in school to assist in handling parental concerns?
* Are the above reflected in your risk assessment?

We have worked together through many issues relevant to school closures over the years, but in these unprecedented times we are under increased scrutiny from several areas and it is important to have a clear record trail both for schools and the local authority.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to contact us. We are here to support and guide you should you need it.

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Yours sincerely

Barry & Pat

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