

Education, Leisure and Housing

Kirkwall Grammar School - Information on Barrier Closures



Weather Disruption to Churchill Barriers

During the winter we will almost certainly encounter disruption due to Barrier closures. Although to some extent wind and tide can be forecast, there is no identifiable pattern for when the Barriers close, e.g. a certain time before high tide. Likewise, the actual length of the closure can range from one hour up to four or five hours. Similarly the review period can vary, resulting in uncertainty over the timing of updates.

The following paragraphs set out our general principles to managing Barrier closures.

Procedures to Deal with Barrier Closures

Decision to Close the Barriers and Barriers Monitoring Conditions

Orkney Islands Council Roads Department along with Police Scotland monitor weather conditions continually. Where it is considered that wind and tide are likely to have an adverse effect on the Barriers, a meeting will take place and an assessment made regarding closure. If it is determined that a Barrier is unsafe to cross the road will be closed by until such time as it is safe to cross.

This information is passed on 'in real time'. This means we receive the news at the same time as anyone else in the community who has 'signed up' for the relevant social media alert. We, along with the various transport providers also monitor conditions and every effort is made to alert folk to the possibility of a Barrier closure before it happens.

Morning Closures – if the Barriers are closed before the school opens at 08:35 pupils and staff who reside across the Barriers cannot get to school.

In the event of a bus being unable to cross the Barriers in the morning, the driver will contact Stagecoach to liaise with OIC and KGS on the best action to follow; i.e. whether to return pupils home, or to wait for calmer conditions (dependent on prevailing conditions at the time and expected length of closure).

How can we inform parents and pupils of this – if the closure happens before or at the time of Radio Orkney broadcasting (07:30 - 08:00) then it will be announced on the radio and on their Facebook page. It will also be on the OIC School Transport Facebook page. If it is announced after 08:00, it is likely that the Radio Orkney Facebook page will carry the news. The OIC Roads Twitter report up to date information on the Barriers.

School transport - Routes 32 (South Ronaldsay / Burray) and 33 (Hope) will not be able to operate during Barrier closures. However, should the Barriers re-open before 09:00, Stagecoach will undertake to operate. If the Barriers open any later than 09:00 Stagecoach cannot commit to conveying the pupils. Stagecoach will, however, operate as usual in the afternoon so any pupils who managed to get to school will be able to get their school transport home.

Please note this approach is different from snow closures where, if a bus cannot operate in the morning, it will not operate in the afternoon. The reason for this being that, if the road was too dangerous in the morning it is unlikely that it will be safe in the afternoon.

Routes 32 and 33 are operated by Stagecoach. Stagecoach reserve the right at any time not to cross the Barriers (even if they are open) if the driver(s) do not think it is safe for a bus full of pupils to cross. They will always take the safety of their passengers as their prime consideration.

Throughout the school day - if the Barriers close throughout the day it will be our intention, where possible, to keep the pupils in class to avoid and minimise disruption to their learning.

In the event of the Barriers being deemed unsafe by the driver(s) to cross, or if they close before the buses arrive, pupils will be returned to school.

If a closure extends beyond the school day, pupils will be kept in school unless prior arrangements have been made by the parents and the school office have been informed. Parents wishing to collect their children must report to the school office. No pupils will be allowed to leave with other parents unless the school has been informed of this by the parent of the pupil receiving the lift.

A snack will be provided to pupils and, if the closure extends beyond 17:00, a meal will be provided.

School transport will collect the pupils from the school as soon as the Barriers are reported open.

Early Closures - If high tide is expected near to the end of the school day (including Fridays) or late afternoon consideration will be given to organising the buses to take the pupils home before the end of the school day.

This is due to the fact that, if the Barriers closed two hours before high tide and did not open again until three or four hours after high tide, it could mean that the pupils would not get home until very late.

Communication

Due to the nature of Barrier closure, short notice is often given. OIC will issue notification in the form of:

- A text message from the school.
- Xpression (This is an App the school uses for instant messaging to your phone or mobile device using the internet / WiFi / Data. It is similar to WhatsApp). Contact the school if you require more information on this method of messaging.
- Facebook – OIC School Transport.

If you would prefer your child not to go home on the bus early or suffer any disruption to their school day and remain in Kirkwall during a Barrier closure period, please ensure you have confirmed this with the school and have emergency contacts and arrangements in place, and that they are kept up to date. Please discuss this with your child so they know what to do.

Information on the Barriers can be obtained from the following sources

OIC Twitter feeds

- Follow [@OIC_Roads](#) for Churchill Barrier reviews and closures.
- Follow [@OrkneyCouncil](#) for general Council news and information, including adverse weather school closures.

OIC Facebook Pages

- Follow us on our [OIC School Transport Facebook page](#).
- We also use our [OIC Updates Facebook page](#) to provide you with more general Council news and information.
- Please note that Twitter and Facebook are independent websites and the Council cannot guarantee against the alerts being delayed.

BBC Radio Orkney

- Morning broadcast (93.7 FM) and [Radio Orkney Facebook page](#).

Note for any Holm pupils on Route 32 South Ronaldsay bus: If the Barriers close, alternative arrangements are in place with Stagecoach and KGS (and will be discussed with you in advance of winter terms). Any queries contact Stagecoach 01856870555 or School Transport on 01856873535 extension 2427.

Any questions or comments

Please contact Kirkwall Grammar School, telephone 01856872102 or School Transport, Orkney Islands Council, telephone 01856873535 extension 2421.

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