

General election 2019 - implications for schools

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Schools are popular places for polling stations and whilst some larger schools are able to continue to operate on election day, many smaller schools are forced to close. Parents and schools are undoubtedly unhappy about this as a day of lost teaching and additional childcare costs for parents are not ideal. There are no conclusive statistics for how many schools will close but online lists suggest that some areas rely heavily on schools for their polling stations.

Some schools are also likely to face disruption to their festive activities as many have had to reschedule their nativity plays and Christmas concerts. Some local authorities are making use of alternative facilities but schools are often chosen as they are free, have disabled access and are 'tried and tested' locations.

Publicly funded schools, including academies, cannot legally refuse to be used as a polling station nor can they charge for any losses incurred as a result of the inconvenience.

Civil servants and public bodies cannot publish anything that could be considered political in the period before an election, known as 'purdah'. As a result Ofsted will delay publication of its annual report and it is likely that expected Department for Education (DfE) announcements will be deferred until after the election.

If your school or trust has been asked to host a polling station and you would like advice on how best to respond and communicate this with your staff, pupils or parents please get in touch.

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