



**Letterkenny
Educate Together**
National School
ag fás le chéile - ag foghlaim le chéile

Emergency Closures Policy

Introduction

The school policy on emergency closures was drafted by the Principal, staff members and parent representatives. Copies of the full policy document will be available on request to parents/guardians.

Rationale

The need for the school to devise a policy on emergency closures is primarily due to:

- a) Possibility of disruption in water or electricity supply
- b) Inclement weather, such as heavy snowfalls, high winds etc.
- c) Building programmes and alterations to the design of the school which may necessitate unscheduled closures on Health and Safety grounds
- d) Critical incidents

Relationship to School Ethos

Letterkenny Educate Together National School seeks to provide a child-friendly, secure and safe learning environment for all pupils, whilst also striving to ensure that staff and visiting personnel can access a safe and welcoming working environment. This aim is founded on respect for the individual, child or adult, and is fostered in a culture which values diversity and difference.

Aims and Objectives

- To provide for the welfare of all pupils, staff and parents/guardians while on the school premises
- To ensure a safe, child friendly learning environment is available to all children
- To conform with Health and Safety legislation

Procedures

Type 1: Unplanned Closures

Heavy Snowfall

In the event of a heavy snowfall, the Principal shall consult with the Chairperson of the B.O.M. as soon as is feasible, and a decision is made as to whether it is in the interests of all parties to close the school.

If it is decided to close the school, the school authorities will contact the local radio station, Highland Radio, making use of a special code supplied to the school, and request that regular announcements be carried on the airwaves that the school will not be opening. Parents/guardians who supply school with up-to-date mobile numbers will be notified by text.

All bus operators servicing the school will be contacted by the Principal or another designated person, confirming that the school will not be opening. If the snowfall is prolonged over a number of days and the school is closed indefinitely, parents will be informed of re-opening dates through the local radio station, on the school Facebook page and by text. The Principal will inform bus operators of re-opening dates.

High Winds / Thunderstorms

The procedures in place for heavy snowfall are generally replicated in the event of storms / lightning i.e. parents/guardians and bus operators are contacted via local radio and informed that the school will remain closed. If the school has already opened and is in operation when high winds etc. occur and remaining on the premises is a risk to all, teachers will remain on the premises until all children have been collected by parents / guardians or bus operators.

Unexpected loss of services

Where notification is not given to the school regarding loss of electricity or water services, the principal will endeavour to determine the extent of interruption to the service. Following consultation the Health and Safety Officer on staff and the chairperson of the Board of Management regarding

the Health and Safety implications of the loss in service, a decision may be taken to notify parents/guardians of the need to close the school. Teachers will remain on the premises until all children have been collected by either parents / guardians or bus operators.

Critical Incident / Death

In some instances the school might remain closed for pupils in the event of a critical incident or death of a staff member, B.O.M member or pupil. Parents are informed of such closures either by phone or circular, whichever is deemed appropriate by the Critical Incident committee. In this particular instance, the school may remain open to staff, B.O.M, Parents Association or Critical Incident committee if issues such as funeral services, liaison with media or counseling need to be addressed (See Critical Incident Policy).

Type 2: Planned Closures

Disconnection of Services

Where water or electricity services to the school are to be disconnected, a week's notification is normally given to the school authorities. This enables the school to furnish the parent body with the relevant advance warning of such closures via circular or text. It is not the policy of the school to confirm such closures through the local Radio station.

Building Programmes

The Health and Safety Officer on the Board of Management will consult with on-site Health and Safety personnel to ensure compliance with any statutory obligations in this regard. Parents/guardians will be briefed on such matters and the health and safety of pupils and staff will be paramount in any decisions made regarding closure in such circumstances..

Staff Meetings/In-Service Closures

All half days and in-service closures are notified to parents at least one week in advance. Reminder notices are issued closer to the date. All bus operators servicing the school are kept informed regarding any such closures.

Roles and Responsibilities

Emergency closures in the school place particular responsibilities on various personnel within the school chain of command:

- ✚ Parents are responsible for keeping school briefed on up-to-date contact details during school year
- ✚ Principal is responsible for organizing annual review of parent contact details
- ✚ School secretary is responsible for entering review information in electronic class files
- ✚ Chairperson of Board of Management and Principal are responsible for ultimate decision to close the school
- ✚ Health and Safety Officers at staff and Board level are responsible for advising Principal and Board of Management regarding breaches of Health and Safety Policy which may merit school closure
- ✚ Principal is responsible for notifying staff of unplanned closures; as staff grows, cascade contact system will apply
- ✚ Principal is responsible for notifying bus operators of school closures

Success Criteria

- Positive school community feedback
- Conformance with Health and Safety legislation
- Maintaining a safe school environment for all staff, children and parents

Ratification and Communication

This policy was reviewed and ratified at September 2012 BOM meeting. Following ratification of the policy, a summary of key points will be circulated to the parent body.

Implementation and Review

The policy will be implemented following ratification the 5th November 2012 and will be reviewed bi-annually or as necessary.