

St Brigid's NS, Ballysax

Emergency Closures Policy

Introduction:

The school policy on emergency closures was drafted as a whole school exercise, involving parent representatives, staff and Board of Management. It will be circulated to the entire school community via the school website in due course.

Rationale:

The need for the school to produce a policy on emergency closures in recent years is primarily due to:

- Inclement weather, such as heavy snowfalls, high winds etc.
- Leaks in the local water scheme which causes a Health & Safety Issue regarding access to toilets
- Break down in heating system
- Electricity outage which causes a Health & Safety issue regarding availability of heating and light
- Serious damage to school building
- Critical Incident

Our policy for Emergency Closures follows the guidelines for schools available in the following publication;

National Rules for Schools – Rule 60

It is important to note that any national or local closure, as directed by the Government, will be adhered to for the recommended period.

Relationship to School Ethos:

St. Brigid's N.S. strives to provide a child friendly, secure environment catering for the needs of all students as far as is practicable and where respect is fostered in a culture which values diversity and difference.

Aims and Objectives:

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

Procedures

Heavy Snowfall:

In the event of a heavy snowfall, the Principal shall consult with the Chairperson of the BoM as soon as is feasible, and a decision will be 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 parents/guardians as soon as is feasibly possible, using the Aladdin administration system and/or Textaparent. The local radio station, KFM, will be contacted by the principal/Deputy Principal and request that regular announcements be carried on the airwaves that the school will not be opening.

If the snowfall is prolonged over a number of days and the school is closed indefinitely, parents/guardians will be informed of re-opening dates via Aladdin/Textaparent and through the local radio station.

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 email or text. It is not the policy of the school to confirm such closures through the local Radio station in these circumstances.

Where the heating system breaks down, the sewage system overflows or the water pipes burst, parents will be given notice as soon as possible via text. Every measure will be taken to repair the system as soon as possible.

High Winds/Thunderstorms:

The procedures in place for heavy snowfall are generally replicated in the event of storms/lightning i.e. parents are contacted via Aladdin Textaparent and 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 the children have been collected by either parents/guardians.

Damage to school building

The procedures in place for heavy snowfall are generally replicated in the event of severe damage to the school building such as burst pipes, collapsed ceilings, fire damage, etc. i.e. parents are contacted and informed that the school will remain closed. If the school has already opened and is in operation when damage occurs and

remaining on the premises is a risk to all – teachers will remain on the premises until all the children have been collected by either parents/guardians.

Critical Incident/Death:

In some instances the school might close for pupils in the event of a critical incident/death (See Critical Incident Policy). Parents are informed of such closures by email and/ or text. In this particular instance, the school may remain open to staff and BoM or Parent Teacher Association if issues such as church services, Guards of Honour, readings or counselling is required.

Please note:

All half days and in-service closures are notified to parents **at least** one week in advance.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Emergency closures in the school place particular responsibilities on various personnel within the school chain of command, with a view to

- Compliance with Health and Safety legislation
- The maintenance of a safe school environment for all staff, children and parents
- The guidance for schools in relation to making up for time lost due to unforeseen closures (See Appendix A)

Ratification and Communication:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on: 19th September 2022

Signed: Elizabeth Smith

Date: 19-9-22

Appendix A

Excerpt from Circular 005/2020: Standardisation of the School Year in respect of Primary & Post-Primary Schools for the years 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Guidance for schools in relation to making up for time lost due to unforeseen closures

1. The school authority should, in the first instance, quantify the number of school closures that have occurred.
2. The school authority should, in consultation with the Principal and teachers, assess the effect of the loss of tuition and identify any shortfalls that have occurred as a result of the unforeseen closures.
3. The school authority should consult with the Principal and teachers with a view to ensuring that the curriculum for each class/year group can be completed before year end. Subject to consensus at local level, any changes to normal practice that can be made to facilitate such work should be put in place. A non-exhaustive list of possible examples of how this might be achieved include:
 - prioritising tuition over other non-tuition activities
 - reducing where possible the length of mock/house examinations
 - consideration of whether learning in the classroom should be prioritised over school tours, etc.in the case of second level schools ensuring examination classes attend all classes to the end of May.
4. If necessary, the school authority should review the school calendar with a view to identifying any available discretionary days that the school had planned to close that could be made available to make up the loss. In this regard, the school authority should take into account the need to provide adequate notice of any changes to the school calendar to pupils, parents and staff.
5. In cases where a school has been affected by extensive or prolonged school closures (e.g. due to weather, etc.) and where the school authority considers that the above measures will not adequately address the loss in tuition involved, the school authority may, having established what arrangements for school transport may or may not be feasible if other schools are remaining closed, decide to implement either or both of the following contingency arrangements:
 - the February mid-term break may be reduced by up to three days subject to the requirement that all schools must be closed on the Thursday and Friday of the week in which this break falls
 - the Easter break may be reduced by up to three days by the school remaining open up to and including the Wednesday immediately preceding the Easter weekend. All schools must be closed on the Thursday and Friday immediately preceding the Easter weekend and remain closed for the remainder of the Easter break as set out in Appendix A of this circular.
6. The school authority should consider the implications of any measures identified for pupils, teachers, parents and other staff and also other parties such as school transport, bus escorts, traffic wardens, visitors to the school, etc.
7. The school authority should consult and communicate with the school community as early as possible on this matter.