



Emergency Closures Policy

Introduction

The school policy on emergency closures was drafted as a whole school exercise, involving parents, pupils, staff and Board of Management. It was circulated to the entire school community in 2005 and will be posted on the school website in due course.

Rationale

The need for the school to produce a policy on emergency closures is to set out guidelines and procedures to be followed in the event of inclement weather *e.g.* heavy snowfalls, high winds *etc.* or disconnections of services or critical incident.

Relationship to School Ethos

Muire gan Smál strives to provide a child friendly, secure environment catering for all 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 the local radio station, Mid-west Radio and request that regular announcements be carried on the airwaves that the school will not be opening.

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 and bus operators will be informed of re-opening dates 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 circular. It is not the policy of the school to confirm such closures through the local Radio station.

High Winds/Thunderstorms:

The procedures in place for heavy snowfall are generally replicated in the event of storms/lightning *i.e.* parents 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 the 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, BoM member or pupil. (See Critical Incidence Policy). Parents are informed of such closures by circular. In this particular instance, the school may remain open to staff and BoM or Parents Association if issues such as church services, guards of honour, readings or counseling is required (*See Critical Incident Policy*).

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;

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

Ratification and Communication

This policy has been ratified and in operation in the school since 2005.

Implementation and Review

The redrafted policy has been implemented since 2007 and will be reviewed in the light of unplanned events that lead to unscheduled school closures.

Signed: Gerry Lynch
(*Chairperson B.O.M.*)