

St Patrick's N.S
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Policy on Emergency Closure

Updated May 2015

Introduction

The school policy on emergency closure 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.

Rational

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

- a) Inclement weather, such as heavy snowfalls, high winds etc.
- b) Building programmes and alterations to the design of the school which have necessitated unscheduled closures on Health and Safety grounds in recent years.

Relationship to School Ethos

St. Patrick's National School 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 conform 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 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 parents via Text-a-parent.

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 school re-opening dates through the Test-a-Parent system. If the closure straddles or is to come directly after a weekend, then notice will be placed in the Parish Bulletin.

Disconnection of Services

Where water or electrical services 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.

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 Text-a-Parent 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, the 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, BOM member or pupil. Parents are informed of such closures by Text-a-Parent. In this particular instance, the school may remain open to staff and BOM or Parent's Association if issues such as church services, Guards of honour, readings or counselling 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
- Conformance with Health and Safety legislation
- Maintaining a safe school environment for all staff, children and parents