

Claddaghduff N.S 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 drafted as a whole school exercise involving staff, parents and Board of Management. It will be posted on 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.
- The need to respond to the new guidelines given by the Dept. of Education in relation to 'Schools and Severe Weather'.
- Refer to attached document for above
- The need to respond to the decision made by Bus Éireann not to run school services during **ALL** Met Éireann Status Red weather events

(Refer to attached documentation for above)

Relationship to School Ethos:

Claddaghduff N.S 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 parents and members of staff via TextaParent.

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 TextAParent.

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.

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 TextaParent 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. Parents are informed of such closures either by circular or text. 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 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
- Compliance with Health and Safety legislation
- Maintaining a safe school environment for all staff, children and parents

Contingency Arrangements in the Event of Unforeseen School Closures

- After consultation with The Board of Management, The Staff and Parents Association it has been agreed that the school will use the discretionary days that the school has at its disposal to make up for time lost if the school is closed **for more than three days** due to unforeseen closures i.e. weather/E.S.B. etc.

(to Circular 0016/2014 attached to this document).

Ratification & Communication

The BOM officially ratified this policy in June 2019.

All parents will be able to access this policy through the office following ratification and thereafter prior to enrolment.

Review

This policy will be reviewed in three years.

Signed: _____ Date: 19th June 2019

Chairperson Board of Management

Signed: _____ Date: 19th June 2019

Principal

(see below for relevant documents)

Schools and Severe Weather

The following is provided as guidance for school management.

Be prepared Be informed Be vigilant

Preparation

Schools should conduct a pre-event evaluation of what should be, or could be, in place to ensure the opening of the school in the event of severe weather. Areas for consideration are maintenance of school premises and utilities, salting and gritting and transport to and from school. Access in the school to a battery operated radio and flashlights should be put in place.

Schools should ensure that every member of staff is clear as to their role and responsibilities during severe weather including in the event of a school closure. A member of staff should be assigned to monitor weather conditions and to contact the principal response agencies and school transport services where required.

Included in the school's plan for severe weather should be the proposed responses and roles which will apply in the event of a Red level weather warning from Met Éireann.

Communications

Schools should ensure to have the relevant contact details of the principal response agencies for their area, including An Garda Síochána, fire brigade and local authorities and other appropriate services. Schools should also have contact details for the transport services serving their school. These details should be checked regularly and kept up-to-date.

Schools should establish communications with neighbouring schools to ensure, as far as practicable, a unified local response to severe weather events may be implemented. It is noted however that while schools in an area may try to co-ordinate their decisions, the circumstances can vary between individual schools in close proximity and may on occasions lead to different decisions being taken by schools.

Most schools use a text messaging service to communicate with parents and staff. Local radio, the school's website or social media may also be useful to alert parents and students to school conditions and closure should this arise.

State Examinations

In the event of severe weather during scheduled state examinations the State Examinations Commission will communicate with schools to put in place

Red means STOP

(In affected areas)

Services provided under the School Transport Schemes

(Bus Éireann school buses and Contractors services)

Bus Éireann has decided as a precaution against severe weather and in the interest of child safety, to introduce a policy applicable to all school transport services that it provides under the Department of Education and Skills School Transport Schemes - for ALL Met Éireann Status Red weather events.

This means that when a Red alert is issued by Met Éireann for the area in which you live – or an area to which your child/ren are travelling to on a school bus – the services will not operate.

This policy is available on www.buseireann.ie/statusred. A Status Red weather warning automatically means all school transport services provided by Bus Éireann under the School Transport Schemes are cancelled – in the affected areas – while the warning is in effect.

Weather warnings are carried on all national and local news bulletins.

Red means STOP

(In affected areas)

While Bus Éireann may not be providing school transport services because of this new policy, it understands that when any severe weather is forecast it remains for each individual school to decide whether that school should close or not.

Guidance on school closure - provided by the Department of Education and Skills and contained in the Government's Winter Ready publication - includes specific guidance where there is a Status Red alert relating to strong wind and storm conditions. The Department of Education and Skills guidance to schools in the event of severe weather is available on www.education.ie

Thank you for taking the time to read this email.

Yours sincerely,

Bus Éireann