



Ballinahinch National School

Scoil Náisiúnta Baile na hÍnse

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Policy on Emergency Closures.

Introduction:

This school policy on emergency closures was drafted by the staff and Board of Management of Ballinahinch N.S. as a response to the very difficult weather conditions experienced during the winter of 2010-11 and March 2018.

Rationale:

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

- ◆ Inclement weather, such as heavy snowfalls, high winds etc.
- ◆ Frozen water pipes which causes a Health & Safety Issue regarding access to toilets
- ◆ Break down in heating system
- ◆ Possible damage to school building or part thereof.
- ◆ Possible Critical Incident

Our policy for Emergency Closures follows the guidelines for schools available in the following publication;
National Rules for Schools – Rule 60

Relationship to School Ethos:

The teachers of Ballinahinch National School wish to ensure that our school be a place where pupils are happy and feel secure. Incidents may occur which may compromise the safety of both pupils and staff.

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 and Frost:

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, all parents will be informed by text message of closing.

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-a-parent. The school will endeavour to remain open during power outages. 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 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 – 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 via & text-a-parent 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 remain closed for pupils in the event of a critical incident or death of a staff member, BOM member or pupil. Parents will be 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. These include;

- ◆ Ensuring that ALL parents/Guardians are informed immediately
- ◆ Compliance with Health and Safety legislation
- ◆ Maintaining a safe school environment for all staff, children and parents

School closure will be the last resort. Every effort will be made to keep the school open at all times but the safety and welfare of the pupils, staff and parents will be paramount in making any decision.

Ratification and Communication

This policy has been in operation in the school since 2010 having been ratified by the B.O.M. of the school.

Implementation and Review

This Policy will be reviewed in the light of unplanned events that lead to unscheduled school closures, but not later than 2020.