



Emergency School Closures Policy

Introduction:

The school policy on emergency school closures was drafted in consultation with the staff, parents and Board of Management and in line with national guidelines and procedures.

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.
- Leaks in the local water scheme which causes a Health & Safety Issue regarding access to toilets
- Break down in the heating system or electricity supply
- Serious damage to the school building
- Building programmes and alterations to the design of the school which may necessitate unscheduled closures on Health and Safety grounds
- Critical Incidents

Relationship to School Ethos:

Kilmacanogue National School strives to provide a child-friendly, secure and safe learning environment catering to the needs of all students, whilst also striving to ensure that staff and visitors can access a safe and welcoming working environment.

Aims and Objectives of the policy:

- 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 to Health and Safety legislation

Adverse Weather

Heavy snowfall:

In the event of a heavy snowfall, the Principal shall consult with the Chairperson of the Board of Management 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 all school staff and parents/guardians by email to inform all that the school will not be opening. If the snowfall is prolonged over a number of days and the school is closed indefinitely, parents will be informed of reopening dates by email.

In the event of an emergency closure during the day due to severe snowfall, parents will be contacted as soon as possible via email.

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 email 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 children have been collected by either parents/guardians.

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.

Unexpected loss of services

Where notification is not given to the school regarding the loss of electricity or water services, the principal will endeavour to determine the extent of the interruption to the service. Following consultation with the Health and Safety Officer on staff and the Chairperson of the Board of Management regarding the health and safety implications of the loss in service, a decision may be taken to notify the parents/guardians of the need to close the school. Teachers will remain on the premises until children have been collected by their parents/guardians.

Critical Incidents

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 whichever means is deemed appropriate by the Critical Incident Management Committee. In this particular instance, the school may remain open to staff, BOM, Parent Teacher Association or Critical Incident Committee, if issues such as funeral services, liaison with media or counselling need to be addressed (see Critical Incident Policy).

Building Programmes

The Health and Safety Officer on the Board of Management will consult with on-site Health and Safety personnel to ensure compliance with any statutory obligations in this regard. Parents/guardians will be briefed on such matters and the health and safety of pupils and staff will be paramount in any decisions made regarding closure in such circumstances.

Department of Education Guidelines

In cases where the Department of Education issue a directive for all schools to close, due to adverse weather conditions, the school will comply with these announcements and parents will be informed via email.

Department of Education issues guidance for schools in relation to making up for time lost due to unforeseen school closures. Decisions relating to the need to make up these days or how they will be made up are decided at school level. The guidance provides that subject to consensus at a local level, any changes to normal practice that can be made to address the shortfalls should be put in place. Examples of how this might be achieved include:

- prioritising tuition over other non-tuition activities
- consideration of whether learning in the classroom should be prioritised over school tours, etc

If necessary, the school authority should then identify any available discretionary days that the school had planned to close that could be made available to make up for time lost, in line with Department guidelines.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Emergency closures in the school place particular responsibilities on various personnel within the school.

- Parents are responsible for keeping school informed on up-to-date contact details during the school year.
- Principal and secretary are responsible for organising an annual review of parent contact details.
- The Principal is responsible for notifying staff of unplanned closures.
- Chairperson of BOM and Principal are responsible for the ultimate decision to close the school.
- Health and Safety Officers at staff and Board level are responsible for advising Principal and Board of Management regarding breaches of Health and Safety Policy, which may merit school closure.
- All staff are responsible for compliance with Health and Safety legislation and procedures in school

Success Criteria

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

Ratification and Review:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in May 2025 and will be reviewed as deemed necessary.

Signed by Judy O'Toole (Chairperson) _____

Date: _____

Signed by Mark Sheekey (Acting Principal) _____

Date: _____