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**Emergency Closures Policy**

**Introduction**

The school’s policy on Emergency Closure was created to develop a clear and concise Emergency Closure Policy, to be activated by the Principal, in the event that we do not have enough staff available or cannot provide a safe school environment for our students and a safe work environment for our staff for various different circumstances outlined below.

It will be circulated to the entire school community via the school website in due course.

**Relationship to School Ethos**

Scoil Mochua strives to provide a child friendly, safe and 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. It prides itself on a spirit of co-operation between home and school. The safety of staff and pupils is paramount.

**Rationale**

The need for the school to produce a policy on Emergency Closure is in case of the following possible situations:

* Loss of lighting or electricity supply.
* Leaks, disconnections or supply issues in the local water scheme which may cause a Health and Safety issue.
* Break down in heating system.
* Inclement weather such as heavy snowfalls, high winds etc.
* Illness.
* Serious damage to school building.
* Nursing and/or staff shortages
* Critical Incident.
* Building programs and alterations to the design of the school, which may cause necessitated unscheduled closures on Health and Safety grounds.

Our policy for Emergency Closure follows the guidelines for schools available in Circular 0072/2022

**Aims and Objectives**

* To provide for the welfare of all pupils and staff while on the school premises
* To ensure that a safe, child friendly school environment is available to all children
* To comply with Health and Safety legislation
* To ensure all medical needs of children can be safely met

**Procedures**

**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 will be made as to whether it is in the interests of all parties to close the school. The school will monitor all weather warnings and follow official guidance on school closures and safe travel.

If it is decided to close the school, the principal will contact all parents via text informing them of the school closure. It is each parents responsibility to notify the school of any contact number changes.

If the snowfall is prolonged over a number of days and the school is closed indefinitely, parents will be informed of re-opening dates by text from the principal.

Any bus operators servicing the school will be contacted by their escort, confirming that the school will not be opening. If the snowfall is prolonged over a number of days and the school is closed indefinitely, bus drivers will be informed of re-opening dates via their escort.

**High Winds/Thunderstorms**

The procedures in place for heavy snowfall are generally replicated in the event of storms/lightning i.e. the school will contact parents via text informing the school community that the school will remain closed. The school will monitor all weather warnings and follow official guidance on school closures and safe travel.

**Disconnection of Services:**

If advanced notice is given that water or electricity services to the school are to be disconnected, the school will inform parents of closures via text. Bus Escorts will communicate with drivers to inform them of closures.

In the event of an unscheduled breakdown of services e.g. where the heating system breaks down/ there is a power cut/ 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.

**Damage to School Building**

The procedures in place for inclement weather 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 and informed that the school will remain closed.

**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, Board of Management member or pupil. Parents are informed of such closures either by text and/or email. In this particular instance, the school may remain open to staff and Board of Management or Parents Association if issues such as church services, Guards of honour, readings or counselling is required (See Critical Incident Policy).

**Illness**

We will have to enact the Emergency Closure Policy if mandated to do so by a Public Health Team following an outbreak of an illness in the school. Parents will be notified by text.

**Absence of staff**

**School Staff**

The school has a Department of Education funded number of staff employed to open the school safely. We endeavour to meet this number of staff through substitutions when staff are absent.

The sanctioned number of staff is:

* 11 teachers
* 36.5 SNAs

The minimum staffing levels that can be in place for the school to open is as follows:

* 6 teachers
* 25 SNAs

If we are at minimum staffing levels parents should be aware that the student’s programmes will not be followed as normal. A generic group programme will be implemented on these days as designated by the class teacher.

If we reach below minimum numbers, having exhausted all avenues, some or all students will be unable to attend school. Staff will be assigned work at the discretion of the Principal; this may be carried out on or off site.

**Nursing Staff**

The Nursing Director has a clinical responsibility to ensure that the medical needs of all students can be catered for. When the number of nursing staff drops below manageable levels, some or all students may be asked to remain at home. This is in place for the medical safety of all students.

This decision is outside the control of the school as nursing staff are not school employees and work under our Patron body – the Central Remedial Clinic.

**Guidance for schools in relation to making up for time lost due to unforeseen closures**

In accordance with circular 0072/2022, the Board of Management in collaboration with the Principal and teachers will make a decision on making up for time lost due to unforeseen closures. This will be completed in line with appendix B of the circular 0072/2022 namely;

* Prioritising tuition over other non-tuition activities
* Consideration of whether learning in the classroom should be prioritised over school tours. etc.
* The Principal has agreed, where and when possible, to upload work to Aladdin so that work is made available in the event of unforeseen closure. This is supported by the Board of Management.

In cases where a school has been affected by extensive or prolonged school closures (e.g. due to weather, etc.) and where the school authority considers that other measures will not adequately address the loss in tuition involved, the school authority may, having established what arrangements for school transport may or may not be feasible if other schools are remaining closed, decide to implement the following contingency arrangements:

The Easter break may be reduced by up to three days with the school remaining open up to and including the Wednesday immediately preceding the Easter weekend. All schools must be closed on the Thursday and Friday immediately preceding the Easter weekend and remain closed for the remainder of the Easter break as set out in Appendix 2 of this circular 0072/2022.

**Emergency closure during the school day.**

In the event of severe weather or disruption to services during the school day, the school may decide to immediately close if it is decided that remaining on the premises is a risk to all. Parents will be contacted via text. Staff will remain on the premises until all the children have been collected by either parents/guardians or emergency contact persons as notified by parents at enrolment.

Appendix 2 of this policy lists the protocol for Emergency Closure during the school day.

**In-service closures**

In-service closures are notified to parents as far in advance as possible by email and note home. A reminder will be given the week before by class teachers through Aladdin.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

Roles and Responsibilities: Emergency closures in the school place particular responsibilities on various personnel within the school community; Chairperson, Principal, Deputy Principal, In School Leadership Team and School Secretary. The overall responsibility for the day to day management of the school rests with the Principal.

A list of roles and responsibilities are outlined in appendix 1 and 2 of this policy.

**Ratification**

This policy was ratified by the Chairperson of the Board of Management in

This policy will be reviewed by the full staff and Board of Management every three years. Any staff member, board member, parent, guardian, or student who is unhappy with the content or the implementation of any school policy may request a review at any time and such a request will be dealt with as quickly as possible. The next review of this policy will occur before or during the school year 2026/2027.

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Matthew Swain Sophia Casey

Chairperson of BoM Principal/Secretary to the BoM

Appendix 1 – Roles Responsibilities for Closing the school in advance

**School closure is decided in advance**

If for any reason, weather, lack of services etc, the Board of Management decide in advance that the school will not open the following day, the following roles and responsibilities apply.

Sophia to

* contact BOM for approval / notification
* contact Brian, Nicola, Caroline
* contact Staff Group (including internal escorts)
* contact Parents and Families

Anita to

* contact escorts not working within the school
* contact Nursing
* contact teaching/SNA students

Caroline

* contact Carambola
* contact Wiltshire
* contact Milkman

Brian

* contact Sophia if any damage to site that will delay the school re-opening

Absences

* In the event of Sophia’s absence, Anita will carry out the role
* In the event of Anita’s absence, Suzann will carry out the role
* In the event of Caroline’s absence, Nicola will carry out the role

Appendix 2 – Roles Responsibilities for Closing the school during the school day

**School closure is decided during the school day**

If for any reason, weather, lack of services etc, the Board of Management decide that the school will close during the school day, the following roles and responsibilities apply.

* **Sophia** contacts the Board of Management
* **Sophia** texts parents and families
* **Sophia** decides a set time for closing
* **Sophia** calls bus escorts to communal place
  + **Bus Escorts** call drivers to see if they are available
  + **Bus Escorts** report back to Sophia whether or not their bus is able to return early.
* **Anita and Sophia** highlight in red/orange on class lists children whose busses cannot return and distribute lists to class teachers.
* **Teachers** call parents according to lists asking them to be home for bus/pick up from school
* **Teachers** confirm when they have made contact with all families
* All parents who have not confirmed will be rang by **Caroline / Nicola / Anita / Sophia**
* All busses leave at set time. If there are any busses who are delayed in coming to the school, those children wait in the hall / Caroline’s class.
* **All staff** who are not bus escorts / busses aren’t running remain in school until Sophia / Anita have ensured that enough staff are present to meet the needs of remaining children
* **ISLT** stay until all children have been collected.

Absences

* In the event of Sophia’s absence, Anita will carry out the role
* In the event of Anita’s absence, Suzann will carry out the role
* In the event of Caroline’s absence, Nicola will carry out the role