



Emergency Closures

Introduction

The school policy on emergency closures was drafted as a whole school exercise, involving parents, pupils, staff and Board of Management. It was circulated to the staff in 2011 and will be posted on the school website in due course.

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 freezing water etc.
- Very dangerous road conditions

Relationship to School Ethos

Scoil Mocheallóg 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

Background:

Appendix 57 p. 204 CPSMA Management Board Members' Handbook

Should some exceptional circumstances arise (for example, failure of the heating system or damage caused by vandalism) the Board of Management may close the school even if the school cannot be kept open for 183 days (Rule 60).

Rule 60 (Exceptional Closings)

If a school has not been in operation for at least 183 days in the school year the grant of salary and allowances may be reduced, unless owing to some exceptional cause it has not been possible for the school to be in operation for 183 days, in which case the Minister may abate this requirement.

"Exceptional cause" may include the following closures:

- Inclement weather
- Heating breakdown
- Death of a teacher in the school
- Death of a President/Bishop
- Essential repairs*

*Rule 52 (1) states: "Works of maintenance should be carried out, as far as possible, during the vacation periods".

Rule 62 (Closing of School in the interests of Public Health)

When the closing of a school is deemed necessary in the interests of public health, the written recommendation of the Medical Officer of Health should be obtained by the Chairperson of the Board and forwarded to the Department. The responsibility for closing the school rests with the Board of Management.

Circular 28/94 advises management authorities that the Director of Community Care/Medical Officer of Health is the appropriate person to decide on matters in relation to public health. Directors of Community Care/Medical Officers of Health may delegate that authority to the Senior Area Medical Officers or the Area Medical Officers who normally are local General Practitioners.

Procedures

In the event of an emergency closure e.g. 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 local radio station, Limerick 95 FM, requesting that regular announcements be carried on the airwaves that the school will not be opening.

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 the local radio station and textAparent.

The Department of Education and Science instructs schools to make up days where

- it has flexible days to take or
- to use emergency closure days as in-school planning days or
- during the February break or beginning of Easter Holidays.

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

Ratification and Communication:

This policy has been in operation in the school since 2011 having been communicated by the then BoM by means of circular following ratification at the school BoM meeting on November 2011.

Implementation and Review:

This policy has been implemented since 2011 and will be reviewed in the light of unplanned events that lead to unscheduled school closures, but not later than 2013.

