**Kilcommon National School**

**Tinahely**

**Co. Wicklow**

**Emergency Closures Policy - October 2022**

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**1.Introduction:**

The school policy on emergency closures was drafted by the staff and ratified by the school Board of Management. It was posted on the school website after ratification by the Board.

**2.Rationale:**

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

* Upgrading of the local water / ESB scheme which has led to supplies being disconnected on occasions.
* Inclement weather, such as heavy snowfalls, high winds etc.
* Building programmes and alterations to the design of the school.
* Critical Incident / Death.

3. **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

4. **Procedures:**

Where possible, the principal will consult with the Chairperson as to the best course of action in the following situations. If no consultation is possible, the principal will make a decision based on the information to hand. As in Department guidelines, communications will be maintained with local schools so that a uniform approach is adopted, where possible. In all cases, parents will be contacted via the usual forms of communication - text, seesaw & email.

1. Heavy Snowfall:

In the event of 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.

Parents are advised to be prepared for closures during periods of bad weather. Where possible, parents will be informed of a closure the previous evening. However, if a decision needs to be made in the morning, the school will endeavour to contact parents by 7.45am. All bus operators servicing the school will be contacted by the principal, or another designated person, confirming that the school will not be opening.

In the event of a decision to open the school, when school buses are not running due to road conditions, parents and staff will be informed of the decision, along with the advice to ‘only travel if they feel their road conditions are safe for them to do so’.

A bin of salt/sand will be kept in the school store room to ensure safe access for pupils through the playground for use during icy conditions.

In the event of extended closure for severe snow the BOM may deem it necessary to extend term time.

1. Disconnection of Services:

Where water or electricity services to the school are to be disconnected, the school will furnish the parent body, in a timely manner, with the relevant advance warning of such closures.

1. Unexpected Interruption of Services

There may be cases where disconnection is unexpected and occurs whilst the school is in operation. Having considered the expected length of disconnection of services, weather and lighting conditions along with the health & safety of pupils and staff, a decision will be made as to whether the school can remain open for the day.

1. High Winds/Thunderstorms:

The procedures in place for heavy snowfall are generally replicated in the event of storms e.g. parents and bus operators are contacted and informed that the school will remain closed. If the school has opened and is in progress when the high winds etc. occur and it is deemed that remaining on the premises is a risk to all - staff will remain on the premises until all the children have been collected by either parents/guardians or bus operators. Up to date orange and red Status ‘wind weather warnings and severe weather guidelines’ will be followed and parents are advised to be prepared for potential school closures during periods of inclement weather.

(e). 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. In this instance, the school may remain open to staff and BoM or PTA, if issues such as church services, Guards of honour, readings or counseling is required.

(f). Half days / In-Service Days.

Dates of half days and staff in-service closures will be shared with parents as early as possible.

**5. Roles and Responsibilities:**

Emergency closures in the school place particular responsibilities on various personnel within the school chain of command;

Chairperson:

* On behalf of the B.O.M. to ensure health and safety of all pupils and staff in KNS and compliance with Health and Safety legislation.
* To liaise with the principal regarding emergency school closure decisions.

Principal:

* To liaise with the chairperson regarding school closures.
* To put in place a system where chair, BOM, staff, bus drivers and families are contacted as soon as possible regarding school closures.
* To follow school Health and Safety guidelines.

Parents:

* To ensure notifications are turned on on their phones to receive texts and seesaw messages from the school.

**6. Ratification and Communication:**

This policy was ratified by the B.O.M. on …………………………………….

It will be reviewed in 5 years or as deemed necessary.

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Signed. DATE Chairperson Board of Management.