



# **EMERGENCY CLOSURE POLICY**



## Emergency Closure Policy Jonah Special School

### Introduction

The schools policy on Emergency Closure was drafted as a whole school exercise, involving parents, staff and the Board of Management. It is 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 or various different circumstances outlined below.

### Rationale

The need for the school to produce a policy on Emergency Closure in recent years is primarily due to:

- Upgrading of the local water scheme on a phased basis which has led to supplies being disconnected on a number of occasions in recent months.
- Inclement weather, such as heavy snowfalls, high winds etc.
- Building programmes and alterations to the design of the school, which have necessitated unscheduled closures on Health and Safety grounds in recent years.
- Break down in heating system.
- Serious damage to school building.
- Critical Incident.
- COVID-19.

Our policy for Emergency Closure follows the guidelines for schools available in the following publication –

*National Rules for Schools – Rule 60*

### Relationship to School Ethos

The Jonah Special School 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.

### Aims and Objectives

- To provide for the welfare of all students 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

In the event of a heavy snowfall, the Principal shall consult with the Chairperson of the Board of Management and one other member, 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, WLR FM and KCLR, making use of a special code supplied to the school (OA4) and request that regular announcements be carried on the airwaves stating that the school will not be opening.

All parents and taxi drivers 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 will be informed of re-opening dates through phone call or text message.

### **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 phone call or text. It is not the policy of the school to confirm such closures through the local Radio station.

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



## COVID-19

In light of COVID-19 the school may be required to close under certain circumstances. Given the additional leave requirements under COVID-19 (10 day isolation for confirmed test, time off while waiting for a test, 48 hour isolation after a negative test, isolation period if a close contact tests positive etc.) it may be difficult to meet our minimum staffing levels.

We will also have to enact the Emergency Closure Policy if mandated to do so by a Public Health Team following an outbreak of COVID-19 in the school. Parents will be notified by text message or phone call.

## Please Note

All half days and in-Service closures are notified to parents at least one week in advance, more notice will be given where possible.

## 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.

The overall responsibility for the day to day management of the school rests with the Principal. The staff have a responsibility to contact the Principal and let her know as soon as possible that they will be unable to attend work, and the length of that unavailability (if known). The Principal and class teacher assume the responsibility to notify every parent about the school closure, by text message, as soon as is practicable after the Emergency Closure Policy has been enacted.

## Jonah Special School

Emergency Closure Policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Jonah Special School at its meeting held on:

**Ratified by the Jonah Board of Management on:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Principal**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Chairperson, Board of Management**

**Next Review Period: *September 2023***



## Appendix 1:

As of 01/09/2021 following an assessment made by Caitriona (Principal) and Niamh (Director/Behaviour Analyst), it has been agreed that the following ***recommended*** staffing levels be in place to open the school –

**Junior Room – 1 Teacher and 3 SNA's**

**Senior Room – 1 Teacher and 4 SNA's**

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

**1 Teacher plus 6 staff members**

This applies to permanent and temporary staff members only. 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, all students will be unable to attend school.