



# **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.
- Health Risks/COVID-19/Illness.

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***

### **Inclement Weather**

In the event of inclement weather, 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.



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 weather event 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 Aladdin.

## **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 Aladdin.

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 Aladdin. 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 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 Aladdin. 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).

## **Health Risks (COVID-19/Illness etc)**

The school may be required to close fully or partially if there are insufficient staff available to safely operate due to illness. In the event of a confirmed outbreak of COVID-19, another infectious disease, or an environmental health hazard, the school will follow advice from the Local Authority and Public Health Team. Where closure is mandated by Public Health, the Emergency Closure Policy will be enacted immediately. Parents will be notified by phone call or Aladdin.

## **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 phone call or Aladdin, 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 2026***



## Appendix 1:

As of 01/09/2025 following an assessment made by Caitríona Barry (Principal) and Niamh Mc Evoy (Clinical Director), it has been agreed that the following **recommended** staffing levels be in place to open the school –

**Yellow & Green Room – 1 Teacher and 3 SNA's**

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

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

**2 Teachers (one permanent) plus 6 Special Needs Assistants**

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. Staff will be assigned work at the discretion of the Principal; this may be carried out on or off site.