



EMERGENCY CLOSURE POLICY



Emergency Closure Policy Jonah Special School

Introduction

The school's Emergency Closure Policy was developed by staff and the Board of Management and communicated to parents. Its purpose is to provide a clear and concise framework to be implemented by the Principal in circumstances where there is insufficient staff available, or where a safe environment cannot be maintained for students and staff, as well as in other situations outlined below.

Rationale

The need for an Emergency Closure Policy has arisen due to a number of factors, including:

- Upgrades to the local water scheme resulting in intermittent supply disruptions.
- Inclement weather (e.g. heavy snowfall, high winds).
- Building works and structural alterations impacting health and safety.
- Breakdown of heating systems.
- Serious damage to the school building.
- Critical incidents.
- Public health risks (e.g. COVID – 19, infectious 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

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 severe weather, the Principal will consult with the Chairperson of the Board of Management and, where possible, one additional Board member. A decision will then be made regarding school closure.



Parents/guardians and transport providers will be informed via phone call and/or Aladdin message. In the case of prolonged closures, updates and reopening information will be communicated through the same channels.

Disruption to Services

Where advance notice is received regarding planned disconnection of essential services (e.g. water, electricity), parents will be informed at least one week in advance where possible via phone call or Aladdin.

In emergency situations (e.g. heating failure, burst pipes, sewage issues), parents will be notified as soon as practicable via phone call or Aladdin. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue promptly.

Damage to School Building

In the event of serious structural damage (e.g. fire, flooding, ceiling collapse), the procedures outlined above will apply.

If the school is in operation at the time of the incident, students will remain under supervision until collected by parents/guardians. Staff will remain on site until all students have been safely collected.

Critical Incident or Bereavement

The school may close following a critical incident or death affecting the school community. Parents will be informed via phone call or Aladdin.

In such circumstances, the school may remain open for staff to facilitate necessary arrangements; including counselling supports etc. (see Critical Incident Policy).

Public Health Risks (COVID-19/Illness etc)

The school may close fully or partially if staffing levels are insufficient due to illness.

In the case of an outbreak of COVID-19 or another infectious disease, or an environmental health hazard, the school will follow guidance from Public Health authorities. Where closure is mandated, this policy will be implemented immediately. Parents will be notified via phone call or Aladdin.

Additional Information

All planned closures (e.g. in-service days, half days) will be communicated to parents at least one week in advance, where possible.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Principal has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and day-to-day school management.
- Staff members must inform the Principal as early as possible if they are unable to attend work, including expected duration.



- The Principal and class teachers are responsible for ensuring that parents are notified promptly of closures via phone or Aladdin.

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 2029*



Appendix 1: Minimum Staffing Levels (Effective from 01/06/2026)

Following assessment by the Principal and Clinical Director, the following staffing levels apply:

Standard Operation

- 2 Teachers
- 7 SNAs

Minimum Staffing for School Opening

- 2 Teachers (including at least one permanent teacher)
- 6 SNAs

At minimum staffing levels, normal student programmes may not be delivered. A modified group programme will be implemented on these days, as designated by the class teacher.

Emergency Partial Closure

If staffing falls below minimum levels, the school will operate a **partial closure system**, whereby classrooms open on alternating days, where possible. The classroom where the regular class teacher is available will open on the first day of the partial closure, the other on the second day and so on.

Minimum Staffing for Partial Opening

- 1 Teacher (permanent)
- 4 SNAs

Full Closure

If staffing falls below the above levels, the school will close fully. Staff may be assigned duties at the discretion of the Principal, either on-site or remotely.