



# EXCEPTIONAL SCHOOL CLOSURE OR ADVERSE WEATHER POLICY AND PROCEDURES

## **Procedures used in the decision to close St Mary's Primary School**

Our aim is to avoid, as far as possible, any uncertainty and confusion in the event of possible school closure. We believe that the best way to do this is to communicate as fully as possible with our parents. The school will make all practicable efforts to keep parents informed as to the situation with the school during these conditions, as we appreciate that such conditions and the uncertainty places very considerable difficulties upon parents.

There are rare occasions when our school will find it necessary to close. Our first consideration is always the health and safety of our children and staff.

In adverse weather conditions, where staff live some distance from school, Health and Safety risk assessments mean that we cannot open the school if there are insufficient staff to properly supervise the children. These are usually occasions when adverse weather means that travelling to the school site is unsafe and poses health and safety risks to the school community.

A decision to close the school would never be taken lightly and would involve our Senior Management Team.

In the Principal's absence the Vice -Principal will assume responsibility for making final decisions relating to school closure.

## **PROCEDURE:**

### SCHOOL CLOSURE BEFORE SCHOOL OPENS

- A decision will be made, as far as possible, before 8.30am as to whether the school should be open or needs to be closed.
- In the event of closure:
  - the school will send a message to BBC Radio Ulster and BBC N.I. using a prearranged security code to allow them to broadcast the information to the general public.
  - relevant information will be posted on our school website.

- Information will be text to all parents using the pupils first priority contact information on SIMS
- The principal/vice-principal will notify the Chair of the Board of Governors.

We advise our parents to listen out for school closure information from local media.

#### SCHOOL CLOSURE DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

- In the event of the school having to close during the day due to unforeseen worsening weather or similar unforeseen circumstances, this information will be given by text message to parents, telephone call if necessary or to the local media for parents to collect their children.
- In the event of snow, the main pathway from the front pedestrian gate to the front door will be cleared and salted. Parents, children and visitors should be aware that pathways, even where cleared, do remain dangerous. Before and after school class hours, parents are responsible for ensuring that their children do not slide on the school playground.
- During significant adverse weather conditions parents should bring their children into the school foyer. Pupils will then make their way to the school assembly hall where they will be supervised.

#### **Attendance Register**

The school appreciates that during bad weather children may arrive later than normal; parents should endeavour to contact the school to let them know they are on their way if likely to be delayed. The school recognises there may be isolated instances where families are cut off, even where the clear majority of children can get into school. In such instances parents should inform the school of the circumstances of this exceptional situation, as the school has a duty to clarify the circumstances of each case so as to be able to formally authorise the absence.

Parents acting on the assumption that the school would be closed without gaining confirmation, or failing to inform the school of the circumstances that prevents the child coming into school risk their child being registered as an un-authorized absence.

Where the school is officially closed, all absence is counted as authorised absence.