

St. Fergal's National School

Snow and Severe Weather as Critical Incidents

Policy Statement

Introduction

This Policy Statement has been prepared in light of the school's experience during the snowfalls of 2010 and following a review with staff and parents in January 2011. The statement is presented in the context of the school's Critical Incident Policy. It also forms part of the school's Health and Safety Policy.

Statement

In all instances, it is our aim to ensure that St. Fergal's National School will remain open for business and that teaching and learning will not be unduly affected by adverse weather. That notwithstanding, we will be mindful of health and safety considerations for staff, pupils and families who must make their way to and from the school.

The following are situations where the Board of Management must consider closing the school.

- Heating system out of order
- Water supply cut more than one day
- Impassable roads
- Sufficient staff cannot arrive
- Damage to school building/grounds that poses a Health and Safety risk to pupils and staff.

In all other situations, the school will remain open.

If weather conditions are severe, e.g. heavy snow, floods or storm force winds, staff should make their way to work as it is safe to do so. In such conditions, it is expected that local staff will walk to school and that those more distant will take public transport or drive when it is safe to do so. Staff members who do not arrive at work when the school is open will be considered to have taken a day's leave (Force Majeure, EPV, or unpaid leave.)

In such conditions, it is expected that parents will make the decision to bring their child to school when it is safe to do so. Absences occurring during severe weather episodes will be recorded as such. Should weather conditions deteriorate significantly during the school day:

- Staff members who have a distance to travel home will be facilitated to leave as early as possible.
- Children may be collected early by their parents, or by an adult nominated by the parent. The class teacher will note in the Day Book who has collected each child who leaves early.

In any case the school will remain open until 2.30p.m or until the last child has been collected from the school.

Deciding to close the school:

The decision to close the school will be made at the earliest possible opportunity so that parents can be informed in time. In most instances, it is not possible to make this decision until morning. The Principal will make contact with Bray School Project, and St. Kilian's School regarding any decision to be made. The decision to close will be made by the Chairperson and the Principal and will be based on any combination of the following:

- Heating system out of order
- Water supply cut for more than one day
- Impassable roads
- Sufficient staff cannot arrive
- Damage to school building/grounds that poses a Health and Safety risk to pupils and staff.
- Advice from Garda, Roads Authority or emergency services.

Communication:

The following methods of communication will be used as the most effective means for contacting parents:

- Text a parent
- School Website
- The local radio may also be used.

Clearing Entrances of Snow and Ice:

The Caretaker will be responsible for access to the school premises. The school has supplies of Ice-melt or similar. The school also has yard brushes and snow shovels for path-clearing. A Parent Volunteer Group has been formed to assist the Caretaker and other staff in path clearing. This group will be contacted by text message should the need arise for path clearing.

The following priority will be followed for clearing paths:

1. Main Entrance

The school yard will not be cleared and the gates to the yards will remain shut. Normal access and egress will not take place through the school yard. However, the area around all exits doors will be cleared in case of emergency evacuation.

Preparing for Winter, including Snow and Ice.

1. Ensure all staff are aware of the Policy statement
2. Boiler service in Term 1
3. Check any exposed pipes and insulate
4. Order supplies of ice melt or similar, as required
5. Check supplies of yard brushes and snow shovels and replace if required
6. Ensure Text a parent lists are up to date
7. Circulate all parents with snow information
8. Request Parent Volunteers for snow clearing
9. Maintain Volunteer Text a parent list
10. Investigate arrangement with local radio.

Information sites

www.winterredy.ie

www.education.ie

www.cpsma.ie

www.allianz.ie

The Critical incident Team and Severe Weather

The duties and responsibilities of the members of the Critical Incident Management Team are as follows. Responsibilities that may not naturally arise are in italics.

The Chairperson of Board of Management will be kept informed of all developments

The Principal and Deputy Principal will normally be responsible for:

Care of and communication with staff

Organising the supervision of pupils

Liaising with ancillary staff

Liaising with the Parents Association

Liaising with external support agencies, the emergency services, the Board of Management and the Department of Education and Science.

Drawing up a letter informing all parents of the critical incident and the school's response, reporting incidents to the Health and Safety Authority, and/ or communicating with the media, as appropriate.

Health and Safety Representative will normally be responsible for:

- Assessing the Health and Safety issue.

- Liaising with other members of Critical incident Management Team.
- Assisting with reports of dangerous occurrences or accident for the Health and Safety Authority, as appropriate.

The School Secretary will normally be responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Office is manned at all times
- Liaising with other members of Critical incident Management Team

The Caretaker will normally be responsible for:

- Controlling access to the school premises
- Maintaining security procedures
- Maintaining services such as heating, light, water and communication lines.
- Liaising with other members of Critical Incident Management Team.

The Teaching Staff will normally be responsible for:

- Supervising their own and colleagues' classes
- Assisting in identifying and supporting pupils at risk
- Assisting in information gathering
- Maintaining normal procedures

The Ancillary Staff will normally be responsible for:

- Maintaining normal procedures
- Assisting in identifying and supporting students at risk

The Chairperson of the Parents' Association will contribute by:

- Representing parents' concerns and wishes and regard to the school's response to the critical incident.