



## **Kingsland National School - Roll No: 18182I**

### **Emergency Closures Policy**

#### **1. Introduction**

An Emergency Closures Policy is a necessary component of school governance to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of pupils, staff, and the wider school community. It provides a structured framework for decision-making in the event of unforeseen circumstances, such as severe weather conditions, utility failures, or other emergencies.

#### **2. Rationale**

School staff and the Board of Management of Kingsland N.S. felt it necessary to develop this policy as the school had to be closed due to various emergencies in 2025 including the following: -

- Inclement weather, such as heavy frost & snowfalls, severe flooding and dangerous road conditions.
- Complete water outage due to burst pipe on mains connection – Uisce Éireann.
- No electricity provided to the school.

#### **3. Relationship to School Ethos**

Kingsland N.S. strives to provide a child friendly, 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.

#### **4. Aims and Objectives**

This policy aims: -

- To provide for the safety and welfare of all pupils and staff 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, DES circulars and Rules for National Schools

#### **5. Policy Content**

##### **5.1 Definition of Emergency Closure**

Emergency closures occur in the case of exceptional circumstances such as: -

- Inclement weather
- Loss of services (Heating breakdown, no water, no electricity etc.)
- Damage to the school building
- Death of a pupil/ teacher in the school
- Critical Incident
- Death of a President/ Bishop
- Essential repairs to the school building
- Insufficient staff/ Strike
- School premises required for voting in a state or general election
- In the interest of public health.

##### **5.2 Procedures**

Schools may close under Rule 60, 61, 62 of the Rules for National Schools and in accordance with circular 11/95. Most of these closures have been detailed above in 5.1

At present, the Department of Education leaves the final decision regarding the need for and duration of exceptional closing of schools to each individual Board of Management, in line with Department Circulars and the Rules for National Schools.

On a rare occasion the Department of Education will instruct all or schools in a specific area to close such as a Red Weather Warning (most recent Storm Éowyn, January 2025). The decision to close the school will never be taken lightly and the interests of all parties will be discussed including: pupils, staff and parents. Every effort will be made to keep the school open. See point 6 below.

**The following steps will be taken in the event of all emergency closure: -**

1. The Principal will contact the Board of Management members in a group text.
2. A decision will be made as to whether or not the school should be closed.
3. Parents, staff and bus drivers will be informed by text /email that the school is closed.
4. Where possible the reopening date of the school will be given to parents, staff and bus operators.

**5.2.1 Inclement Weather (such as Red Weather Warning, Heavy Snowfall, dangerous road conditions, severe flooding, storms etc.)**

**Heavy Snowfall**

In the event of a heavy snowfall, the Principal shall consult with the Board of Management 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 Principal will contact all parents, staff and bus operators servicing the school via text message and email, as soon as possible after the decision to close the school has been reached. On the first day of snowfall this could be the morning of the school closure.

If snowfall is prolonged over a number of days and road conditions become dangerous, a decision will be made every evening considering local conditions and future weather forecasts. It may be necessary to close the school indefinitely. If this should arise, parents, staff and bus operators will be informed of re-opening dates via text message.

**Red Weather Warnings/ Storms/ Severe Flooding**

The procedures in place for heavy snowfall are generally replicated in the event of Red Weather Warnings/ storms/ severe flooding etc. Parents, staff and bus operators are contacted via text message and informed that the school will remain closed.

If the school has already opened and is in operation when snowfall/ storm/ severe flooding etc occur and remaining on the premises is a risk to all, the Principal will contact the Board of Management to discuss the matter with a view to getting permission to close the school. Parents and bus operators will be contacted and informed that a decision has been made to close the school. Teachers will remain on the premises until all the children have been collected by parents, guardians or bus operators.

**5.2.2 Disconnection or loss of Services**

Where water or electricity services to the school are to be disconnected, advance notification is given to the school authorities. The Principal and the Board of Management will discuss the matter and parents will be given as much advance warning of the closure as possible either by text message.

**5.2.3 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. Parents are contacted via text message 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 either parents, guardians or bus operators.

**5.2.4 Critical Incident/ Death**

After consultation with the Board of Management it may be decided to close the school for pupils in the event of a critical incident or death of a pupil, staff member or BOM member. Parents will be informed of such a closure either by text message. The school may remain open to pupils, staff, BOM or Parents' Association, if issues such as a church service, guards of honour, readings or counselling are required. Please refer to the school's *Critical Incidents Policy (to be drawn up in 2025)* for more information on what a Critical Incident is deemed to be and how the school deals with a Critical Incident.

**5.2.5 Death of a President/ Bishop**

The Minister of Education and/ or the Catholic Church may issue a statement to schools to close following the death of a President or Bishop. Should this arise parents, staff members and bus operators will be informed of this decision by text message.

**5.2.6 Essential repairs to the school**

Every effort will be made to ensure that maintenance works on the school building and grounds will be carried out after school hours, during weekends and school holidays. However, this may not always be possible e.g. storm damage, flooding, burst pipes, collapsed ceilings, fire damage etc. Should this arise parents will be contacted via text /email 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 either parents, guardians or bus operators.

**5.2.7 Insufficient Staff/ Strike in the school**

In the event of an official INTO directive to teachers to go on strike parents will be given as much advance notice as possible either by text message. In the event of this arising, the school must remain closed on health and safety grounds.

In the event of insufficient staff attending school, (e.g. due to a strike, sick, dangerous road conditions etc) the school must close on health and safety grounds. The Principal may not be aware of this until school opening time. Should this arise the Principal will contact the BOM to discuss this matter with a view to closing the school. All parents and bus operators will be contacted and all teachers present will remain in the school until all children have been collected by parents, guardians or bus operators.

**5.2.8 School premises required for voting**

Kingsland N.S. Polling Station - Under Rule 61 of the Rules of National Schools the school must close if the school premises, or any part of it, is required for voting purposes. Should this arise parents will be given as much advance notice as possible by email.

**5.2.9 In the interest of Public health**

Under Rule 62 of the Rules for National Schools, schools may close in the interest of public health if it is the recommendation of the HSE. Such occasions may arise if there was an

outbreak of an infectious, highly contagious disease and remaining open would be a risk to other pupils and staff (e.g. Covid 19). Any outbreak of a contagious infectious disease must be reported to the HSE and advice would be given to the school on what measures to take. Should this arise, the Principal would discuss the matter with the Board of Management and the advice of the HSE taken. Parents, staff and bus operators will be informed of the decision to close the school and on what grounds and informed by either letter or text message.

**Please note:**

All half days, In-Service closures, voting in the school and staff strike days are notified to parents at least one week in advance.

In all other cases the Principal and School Secretary will strive to give as much notice as possible to parents, pupils and staff of a school closure. However, it may be the morning of the closure before the need to close becomes apparent.

The most recent Department of Education Circular in relation to adverse weather will be consulted in relation to days lost due to exceptional closures.

**6. Efforts to keep the school open**

The following measures will be undertaken with a view to keeping the school open: -

**In the event of inclement weather: -**

Every effort will be made to keep these pathways clear. However, this may not be possible in the event of heavy or prolonged snowfall.

Due consideration will be given to the fact if bus operators are running their service or not.

In the interest of health and safety all children will remain inside for the duration of the school day.

Children from senior classes will be allowed leave the school at 2 p.m. if their parent/ guardian is collecting a pupil from the infant classrooms at 2 p.m.

Safe access will be monitored on a daily basis as will the heating system and water supply.

Should matters deteriorate the school may have to be closed for any or a combination of the reasons given above.

Procedures as outlined above will be followed at all times.

**Advice & best practice from the Department of Education, CPSMA, INTO and IPPN will be followed.**

**In the event of loss of services (Heat, water, electricity)**

***Water***

The school supply of water is entirely reliant on the mains connection. In the event of a water outage on the mains and this results in no water to the school, CPSMA directions will be followed to close the school. There is no back-up tank of water in the school attic.

***Loss of heat/ electricity***

Children will be allowed wear their coat in the classroom. The temperature of the classroom will be monitored until it reaches the minimum 16degrees temperature within the first hour of opening. \*There is **no heating** at all in the junior boys' bathroom & the staff bathroom-due consideration needs to be given for this in times of extreme cold temperatures. \*

**7. Roles and Responsibilities**

Emergency closures in the school place particular responsibilities on various personnel within the school chain of command. The BOM must comply with DES circulars, Rules for National Schools and Health and Safety Legislation. The Principal will consult with the BOM members and a decision taken collectively. The Principal shall inform parents, staff and bus operators of the decision to close by text message & email.

**8. Ratification and Communication**

This policy will be presented to the Board of Management for discussion in September 2025 with a view to ratification. Once ratified, a copy of this policy will be uploaded to the school website and parents will be advised as to where to locate it. School staff will have access to a digital copy of this policy.

**9. Implementation and Review**

The policy will be implemented, once ratified by the BOM and reviewed at two-year intervals or sooner should the need arise, in consultation with the staff, parents and Board of Management of Kingsland N.S.

**References**

Circular 11/95 Time in School

Rules for National School (In particular Rules 60, 61 and 62)

[www.gov.ie/education](http://www.gov.ie/education)

[www.cpsma.ie](http://www.cpsma.ie)

[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

[www.into.ie](http://www.into.ie)

[www.ippn.ie](http://www.ippn.ie)

[www.into.ie](http://www.into.ie)

*Ratified on: 1/10/25*

**Signatures:**

Chairperson:	<i>Brendan Beirne</i>
Principal:	<i>Sylvia Cunniffe</i>