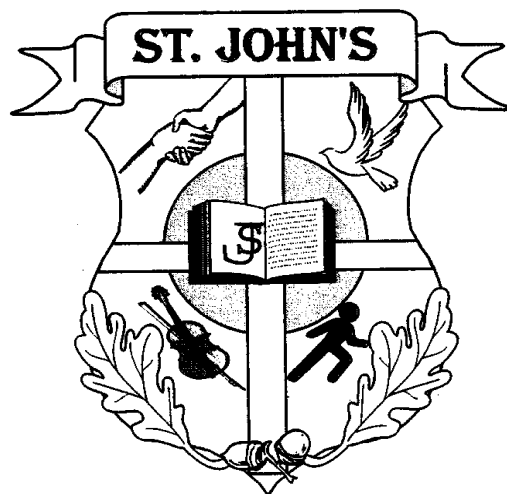


**St. John's Primary School
Bligh's Lane
Derry**

**A Policy for School Closure
2024**



“Learning Together Growing Together”

School Closure Policy in the Event of Exceptional Circumstances

The staff and Board of Governors of St. John's P.S. will endeavour to keep the school open at all times. There may however, be occasions when regardless of our best efforts it is impossible to keep the school open and admit pupils and staff safely.

When making the decision to open or remain closed the principal and Chair of Governors must use a checklist of questions as outlined in '*Checklist for Principals when considering opening or closure of School*', (October 2015)

For example considering Health and Safety;

- Can pupils and staff access the school building safely?
- Are there any areas within the school locality especially impassable or dangerous in times of extreme bad weather?
- Can pupils and staff be evacuated in an emergency?
- Can emergency vehicles access the school?
- Is the area for disembarking cars safe for children?
- Is there an acceptable pupil/ teacher ratio?
- Can staff, (bus driver, kitchen staff, learning support, clerical and teaching staff) actually reach school safely?
- Have the weather/road conditions from surrounding areas been considered for staff travelling?

These questions form part of the risk analysis that must be carried out before the school can open. If the school opens staff will try to follow the curriculum for each class but there may be occasions when this will not be possible, and classes may be put together and supervised by a member of staff.

Such circumstances should be exceptional, and the school should only be closed when it is agreed by the Principal and Chair of Governors, that in keeping with good practices of Health and Safety as outlined in the document '*Checklist for Principals when considering opening or closure of School*', it would be detrimental to pupils and staff welfare to open the school.

When such a decision is taken, staff and parents should be contacted promptly. EA, DENI and CCMS must be contacted and informed of the closure and reasons for it. A request for permission to close from DENI should be sought upon the reopening of the school.

In severe weather conditions parents should be aware of their responsibilities and the arrangements in place for dealing with such incidents of severe weather. These are set out below.

- Please make arrangements for childcare that can be put into place at short notice in case you receive notification that the school is closed for the day. It is good practice to put such arrangements in place before extreme weather events so that the children know exactly what will happen and won't be panicked by changes to their routine.
- Please remember that there may be occasions when it is not possible to operate the morning school transport journey, or the journey may operate late. You are responsible for your child's/children's safety.
- Parents should ensure their children know what will happen if transport provision is late in the morning and/or evenings or does not arrive at all, and, if required, have suitable alternative arrangements in place to ensure the safe transportation of their children to and from school. During periods of severe weather school transport providers will only operate where it is safe to do so and your child/children may be required to use a different bus stop. If the morning school transport journey does not operate and you decide to take your own children to school, then you must also be prepared to collect them at the end of the school day as school transport may still be unavailable.
- There may be circumstances when the school Principal decides it is necessary for children to be sent home from school early. It is essential that the school is able to contact you or a nominated responsible person at short notice. Please make sure that the school has up-to-date contact information.
- If there are difficulties getting suitable staff ratios to supervise our children the school maybe forced to close on grounds of health and safety. You will be contacted if this is the case.
- Please bear in mind also that the school meals provision may be affected in bad weather through closure of the kitchen due to lack of staff. In cases where food cannot be provided, the children needing a mid day meal will be sent home.

ARRANGEMENTS IN SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS

Whilst we would wish to have full attendance throughout the year, we appreciate that on occasion pupils live in areas where conditions make travel impossible or dangerous and this may prohibit attendance at school. Please note the following guidance for

parents and the measures that we may have to take in the event of severe weather conditions.

- Parents themselves should make a judgement whether to send pupils to school if conditions are extreme. This decision should be given careful consideration on Health and Safety grounds only.
- Where weather conditions necessitate early closure parents/guardians/nominated contacts will be informed by Text message and Facebook and asked to collect children promptly from the class teacher.
- If the school is forced to close and this decision can be taken early enough, this information will be posted on the EA website at www.eani.org.uk and on our school website at www.stjohnspsderry.co.uk. Our text messaging system has proved very effective for texting parents quickly and efficiently and will be used in such circumstances. It is vital that we have your up to date contact details to allow us to contact you quickly.

Monitoring, Evaluating and Review.

The monitoring of policy and procedures will be completed on a twice termly as detailed above.

A full review of procedures will be completed annually and EA advice sought where necessary.

Signed: _____

Kathleen McCallion
(Chairperson of the Board of Governors)

Date: _____

(Ratified at Board of Governors' meeting)