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|  | **New Ross Educate Together National School**  **Barrett’s Park, New Ross, Co. Wexford**  **Tel: 051445398**  [office@newrossetns.ie](mailto:office@newrossetns.ie)  www.newrossetns.ie  **Roll no 20458m** |

**Emergency Closures Policy**

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## School Details:

Name: New Ross Educate Together National School

Address: Barrett's Park, New Ross, Co. Wexford.

Telephone: 051445398

Email: office@newrossetns.ie

Roll Number: 20458m

Principal: Therese White

The school day starts at 8.30 and finishes at 1.10 for infant classes and 2.10 for all other classes.

## Introductory Statement and Rationale:

The Board of Management of New Ross Educate Together National School (New Ross ETNS) has the safety of children and staff as the prime consideration in relation to any decision to close the school. This may be due to emergency measures such as adverse weather conditions, serious interruption to the water supply or other utility services or the occurrence of a critical incident. There may also be cause to close the school due to planned closures such as disconnection of services by the local authority or staff meetings/in-service closures.

Adverse weather conditions can be defined as snow, ice, flooding and fog, which render journeys extremely hazardous.

The decision to close the school unexpectedly is not taken lightly; in all cases the Board of Management will seek to avoid a school closure unless it is absolutely necessary.

The School will endeavour to maintain a service to parents and pupils for as long as is reasonably practical. However, the interest and safety of children and staff are paramount under these circumstances. It is vital therefore that any emergency contacts for families are kept up to date so that in the event of a child(ren) having to be sent home for any reason that this can be done easily. Parents/Guardians are requested to notify the school immediately if there is a change in circumstances.

The need for the school to produce a policy on emergency closures in recent years is primarily due to:

* Possibility of disruption in water or electricity supply
* Inclement weather, such as heavy snowfalls, high winds etc.
* Building programmes and alterations to the design of the school, which have necessitated unscheduled closures on Health and Safety grounds in recent years
* Critical incidents

## Relationship to School Ethos:

New Ross ETNS seeks to provide a child- friendly, secure and safe learning environment for all pupils, whilst also striving to ensure that staff and visiting personnel can access a safe and welcoming working environment. This aim is founded on respect for the individual, child or adult, and is fostered in a culture which values diversity and difference.

## Aims and Objectives:

* To provide for the welfare of all pupils 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

## Type 1: Unplanned Closures

### Heavy Snowfall:

In the event of a heavy snowfall, the Principal shall consult with the Chairperson of the B.O.M. 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 school authorities will contact all parents/guardians who supply the school with up-to-date mobile numbers and email addresses by text message and email. A message to this effect will also be posted on the school’s website and social media pages.

If the snowfall is prolonged over a number of days and the school is closed indefinitely, parents will be informed of re-opening dates and by text and email and through the school website and school social media pages.

### High Winds/Thunderstorms:

The procedures in place for heavy snowfall are generally replicated in the event of storms/lightning i.e. parents/guardians are contacted via text message and email that the school will remain closed. Messages relaying this information will also be posted on either the school website or social media pages. If the school has already opened and is in operation when high winds etc. occur 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 child minders.

### Unexpected loss of services:

Where notification is not given to the school regarding loss of electricity or water services, the principal will endeavour to determine the extent of interruption to the service. Following consultation with the Health and Safety Officer on staff and the chairperson of the Board of Management regarding the Health and Safety implications of the loss in service, a decision may be taken to notify parents/guardians of the need to close the school. Teachers will remain on the premises until all children have been collected by either parents / guardians or child minders.

### Critical Incident/Death:

In some instances, the school might remain closed for pupils in the event of a critical incident or death of a staff member, BoM member or pupil. Parents are informed of such closures either by circular or text whichever is deemed appropriate by the Principal and B.O.M. In this instance, the school may remain open to staff and B.O.M or Parents Association if issues such as funeral services, liaison with media or counselling is required (See Critical Incident Policy).

### School Closure Through Illness:

In exceptional circumstances it may be required to close the school. This may occur when either a significant number of pupils and/or staff are absent through illness, for example where a pandemic has been declared by the appropriate health authorities.

• Advice will be sought from the Department of Public Health who will recommend to the school on whether to close.

• When a decision is made, the school will inform all parents/guardians and staff collectively by the school text.

• The Principal will then contact the Department of Education and Skills without delay.

• The school will inform all parents/guardians and staff when the Department of Public Health declares the school safe to reopen.

## Type 2: Planned Closures

### Disconnection of Services:

Where water or electricity services to the school are to be disconnected, a week’s notification is normally given to the school authorities. This enables the school to furnish the parent body with the relevant advance warning of such closures via circular, e-mail or text.

### Building Programmes:

The Health and Safety Officer on the Board of Management will consult with on-site Health and Safety personnel to ensure compliance with any statutory obligations in this regard. Parents/guardians will be briefed on such matters and the health and safety of pupils and staff will be paramount in any decisions made regarding closure in such circumstances.

**Please note:**

All half days and in-Service closures are notified to parents at least one week in advance.

## Roles and Responsibilities:

Emergency closures in the school place particular responsibilities on various personnel within the school chain of command:

* Parents and guardians are responsible for keeping school briefed on up-to-date contact details during school year
* Chairperson of Board of Management and Principal are responsible for ultimate decision to close the school
* Health and Safety Officers at staff and Board level are responsible for advising Principal and Board of Management regarding breaches of Health and Safety Policy which may merit school closure
* Principal is responsible for notifying staff of unplanned closures; as staff grows, cascade contact system will apply
* Principal is responsible for notifying parents/guardians of school closures
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## Department of Education Guidelines on Schools and Severe Weather:

### Status Red Weather Warning

All weather warnings of Status Red will require some action on behalf of schools. Schools need to assess the potential impact of such weather events taking account of past experiences and in light of advice on the current event from the principal response agencies in their area.

A Status Red weather warning for heavy rain may be particularly relevant if the local area is prone to flooding. A Status Red warning related to ice or snow which may compact may cause local issues due to the location of the school and/or the routes taken to reach the school.

### Status Red Weather Warning for Wind

Schools should note in particular Status Red weather warnings where strong winds or storm conditions are forecasted. Due to the high degree of unpredictability as to the impact of the weather associated with such a Status Red warning on local conditions schools should use the following guidance to assist them in making their assessment.

Status Red weather warning for wind related conditions may be given in advance of a school opening or it may arise during the day while a school is underway.

### Advance Warning of Status Red

Following consultation at a national level with the Office of Emergency Planning and the management bodies for schools, the Department of Education and Skills’ advice to schools is that they should consider not opening where a Status Red weather warning related to wind is forecast to coincide with the period/s during which students and staff would be expected to be travelling to and from school.

Whether the school should open later in the day where an improvement to the weather is forecast is a decision which should be taken in consultation with An Garda Síochána, the local authorities, school transport services and other appropriate agencies based in the school’s area.

### Warning of Status Red that arises during the school day

Where the Status Red weather warning related to wind is issued when the school is already underway with students and staff present, the school management should immediately contact An Garda Síochána, the school transport services and other appropriate agencies for advice on whether it may be safe to undertake journeys from the school or when such journeys should commence. Consideration should also be taken as to the safety of parents undertaking journeys to the school to collect children.

Where a decision may have to be taken on health and safety grounds based on the advice available to the school for students and staff to remain on the school premises during a Status Red warning related to wind, then schools should plan for such an eventuality by considering how students and staff can be accommodated within the school while awaiting an improvement in the weather. Such decisions should be taken based on the health and safety of all concerned taking account of the prevailing and forecast weather conditions in the vicinity of the school.

## Ratification and Review:

This policy was ratiﬁed by the Board of Management on the 21/3/2019.  It is scheduled for review in 2021.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents Association.  A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and the Patron, if requested. Hard copies of this, and all school policies, are available at the school on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management biannually.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

           (Principal)                                                      (Chairperson, Board of Management)

Date: \_\_\_21/3/2019\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_