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**Severe Weather Policy**

***This policy has been revised to reflect the DENI Guidance: DENI Checklist for Principals when considering opening or closure of the school. (Reviewed September 2017)***

***Policy Ratified by BOG: 10.01.18***

***Policy Amended 09.01.19***

***Policy Review: June 2019***

**Rationale**

Schools must have a policy in place with a clear plan of action to detail how exceptional closures resulting from severe weather conditions will be managed such as heavy snow or flooding.

**Linked Policies:**

The Severe Weather Policy should be read in conjunction with the following linked policies:

* Child Protection Policy
* Critical Incident Policy
* Examinations Contingency Plan
* Health & Safety Policy

**Responsibility to Monitor Weather:**

It is the Principal’s responsibility to monitor the weather supported by the Vice Principals. If the Principal becomes aware of potential severe weather she should refer to the Department’s Checklist in making the decision to keep open or to close the school premises.

**Safeguarding**

De La Salle College is committed to Safeguarding the Health and Safety of its pupils, parents and employees, and as such, may have to close the School during exceptional circumstances. In doing so, we will ensure that any disruption to the normal functioning of the School will remain minimal, whilst not compromising the safety and well-being of all who enter the premises.

**What is an Exceptional Closure?**

“An Exceptional Closure is unplanned and is due to unforeseen circumstances such as adverse weather conditions, power failure or situations which affect the safety of pupils and staff. Exceptional Closures require approval from the Department of Education to allow a school to reduce its operational days below the 200 required by legislation.”

**How will De La Salle College decide if we need to close**?

Although it may not always be possible to make such a decision, where feasible, and in order to facilitate early communication with parents and staff, the Principal, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, will endeavour to plan for an exceptional closure as far in advance of the actual closure as possible i.e. the afternoon/ night before the closure if circumstances allow.

Decisions the afternoon/ night before can only be taken when all the indications are that the conditions affecting the College will continue overnight. If there are doubts, the Principal will defer decisions until early morning.

Refer to ***DENI Checklist for Principals when considering opening or closure of the school. (September 2011, Amended September 2017)***

**Extreme Weather conditions such as snow, wind and rain.**

The Principal (Mrs C White) will take in to account local conditions and in consultation with the Building Supervisor (Mrs C Boyd) and the Bursar (Mrs M Fallon) will conduct a risk assessment of the grounds and premises of De La Salle College.

The Principal will seek to consult with the Principal of our sister School, St Genevieve’s. Any decisions made will be applicable to De La Salle College and not based on neighbouring schools whose conditions may be different to ours.

**Criteria to be considered for closure**

1. Can parents, pupils and staff access the school building safely?

2. Are pedestrian routes in to school safe and accessible- has grit been applied?

3. Can pupils and staff be evacuated in an emergency?

4. Is parking at all possible within the vicinity of the school grounds, until remedial action has been taken to make the area passable?

5. In an emergency, could the Emergency Services access the school?

6. Have local weather forecasts and road conditions, including those for areas from which staff will be travelling, been considered?

7. Are there any areas within the school locality particularly impassable or dangerous in times of extreme bad weather?

8. Are there any Northern Ireland Met Office warnings available?

9. Can the school premises be heated?

10. Is there provision of water for sanitary use or drinking?

**Other considerations**

1. Can enough Teaching Staff and Classroom Assistants attend school to ensure the adequate supervision of pupils?

2. Is the severe weather likely to clear quickly and allow safe access to the school building?

***The above questions will form part of our Risk Assessment. (See Appendix 1)***

**Closure before De La Salle College Opens for the School Day**

De La Salle College has contact details for all parents/carers, pupils and staff. We also make use of SIMs Text Message Service). Hard copies of parent/carer contact details are available from the Office Manager (Ms E. Dolan), Principal and Vice Principals as backup). Parents are requested and reminded to update the College of any changes to contact details on a regular basis. This is their responsibility.

De La Salle College’s Building Supervisor (Mrs C Boyd) will have visited the College site prior to 7:00 a.m. to assess the viability of the College opening, taking account of the factors as detailed previously in this policy.

De La Salle College’s Building Supervisor will then contact the Principal immediately by telephone call in order that she may make an informed decision and agree a way forward with the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

Should it be required, the Principal will also liaise with the Principal of St Genevieve’s High School.

The Principal will then inform the Staff of the school as a matter of urgency.

Parents and staff will be informed of an exceptional closure through the SIMs Text Message Service and the College App. The following people have access to SIMs text message service and the College App log in details: The Principal, Principal’s PA, Vice Principals, Bursar, Office Manager, Office staff and ICT Technician.

External agencies, who should be present in the College, should be informed of a closure by the member of staff who is responsible for their presence in the College.

Regular communication with the Building Supervisor/ Principal of De La Salle College and the Bursar is central to this plan/ policy- this is the responsibility of these three parties.

If possible, parents/staff will also be updated at a later time in the day with a view to the “next day” so that all have time to make suitable family arrangements.

**Exceptional Early Closure During School Hours**

 Parents/ Carers will be informed, through the SIMs Text Message Service system within the School. (The Office Manager/ The Principal’s PA will take responsibility for informing parents/carers.

In the unlikely event that the Internet is not working – all parents will be contacted by mobile phone using the hard copy of Home contact details available in the School Office.

Should a parent/carer not be able to be contacted or a pupil cannot be picked up by the parent/carer, additional contacts provided by parents/carers for collection purposes throughout the year will be used as the next means of communication.

The Principal & Heads of Year will not leave the premises for home until all pupils (from their designated Year group) have been collected by a person nominated by the parent.

External agencies, who should be present in the College, should be informed of an early closure by the member of staff who is responsible for their presence in the College.

If possible, parents/staff will be updated at a later time in the day with a view to the “next day” so that all have time to make suitable family arrangements.

**Further Strategies in Place**

Heating, lighting and water services will be regularly maintained by the EA. Out of course requests for maintenance are made by the Building Supervisor through the EA Help Desk. (Telephone: 028 90507508). Preparatory action will be taken to prepare the school grounds during severe weather such as heavy snow fall. The Building Supervisor will be responsible for the laying down of salt at the beginning/ end of the school day, should conditions require this approach to be taken.

In addition, during amber weather warnings, the EA has delegated salting responsibilities to a contractors: ‘Out There Services’ it is their responsibility during amber weather warnings issued by the Met Office to manage the salting of the school grounds. They are contracted to grit all areas shown in red as per drawing in Appendix 2.

The Building supervisor and caretaking staff will supplement the salting of all hard surfaces in the school grounds using the salt supplies in the designated salt boxes.

It is the Building Supervisor’s responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient supplies of salt for application to footpaths and the car park area. Supplies can be ordered by the EA Help Desk.

Safety Signs and Hazard Warning Tapes will be available in school for cordoning off hazardous areas. They will be kept in the Building Supervisor’s store and reordered as supplies become low.

The Building Supervisor will make regular checks of the premises, both inside and out to ensure that the School is safe and fit for purpose at all times.

Any perceived hazards (such as fallen down branches etc. in snowy or windy circumstances) will be removed by the Building Supervisor, where physically practicable and with EA Health and Safety requirements being adhered to at all times. Any such incidents and those of a more serious matter, will be reported by the Building Supervisor to the Principal, who may then, on some occasions, make a decision on any possible further course of action required e.g. reporting to Education Authority (Belfast Region) Maintenance Department for response/ support/ guidance.

**Contingency Plan when Risk Assessment determines that the College will Remain Open to Pupils & Staff:**

**Pupil Arrival to School**

Upon arrival to the College site, Pupils will be redirected to a safe pathway by senior and available staff using the options listed below. The principal will decide which Option to follow

**Option 1:** The pedestrian entrance at the main school gate leading to the front door of the technology department

**Option 2:** The pedestrian gate facing the front door of the school leading to the main front door of the school into foyer area

**Option 3:** The pedestrian gate by the canteen leading to the pupil entrance at the assembly hall

The pupils on site will be managed by available staff and the College will endeavour to keep the school open to 3:05pm.

**Staff Arrival to School**

Members of staff who experience a delay with their journey should ***and only if it safe to do so***, ring the College to inform their Line Manager of the delay. For Teaching staff this is the Principal, Mrs C. White and for Non-Teaching staff this is the Bursar, Mrs M.Fallon.

In the event of staff delays, pupils will be directed to the Assembly Hall for supervision by Senior and available staff.

Upon arrival to the College, staff must report to the Principal’s PA: Ms C.McWilliams so a register can be taken of all staff present in the building.

Teachers should then collect their form class from the Assembly Hall and escort them to their classroom for normal class.

**Examinations during Severe Weather**

If examinations are scheduled they will be relocated to the small gym in the PE Department or a suitable alternative location and students involved will be briefed by SLT. The Exam’s Office, the Head of Centre and the SENCO must be informed immediately of any changes to the scheduling of examinations due to severe weather conditions.

The Examination’s Contingency Plan details the action required if the Examination’s Officer is unable to attend for work.

**Appendix 1: Risk Assessment Questions for the Principal to Consider**

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| --- | --- |
| **Criteria to be considered for closure** | **Outcome**  |
| 1. Can parents, pupils and staff access the school building safely?  |  |
| 2. Are pedestrian routes in to school safe and accessible- has grit been applied?  |  |
| 3. Can pupils and staff be evacuated in an emergency?  |  |
| 4. Is parking at all possible within the vicinity of the school grounds, until remedial action has been taken to make the area passable?  |  |
| 5. In an emergency, could the Emergency Services access the school?  |  |
| 6. Have local weather forecasts and road conditions, including those for areas from which staff will be travelling, been considered?  |  |
| 7. Are there any areas within the school locality particularly impassable or dangerous in times of extreme bad weather?  |  |
| 8. Are there any Northern Ireland Met Office warnings available?  |  |
| 9. Can the school premises be heated?  |  |
| 10. Is there provision of water for sanitary use or drinking?  |  |
| **Other considerations**  |  |
| 1. Can enough Teaching Staff and Classroom Assistants attend school to ensure the adequate supervision of pupils?  |  |
| 2. Is the severe weather likely to clear quickly and allow safe access to the school building?  |  |

**Outcome of Risk Assessment:**

**Immediate & Urgent Action to be taken:**

**Principal’s Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Appendix 2:**

Map of School area to be salted during amber weather warnings by EA contractors.



**Appendix 3: Risk Assessment Template for Principals**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ACTIVITY** | **HAZARD** | **PERSONS WHO MAY BE AT RISK** | **CONTROLS IN PACE** | **FURTHER CONSIDERATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION** |
| **Travel/ Transport to/from school** |  |  |  |  |
| **Access within the school** |  |  |  |  |
| **Supervision of Activities**  |  |  |  |  |
| **Heating and Welfare Activities**  |  |  |  |  |
| **Maintenance of School Premises**  |  |  |  |  |

**Principal’s Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date of Completion:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Referenced Documents:**

DENI Checklist for Principals when considering opening or closure of the school. (September 2011, Amended September 2017):<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Principals%20Checklist%20-%20September%202017.pdf>

**Relevant Contact Details**

Education Authority, Belfast Region: paula.maguire@eani.org.uk Tel: 028 90564112

NI Met Office: [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)

DfI Roads [www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/roads](http://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/roads)

NI Water: [www.niwater.com](http://www.niwater.com)

PSNI: [www.psni.police.uk](http://www.psni.police.uk)

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service: [www.nifrs.org](http://www.nifrs.org)