



Principal: Mrs J Thompson

Contingency Plan for Severe Weather – December 2023

Aim

Our school appreciates that any closure will disrupt children's education and can make life very difficult for parents, especially those who work and need to find childcare at short notice. Therefore, Loughries IPS has developed this contingency plan for severe weather on the assumption that the school will endeavour to stay open where possible, dependent upon staff availability.

Exceptionally severe weather or other crisis events may disrupt even the best of plans. It may be necessary to close the school for a variety of extreme reasons including:

- Exceptional severe weather including snow, flooding or storms
- Disruption to national transport systems, for example through petrol or diesel shortages
- Accommodation problems, for example loss of power supply, heating failures or fire damage

Decision for closure

The decision to close the school will rest with the Principal, or in her absence, Mrs Rea and will be confirmed with the Chair of the Board of Governors. The decision will be made where possible before 8.00am and on the basis of information received from the media about weather, supplemented by on the spot observation from the Principal and through appropriate external agencies such as the Met Office.

Factors involved in reaching the decision to close the school are likely to be:

- Access to the school, i.e. road conditions (obstructions, snow, ice, flooding etc.) prevents safe access to the grounds and building
- Breakdown of school essential services (heating, electrical services, water, storm damage etc.)
- Lack of: First Aid Cover, Designated Persons for Child Protection, Food Service etc.
- Mrs Thompson, or in her absence Mrs Rea, will comply with the guidelines within "Checklist for Principals when considering Opening or Closure of School" (September 2011).

Notification of closure

Staff, Governors, parents and pupils will be advised of closure as follows:

- The Principal will contact BBC NI so that the information can be included in the BBC's Digital Text Service and, if a significant number of schools decide not to open, on the Northern Ireland news website at www.bbc.co.uk/ninews
- The Principal will add a notice of closure to the school website (www.loughriesips.com) and send an email via Eduspot to parents/carers.
- Finally, information signs will be posted at the gate to the school grounds and, if possible, the school phone line will be attended until 10.30am.

In order to facilitate this plan, parents and staff are asked to keep school informed of any changes to their contact email. Please do so by contacting the office. The procedure will be repeated on a daily basis for as long as the closure is required.

Initial Response to the Event of Severe Weather

1. Staff present at school as soon as is possible

Although it is recognised that severe weather conditions make it difficult for staff to get to and from work, unless advised to the contrary by Mrs Thompson or Mrs Rea, the expectation is that all staff will present themselves for work as soon as they can safely do so.

2. Clearance of snow

Within the school site, the school is responsible for snow clearance and the clearing of approach paths is the specific task for the building supervisor. When severe weather is forecast, the building supervisor will be responsible for spreading salt on the evening before. In extreme conditions, she will request the snow clearing services of the Education Authority. Please note that the clearance of public roads is the responsibility of the Road Service Department.

3. School hours reduced

In the unlikely event that severe weather conditions become hazardous when the children have already reported to school, pupils will be sent home early. The following conditions will apply:

- The school secretary will send an email to parents/carers and they will be asked to collect their child from school.
- Staff will be permitted to go home early as soon as practically possible.