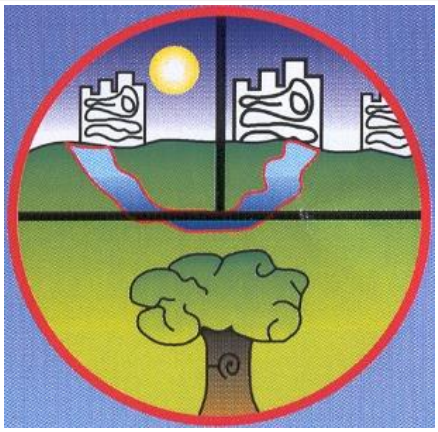
EDUCATION AUTHORITY
Cumran Primary School



Extreme Weather Policy and Procedures

Incorporating:

Loss of Water Policy & Procedures

Loss of Electricity Policy & Procedures

Rationale

In Cumran Primary School we recognise that it is essential to promote the health and safety of all in our school community. We will work towards providing an environment where each pupil's physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development is promoted with his or her best interests in view.

In the event of disruption caused by heavy snow the prime concern of the school will always be the health and safety of the pupils, parents and staff.

Even when opened, the decision as to whether or not to send a pupil to school during severe weather must be at the discretion of the parents, taking into account factors such as local road conditions and the availability of child-care.

Principles

This Extreme Weather Policy and procedures document is an important strand to our Health and Safety Policy. It promotes the development of speedy and accurate communication to all stakeholders.

Aims

- To enable parents and staff to make quick, safe and rational decisions during extreme weather.
- To promote positive attitudes towards health and safety.
- To promote a sense of responsibility to school and our role of carers.
- To ensure adequate supervision is maintained.
- To ensure all stakeholders appreciate the rationale behind decision-making.
- To enable parents, pupils and staff to arrive and leave school safely.
- To provide a knowledge base and ensure all stakeholders are aware of the communication network used during difficult circumstances brought on by severe weather or loss of main services.

What if heavy snow falls overnight?

What if there is a burst pipe or failure of electricity / heating overnight?

If any of the above occurs overnight, the principal (in conjunction with the Chairperson of the Board of Governors and senior leaders) will make a decision whether to open or not. This decision will be based on the following:

- Is access to the school (including local roads) safe for pupils, parents and staff?
- If access is dangerous, can it be made safe before the arrival of pupils, parents and staff?
- Can enough staff members get to school to ensure an appropriate child / adult ratio?
- Are the conditions likely to deteriorate during the day, impacting on the safe collection of children?
- Can the school provide meals for the day?
- Are the toilets working and is drinking and hand-washing water available?

If a number of the above are a concern, then the school may have to close. Please be assured that the school will only close when extremely necessary.

When will the decision to close be made and how do parents and staff know?

The decision to close will be made where possible before 7.30 am. If possible, the decision will be made the night before with an aim of providing working parents with more time to find alternative and suitable supervision for children.

When a decision has been made to close, the announcement will be made firstly by text message to all first points of contact for pupils, then on the school website and then on the BBC news website. Parents should be aware that most of these are now managed through C2k. The updating of the relevant sites can take some time so the first port of call should always be the text message and the school's own website. During severe weather parents and staff should always check these sources before travelling to school. The principal will always advise staff by means of a mobile text.

Will the staff be expected to travel in extreme weather?

Staff are asked to make every effort to get to school although, again in severe conditions, they must make a judgement about the safety of travelling. It is expected that all staff will make every reasonable effort to undertake the journey to school. It is appreciated that the journey may take longer than normal and therefore some staff may not be able to arrive before the normal start time. Staff should however consider making arrangements to leave home significantly earlier on such days.

Will the school run as normal on these days?

The school will post updates on the website and send text messages informing parents of the situation. In particular they will be advised as to whether or not the school is open to operate a normal timetable, depending on the number of staff and pupils available. In the event of having to operate with a small number of staff, the staff available will organise a programme of events on a daily basis. This programme will obviously differ significantly from the usual daily lessons and routines.

Are all entrances open on snowy or icy days?

It is difficult to clear and grit all access paths leading to the school and the school does not have any specific machinery to assist with the clearing of snow or ice. When ice or snow hamper movement

around the school, in order to minimise the risk of injury, we will aim to ensure that the main entrance is always cleared to the best of our ability.

Can children play outside in the snow?

Prior to pupils being allowed to play outside in the grounds, all children should have appropriate footwear and a well-labelled warm coat, hat and gloves. Children will be instructed by staff not to throw snowballs. Pupils are only allowed outside to play under the supervision of staff.

What happens if there is a need to close early?

Once the school is open, we will aim to remain open until the end of the normal school day. In the event of extreme weather or loss of services during the day, we will immediately announce an 'Early Closing' on the school website and by text message to the first point of contact for every pupil. Once all parents are contacted, staff living significant distances from school will be permitted to leave as long as an appropriate pupil / staff ratio is maintained. As the numbers of day pupils remaining decreases, they will be moved to the Assembly Hall or one classroom.

Will children still be able to travel on the school bus in extreme weather?

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 until they are on the school bus or taxi. Parents should ensure their children know what to do if transport provision is late or does not arrive 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 if school transport is still 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. There may be circumstances where transport is not available for the afternoon journey, in which case you will be contacted by the school. In such eventualities you will be required to make alternative transport provision for your child/children.

Conclusion

Please remember that under all circumstances, if parents are concerned, they are always welcome to collect their children early and the child will still receive a full present mark. As telephone lines can become extremely busy at such times, it is advisable just to call into the school reception to sign your child out.