



Kesh Primary School and Community Nursery Exceptional Closure Policy

Ratified by Board of Governors in:

November 2024

Signed:

Chairperson of Board of Governors

Next Review:

November 2027

Signed:

Principal

Exceptional Closure Policy

Kesh Primary School and Community Nursery will always endeavour, within the constraints of statutory guidance and health and safety legislation, to remain open during the school day to deliver the best possible education to its pupils.

An exceptional closure is unplanned, and is due to unforeseen circumstances such as adverse weather conditions, or power failure. During such circumstances, the safety of all pupils and staff is of paramount importance. The principal is authorised to make an emergency closure, in consultation with the Chair or Vice-chair of the Board of Governors, in exceptional circumstances, when it is absolutely necessary to do so in the best interests of the pupils and staff.

Examples of specific exceptional closures are:

- The death of a teacher or pupil at the school
- Flooding or burst pipes at the school
- Electricity failure
- Heating failure
- Damage to school
- Severe weather conditions e.g. heavy snowfall
- School being used as a polling station for parliamentary/local government elections

The decision to close the school will be taken by the principal following the completion of a risk assessment. In times of extreme weather, the principal will consider the risk as far in advance of such a closure as possible. The principal will endeavour to make a decision at the earliest possible time. Decisions the night before can only be taken when all the indications are that adverse conditions will continue overnight. If there is any doubt the principal will defer the decision until the next morning.

Factors to be considered in coming to any decision to close for exceptional reasons

- Can pupils and staff access the school building safely by pedestrian and vehicle routes?
- If not, can access be made safe?
- Is the school appropriately heated?
- Can buses, meal deliveries, etc., reach the school, particularly if the unforeseen circumstances affect a large proportion of pupils?
- If a limited number of staff can attend, are there enough adults to ensure adequate pupil teacher ratios?
- If there was an emergency could the school be safely evacuated and emergency services reach the school?

Decisions taken must be applicable to each individual school –
not based on neighbouring schools whose conditions may differ.

Communication regarding exceptional closures due to adverse weather conditions

Closure notification before the start of the school day:

- Parents will be notified by 'TheSchoolApp' messaging service, as well as through the school social media channels on Facebook, Instagram and X.
- The closure will be posted on the School Website <https://www.keshprimary.co.uk/>
- The principal will inform EA and DE or any closure using the agreed methods of communication via 'MySchool'

Closure notification during the school day

If the weather deteriorates during the day:

- The school may be closed early, but only in extreme cases
- Parents will be notified by 'TheSchoolApp' messaging service
- The closure will be posted on the School Website <https://www.keshprimary.co.uk/>
- The school will be kept open, with as many staff as possible on hand, until the last pupil has left
- It is not possible for pupils to be given lifts by members of staff
- Staff travel must also be taken into consideration for health and safety reasons
- Where possible parents/carers will be notified later in the day regarding a closure for the next day to facilitate the making of childcare/family arrangements

The school will make all practicable efforts to keep parents informed as to the situation with the school during adverse weather conditions, as we appreciate that such conditions and the uncertainty, places difficulties upon parents. Parents are expected to check their app messages and notify the school office for any change in contact details.

EA buses transport many of our children to school. Each driver has the responsibility for deciding if their bus will complete all, some, or part of their normal route. We will try to communicate this information to parents as soon as we know, however it is not always possible that parents will receive this before the usual time for bus collection.

It is always very important that parents make informed decisions on the safety of their children travelling on dangerous roads, regardless of whether the school is open or closed.

Parents can also check BBC School Closures as the BBC have agreed that they will:

- create a dedicated webpage when they receive emergency closures from more than 5 schools
- tweet closures on: BBC News NI: @bbcnewsni
- post them on their BBC News NI Facebook page

Appendix 1 Adverse Weather Risk Assessment

ACTIVITY	HAZARD	PERSONS WHO MAY BE AT RISK	CONTROLS IN PLACE	FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS
Travel - Getting to the school	Dangerous travel in extreme bad weather conditions	Principal, teachers, Building Supervisors and/or maintenance staff, pupils	Principal monitors weather conditions/warnings https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No travel should be considered if extreme bad weather warning and advice is given for only essential journeys to be undertaken. ● Rural location of school and/or majority of school personnel. ● Regional warnings may not be accurate at local level, so local media broadcasts may also help. Refer to e.g. BBC weather and search by postcode
Getting appropriate members of staff to open school	Inadequate supervision	Teachers and pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A means of communicating with school staff in order to establish their attendance on the day of extreme bad weather. ● Staff will communicate with principal via his mobile (phone call / text message) when possible ● A means to communicate with school bus service (drivers have the principal's mobile number), local authority to establish pupil means of getting to school. ● Principal to establish what would constitute appropriate supervision – through dynamic assessment on the day of extreme bad weather. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The emphasis should be on how to operate safely, not whether a full and normal curriculum could be followed. ● Primary school pupils are likely to be local, with a greater expectancy of attendance, however we are a rural school, with most children travelling from surrounding areas highly dependent on school buses numbers may be less – and supervision easier.

Access to school buildings	Slips, trips or falls	Principal, teachers, Building Supervisors and/or maintenance staff, contractors, parents/carers and pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Salting/gritting could be undertaken when snow or ice is foreseeable. ● Salt/grit spreading on pedestrian walkways and snow clearance where reasonable. ● The Principal to determine which walkways should be used and treated first. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extreme bad weather is generally forecast, although snow/ice can be worse or less than expected, depending on local geography. ● If a school's salt/grit stock is low then only main walkways should be treated. ● Other routes could be signed to prevent use.
Heating and Welfare facilities	Cold – below permitted work level (16° C / 60.8° F). No sanitary or drinking water	Principal, teachers, Building Supervisors and/or maintenance staff, contractors and pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Constant heating throughout periods of known cold snaps to prevent frozen pipes. ● Maintenance of water systems, for example prompt repair of leaks and drips. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If the school premises cannot be heated or provision of water for sanitary use or drinking cannot be made within school hours then the school may have to close.
Keeping the school open	Slips, trips or falls of pupils at break-time	Pupils and Supervisory Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No use of playgrounds and other external areas, when snow/ice cannot be easily removed or reduced. ● If there are external areas free or generally free of snow/ice, supervised play/break can be undertaken. ● The supervision level should be higher and running prohibited. ● Any areas of snow/ice remaining should be avoided and managed, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Certain areas could be cordoned off and managed through salting/gritting prior to releasing for use. ● Melted snow/ice can refreeze so continued attention may be needed. ● If necessary, use only one playground therefore as restricted space then staggered breaks could be undertaken. However, could this system be appropriately supervised?

			e.g. cones used to mark area of ice. Pupils should be informed of restrictions.	
Continuing to keep the school open	Further snow or ice, or icing of previous fall	Principal, teachers, Building Supervisors and/or maintenance staff, and pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Principal to monitor the weather conditions through the Met Office and local media. ● Information may also be gained from the EA. ● Further salt/grit could be used on walkways and other areas to minimise for the next day. ● Surface water could be brushed to drains to avoid icing up overnight. ● Maintain walkways and key roadways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Further stock of salt/grit could be organised and/or maintenance undertaken on water or heating systems to ensure they continue to work effectively.

Appendix 2 – KEY WEBSITES AND CONTACTS

NI Met Office	www.metoffice.gov.uk
Application to DE for exceptional closure	https://exceptionalclosures.education-ni.gov.uk/Identity/Account/Login?ReturnUrl=%2F