



Adverse Weather Policy & School Closure

Procedures used in the decision to close Cregagh Primary School in the event of adverse weather conditions.

Our aim is to avoid, as far as possible, any uncertainty and confusion in the event of possible school closure. We believe that the best way to do this is to communicate as fully as possible with our parents. 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 very considerable difficulties upon parents.

There are rare occasions when our school will find it necessary to close. These are usually occasions when adverse weather means that the school site is unsafe and poses health and safety risks to the school community.

Our first consideration is always the safety of the children. In adverse weather conditions, where staff live some distance from school, the journey to school may be too hazardous for them to set out and, once here, equally hazardous for them to get home. Staff may also be affected by the closure of their own children's schools. Health and Safety risk assessments may mean that we cannot open the school if there is insufficient staff to properly supervise the children.

Staff who live locally will be in school to keep the school open if at all possible. A decision to close the school is never taken lightly and involves the Principal and Senior Leadership Team. The Chairperson of the school's Board of Governors is also consulted before any final decision is made.

In the Principal's absence, the school's Senior Leadership Team will assume responsibility for making final decisions relating to the Adverse Weather Policy.

In the event of adverse weather:

- A decision will be made, as far as possible, before 8.15am as to whether the school should be open or needs to be closed;
- In the event of closure, the school will:
 - ✓ Send a message to **Radio Ulster and BBC N.I.** through the official school closures system (DENI), using secure log-in details known only by each school, to allow media to broadcast the information to the general public;
 - ✓ **Text message** all pupils' parents using the most up-to-date mobile phone numbers supplied by them to school (*please ensure you update the school office records if you change your phone number: mobile phones and/or landline);
 - ✓ Put any relevant information up on our **school website** (www.cregaghprimary.org.uk);
 - ✓ Post any relevant information on our school **Facebook page** (<https://www.facebook.com/cregaghprimary/>)

- We advise our parents to listen out for school closure information from local media during times of bad weather; BBC Radio Ulster in particular;
- In the event of the school having to close **during the school day** due to unforeseen worsening weather or similar unforeseen circumstances and parents are requested to collect their children, this information will be shared with parents by text message and/or telephone, Facebook page, and whenever possible the local media;
- In the event of snow and ice, all reasonable efforts to clear and salt pathways will be made. Parents, children and visitors should be aware that pathways and carparking areas even where cleared, may remain dangerous. Before and after school class hours, parents are responsible for ensuring that their children do not slide on the school pathways and playgrounds;
- During significant adverse weather conditions parents should bring their children into the school building. In certain instances, Parents may be required to supervise their children in the hall or classroom until staff are available to formally take supervision of the children. They are asked to leave the school immediately as soon as the staff has taken over;
- Parents are asked not to contact school to 'ask' if it is opening or staying open. In the event of school having to close due to severe weather, families will be notified using the various methods outlined. If school plans to close, it will notify parents.

Attendance Register

The school appreciates that during bad weather children may arrive later than normal. Parents should endeavor to contact the school to let them know they are on their way, if likely to be delayed. The school recognises there may be instances where families (especially any living in rural or further away areas) are cut off, even though the majority of other children can get into school. However, as most of our pupils live very close to our school building, this will apply to very few families. In such instances, parents should inform the school of the circumstances of this exceptional situation, as the school has a duty to clarify the circumstances of each case to be able to formally record the absence to the Education Authority (South-Eastern Region, EA).

Parents acting on the assumption that the school would be closed without gaining confirmation or failing to inform the school of the circumstances that prevents the child coming into school risk their child's absence being registered as an "unauthorised".

Where the school has been officially closed, all absence is counted as authorised absence.

We will always do everything in our power to avoid school closure. However, parents are asked to remember that while pupil safety always comes first, the safety of school staff must also be carefully considered. In fact, the safety of the children is directly affected by the availability of school staff. Normally, when a school is forced to close it is because its staff cannot guarantee their attendance at their place of work. School cannot run the risk of having 135 children present with only a handful of staff to look after them. Consequently, any decision to stay open or close in times of severe weather must be made 'in the round' taking account of several important considerations.



D.F. Heggarty
Principal
CREGAGH PRIMARY SCHOOL

