



St. Michael's School

Emergency Closure Policy

Originally adopted: June 2022

Comprehensively Updated: **May 2026** | Next Review: May 2028

Updated to reflect current emergency planning guidance, communication systems, critical incident procedures, severe weather protocols, continuity of learning considerations and stakeholder communication frameworks.

Introductory Statement

St. Michael's School recognises that there may be occasions when it becomes necessary to close the school unexpectedly or at short notice. This policy sets out the procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency closure, to ensure the safety of all pupils and staff, the continuity of education where possible, and clear, timely communication with all stakeholders.

This policy applies to all unplanned closures and to situations requiring early dismissal. It has been updated to reflect lessons learned from extended school closures (including the COVID-19 pandemic), the availability of digital learning platforms, and current Department of Education and Youth (DEY) emergency planning guidance.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the school's Critical Incident Management Policy, Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, Data Protection/GDPR Policy, and Acceptable Use Policy. St. Michael's School seeks to maintain a practical and proportionate approach to emergency closure planning, recognising that the primary consideration in all circumstances is the health, safety and wellbeing of pupils, staff and the wider school community.

Rationale

The Board of Management has a duty of care to all pupils and staff. In the event of an emergency, the primary responsibilities of the school are to:

- ensure the immediate safety of all pupils and staff on the school premises.
- communicate promptly and clearly with parents/guardians, staff, and relevant authorities.
- arrange for the safe supervision and collection of all pupils and ensure clear communication with parents/guardians regarding collection arrangements.
- maintain continuity of education to the greatest extent possible during any period of closure.

Types of Emergency Closure

This policy covers the following types of unplanned or emergency closure:

Type of Closure	Examples
Severe Weather	Status Red/Orange weather warnings; severe snow, ice, or flooding; road conditions making transport unsafe
Building / Infrastructure Emergency	Heating failure; burst pipes; structural damage; fire; gas leak; loss of electricity or water
Public Health Emergency	Notifiable disease outbreak; pandemic; public health authority direction
Critical Incident	Death of a pupil or staff member; serious accident on or near school premises; security threat; civil disturbance
Direction from Authorities	Direction from DEY, HSE, An Garda Síochána etc. to close
Staffing Emergency	Insufficient staff to safely supervise pupils; industrial action (in accordance with relevant legislation)

Decision to Close

The decision to close the school rests with the Principal, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Board of Management (BoM) where time permits.

Factors the Principal will consider include:

- the nature and severity of the emergency
- advice from relevant authorities (Met Éireann, HSE, An Garda Síochána, DEY, local authority)
- the condition of the school building and grounds
- the availability of adequate staff supervision
- the transport situation — particularly whether school buses and escorts can safely operate
- the individual needs of pupils together with the availability of safe supervision and transport arrangements.

Where closure is directed by DEY or another statutory authority, the Principal will act in accordance with that direction immediately.

The Principal may utilise the Emergency Closure Decision Checklist (Appendix A) to support decision-making and communication processes during significant emergency closure events.

Severe Weather Protocols

Met Éireann Weather Warnings

The school will follow a clear protocol based on Met Éireann weather warning status:

Warning Level	School Response
Yellow	School remains open. Principal monitors situation. Staff and parents/guardians advised exercising caution on journeys.
Orange	Principal assesses local conditions, transport safety, and building safety. Closure may be considered. Decision communicated to all stakeholders by 7:00am if closure decided before school day begins.
Red	School closes. No exceptions. DEY guidance will be followed. Parents/guardians notified immediately via all available communication channels.

Where a weather warning is issued during the school day, the Principal, in consultation with the Chairperson, will assess whether early dismissal is necessary, taking into account transport safety and the ability of parents/guardians to collect pupils.

The school will never send pupils home early without being satisfied that adequate supervision and safe collection arrangements are in place for all pupils.

Communication Framework

Prompt, clear, and multi-channel communication is essential in an emergency closure. The following communication framework applies:

Communication Channels

Channel	Use
Aladdin SMS / Push Notification	Primary channel for immediate parent/guardian notification — all closures and early dismissals
Aladdin Email	Detailed follow-up communication regarding closure arrangements, collection procedures, continuity of learning considerations and return-to-school information.
School Website	Public notice of closure posted as soon as decision is made
Staff Communication (Aladdin / School Email)	All staff notified simultaneously with or before parent/guardian notification
DEY / TUSLA / Bus Inspector	Notified by Principal as required by their respective reporting obligations

Communication Timing

- Where closure is decided the evening before or early morning: notification to parents/guardians and staff by 7:30am at the latest
- Where closure is decided during the school day: notification issued immediately upon decision
- Where early dismissal is required: parents/guardians notified with maximum possible notice — minimum 30 minutes where practicable
- Where a public health emergency requires extended closure: updates to parents/guardians and staff until a return date is confirmed

The Principal/ Deputy Principal will designate a staff member to manage communications if the either is unavailable.

Pupil Safety During Emergency Closure

The safety of pupils during an emergency closure or early dismissal is the primary concern. The following procedures apply:

Pupils on School Premises at Time of Closure

- Pupils remain under school supervision until collected by an authorised person.
- Teachers and SNAs maintain supervision ratios throughout.
- The Principal or Deputy Principal will coordinate collection arrangements, with particular attention to pupils who travel by school bus.
- Pupils must not be permitted to leave the premises unaccompanied unless they are of an age and ability to do so safely and written parental consent has been provided in advance.
- A record must be kept of the time each pupil is collected and by whom.
- Where a pupil cannot be collected by an authorised person within a reasonable time, the Principal will consider and implement any actions deemed necessary in the

circumstances, which may include contacting An Garda Síochána, Tusla or other relevant agencies.

Individual Pupil Considerations

St. Michael's School recognises that some pupils may require additional support, reassurance or communication during emergency closures or disruptions to routine. Where appropriate, the school will communicate with parents/guardians regarding arrangements necessary to support a safe transition home or return to school following a closure.

Pupils Travelling by School Bus

- Bus Eireann and bus escorts will be contacted immediately upon decision to close.
- Parents/guardians of pupils will be specifically notified of transport arrangements by Aladdin and telephone where necessary.
- Bus escorts employed by the Board of Management shall follow school transport guidance and individual pupil transport arrangements where applicable.
Responsibility for transport services operated by external providers remains with the transport provider and parents/guardians in accordance with agreed procedures.

Continuity of Learning

In the event of an extended emergency closure, St. Michael's School will consider appropriate measures to support continuity of learning, taking account of Department of Education guidance, the nature and duration of the closure, available resources and the needs of pupils. Such measures may include communication with families, the provision of learning activities or the use of school-approved digital platforms where appropriate and practicable.

Critical Incident Closure

Where an emergency closure is required due to a critical incident (e.g. death of a pupil or staff member, serious accident, security threat), the following additional procedures apply:

- The school's Critical Incident Management Policy is activated immediately alongside this policy.
- The Principal will contact the DEY, the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) / National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) as appropriate.
- Communication with parents/guardians and staff will be sensitive to the nature of the incident and will be approved by the Principal before issue.
- The school will not release details of a critical incident to media — all media enquiries are referred to the Principal/Chairperson of the BoM
- Debriefing and psychological support for staff and pupils will be arranged in consultation with NEPS following a critical incident closure.
- Return-to-school arrangements following a critical incident will be carefully planned, with appropriate supports in place.

Extended Closure (Public Health or Prolonged Emergency)

In the event of an extended closure (e.g. a public health emergency, significant structural damage, or other prolonged event), the Principal will establish appropriate communication arrangements with staff, parents/guardians and the Board of Management for the duration of the closure.

The Principal will liaise with the Department of Education, NCSE, Tusla and other relevant agencies as required.

Return to School Following Emergency Closure

When the school is ready to reopen following an emergency closure:

1. The Principal or delegate will inspect the school building and grounds and confirm they are safe before pupils return.
2. A clear return-to-school date and time will be communicated to all stakeholders via Aladdin Connect email, and the school website.
3. Bus Eireann and bus escorts will be notified of the return date and any revised arrangements.
4. Staff will be briefed on any changes to procedures or the physical environment before pupils return.
5. A post-closure review will be conducted by the Principal and BoM to assess the effectiveness of the response and identify any improvements needed.

Where appropriate, the Principal may complete the Post-Closure Review Template (Appendix B) and report any significant findings or recommendations to the Board of Management.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Principal	Makes closure decision; coordinates all communications; manages staff deployment; liaises with authorities; considers continuity of learning arrangements where appropriate; leads post-closure review
Deputy Principal / ISM Team	Supports Principal in all closure procedures; assumes Principal's role if Principal is unavailable
Chairperson, BoM	Consulted on closure decision where time permits; informed immediately of all closures; supports Principal in media/external communications
Class Teachers	Maintain pupil supervision during emergency closure procedures, support communication with families where required and contribute to continuity of learning arrangements where appropriate; report welfare concerns during closure
SNAs	Maintain pupil supervision and support pupils in accordance with their assigned duties and the direction of the Principal
Bus Escorts	Follow revised transport instructions; follow school transport guidance and communicate any concerns arising during emergency closure arrangements to the school; contact school immediately if any concern arises
Administrative Staff	Send Aladdin notifications; update school website; maintain record of all communications sent during closure
All Staff	Respond promptly to communications; follow Principal's instructions; maintain safeguarding vigilance during closure; complete post-closure debrief

Key Emergency Contacts

Contact	Details
DEY Emergency Line	01 889 6400
NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service)	01 889 2700
Met Éireann Weather Warnings	www.met.ie
An Garda Síochána (Emergency)	999 / 112
Local Garda Station	Ballyfermot Station 01-6667200
Tusla (Child and Family Agency)	www.tusla.ie Duty Social Worker National / General Contact Tusla National Office Tel: 01 7718500 Email: info@tusla.ie  Out-of-Hours Emergency Tusla Out-of-Hours Social Work Service Tel: 0818 776 315
School Bus Eireann Inspector	School Transport Provider – Current contact details maintained by the Principal. Email contractordublin@buseireann.ie
Local Authority / Civil Defence	South Central Area / Ballyfermot–Drimnagh Area Office. Local Authority / Civil Defence Dublin City Council Tel: (01) 222 2222 Fingal County Council, (01) 890 5000
School Insurance Company	School Insurance Provider – Current contact details maintained by the Principal. www.marsh.ie
Chairperson, BoM	chairperson@stmichaelsholyangels.com

Success Criteria

- All closures are communicated promptly and clearly to all stakeholders.
- All pupils are safely supervised and collected during any emergency closure.
- Appropriate communication and continuity of learning arrangements are considered during extended closures where practicable.
- All safeguarding obligations are maintained during periods of closure.
- A post-closure review is conducted after every significant emergency closure.
- Key emergency contacts are reviewed and updated at the start of each school year.

Related Policies

- Critical Incident Management Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)

- Data Protection Policy / GDPR
- Health, Safety & Wellbeing Statement
- School Transport Policy

Ratification and Review

This policy was originally adopted in June 2022. It was comprehensively updated in May 2026. It will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if DEY guidance, legislation, or a significant closure event requires an earlier review.

It was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on 24th June 2026.


Signed: **Date:** 24th June 2026
Chairperson, Board of Management

Appendix A – Emergency Closure Decision Checklist (Principal Use)

Complete this checklist before issuing closure notification. Keep on file.

Action	Yes	N/A
Nature and severity of emergency assessed		
Relevant authority guidance checked (Met Éireann / DEY / HSE / Garda)		
Building/grounds safety assessed		
Transport safety assessed		
Chairperson BoM consulted / informed		
Staff notified		
Parents/guardians notified via Aladdin SMS		
Parents/guardians notified via Aladdin email		
School website updated		
Local radio notified (if severe weather)		
Bus operator notified		
DEY notified (if required)		
Continuity of learning arrangements considered where appropriate.		
Critical Incident Management Policy activated (if applicable)		
Post-closure review scheduled		

Date of closure: _____ Time of decision: _____

Nature of closure: _____

Checklist completed by: _____ Signed: _____

Appendix B – Post-Closure Review Template

To be completed by the Principal following every significant emergency closure and presented to the BoM.

Date(s) of closure: _____ Nature of closure: _____

Duration: _____ Number of pupils affected: _____

1. Was the closure decision made in a timely manner? Comments: _____
2. Were all stakeholders notified promptly and through appropriate channels? Comments: _____
3. Were all pupils safely supervised and collected? Any issues? Comments: _____
4. Were transport arrangements managed effectively? Comments: _____
5. Were communication arrangements effective and were any continuity of learning measures appropriate and practicable? Comments: _____
6. Were there any safeguarding concerns during the closure? How were they managed? _____
7. What worked well? _____
8. What needs to improve for next time? _____
9. Actions arising: _____

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

Presented to BoM: _____ Date: _____