



BALLYORAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

**Exceptional
School Closure
Policy**

Reviewed January 2026

Rationale

This document aims to outline the school's policy on Exceptional Closures and detail the action to be taken in the event of an Exceptional Closure being deemed necessary.

Ballyoran Primary School has a legal obligation to remain open and provide education to its pupils on a set number of days each year.

The school's vision states 'As a welcoming Inclusive School we aim to provide a safe, happy, caring and stimulating learning environment which will enable each child to develop to his or her full potential - academically, socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually, in preparation for becoming responsible citizens.' This vision can only be realised if the school is open.

Management will ensure that the school is open on every day possible and that an exceptional closure is taken as a last resort.

It is widely recognised that the impact of Exceptional School Closures goes well beyond the school gates. An Exceptional School Closure causes disruption to the education of pupils and inconvenience for parents who have to arrange alternative childcare. They also have an adverse affect on the economy as parents have to take days off work to look after their children.

The Principal and Board of Governors have to balance their duty to keep the school open with their duty to ensure the health and safety of the school's stakeholders – pupils, staff, parents and visitors. It is accepted that there will be exceptional circumstances when a school has no option but to close. It is important to state that this decision will never be taken lightly.

What necessitates an Exceptional School Closure?

The Department of Education (DE) have granted schools five days out of the school year for staff development. These are called School Development Days when staff are in school and pupils are off. These are on top of five Baker Days which staff work out of the holidays.

The Department of Education will consider an application for a reduction in the days on which a school must be in operation to take account of exceptional circumstances or where the closing of the school is outside the control of the school authorities, for example, due to:-

- the death of a teacher or pupil at the school
- flooding or burst pipes
- electricity failure
- an exceptionally heavy snowfall
- weather warning eg a storm
- use as a polling station for parliamentary/local government elections

The above list is by no means exhaustive.

The Role of the Principal

As the Principal has overall responsibility for the day to day running of the school, any decision to close the school rests with him. This decision will be taken after liaison with the relevant people on the ground.

The Principal will:

1. Decide to close the school
2. Initiate Text Alert System - staff and parents
3. Post closure information on the school website
4. Inform Chair of Governors
5. Inform EA
6. Seek approval from DE for an Exceptional Closure

Communication

Communication is vital when the decision to close a school at short notice has been taken. This decision may be taken on the morning of the closure so it is essential that information is communicated to the school's stakeholders as swiftly and efficiently as possible. The decision will be communicated as follows:

1. Staff Text Alert System will be initiated by Principal
2. Parents will be informed in the following ways
 - Text Alert System
 - School App
 - Facebook
 - School website
 - EA Website
 - BBC News NI Website

Review

This policy will be reviewed and updated annually.

