

# **GATEHOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## **PROCEDURES for EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSURE**

Edition 2: August 2006

### **A: Introduction:**

These guidelines are established to specify procedures to be taken in the event that the school has to close during the course of the school pupil day due to unforeseen circumstances.

### **B: Definition:**

An 'emergency school closure' is a situation where, between the hours of 9.00am and 3.00pm (the school pupil day), the school has to be closed due to circumstances beyond the control of staff, for whatever reason, and where the conditions in school are such that the welfare of pupils and staff is in jeopardy. Such conditions may include loss of electricity and / or heating, and may also include loss of facility to prepare mid-day meal. They may also include factors outside the control of the school such as weather conditions and the state of the local roads.

*All references to the 'headteacher' in the under-noted arrangements include 'or his representative in his absence'.*

### **C: Responsibilities:**

The responsibility for the decision to close the school rests with the headteacher. The Education Department (i.e. both central services at 30 Edinburgh Road, Dumfries *and* the school's Education Officer) must be informed, as details are passed by the former to the Council's public services section where arrangements are made for public notification of the event as appropriate. The Education Department's policy has always been that the headteacher, being on site, is best able to judge conditions and be aware of local circumstances, and is therefore best able to make the appropriate decision at the time of any emergency, based upon these.

### **D: Procedures:**

1: At the time of any proposed school closure, all factors should be balanced carefully (so as to be able to fully justify closure). The paramount consideration, however, must at all times be the welfare of everyone in the school – children and adults.

2: Each situation must be judged upon individual circumstances, particularly where it may not be necessary to close the entire school. For example, road conditions in a certain area may be such that it is only necessary to end the day for certain pupils, or it may be that, should conditions deteriorate late morning, they may not be

sufficiently bad to take action until after lunch, so avoiding unnecessary disruption to, and waste for, catering arrangements.

3: Once a decision is taken to close the school, the necessary telephone contacts (at C above) should be made in the first instance.

4: Each class teacher should maintain a separate, up-to-date, class-list indicating-  
those pupils in class travelling to/from school by bus (priority A pupils),  
those pupils who travel by family car / other transport (priority B pupils),  
those pupils who live within walking distance from school (priority C pupils).

5: It is **ESSENTIAL** that pupils are not despatched from school until the relevant parents/carers/emergency contacts have been notified. All pupils should remain in classrooms under supervision of class teachers while arrangements to ensure care/supervision of them after their despatch are made.

6: It is important to ensure that **priority C children** understand that they must return to school if, when reaching home or other designated 'safe' location, they are unable to gain entry or make other contact with the appropriate adult/carer.

7: **School personnel involved in contacting parents** / nominated family members are the **headteacher** and the **school secretary**. It is important to maintain a central register indicating contacts made during the procedure in order to avoid confusion and the risk of misunderstandings - which could arise when many staff are making individual contact.

8: School transport (bus) lists should be obtained from the school office to indicate pupil passenger lists.

9: Pupils using buses (priority A pupils) will normally be despatched first (after contact with parents/carers has been made - and it may be that conditions are such that these are the only pupils that need to be despatched).

10: If appropriate, parents/carers of priority B pupils will then be made, and these pupils will be despatched *as they are collected*.

11: If appropriate, parents/carers of priority C pupils will then be made, and the pupils will be despatched accordingly.

12: Members of staff will be released according to conditions.

13: The headteacher has responsibility for remaining in school until 3.00pm after closure to ensure:

- Supervision, in the event of absence of class teachers, of any pupils for whom no arrangements at home can be made, or who have returned to school;
- Availability for telephone contact to respond to any queries arising from the early closure.