



Department of
Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
Bangor
BT19 7PR

14 September 2018

Dear Principal

The purpose of this letter is to highlight the need to have in place an action plan detailing how your school will deal with any exceptional closures which may arise during the school year due to extreme weather conditions, such as severe cold weather or flooding.

A checklist is available on the Department of Education website at www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools, outlining the main factors that you should consider when making decisions about a possible school closure.

Key Actions for School Principals

- Consider the health and safety guidelines provided in the checklist and ensure that your school's action plan is kept up to date.
- Have in place an agreed communication method for informing parents/guardians, school staff, school authorities and the Department of Education about school closures. All contact details need to be up to date and parents and staff should be made aware of the agreed communication method.
- Consider using the texting service which is available to schools as part of C2k's Education Network service. A SMS Messaging Service, within the MY SCHOOL Portal, has been made available to all schools and enables nominated users to send a single text message to multiple recipients' mobile phones registered within each school.
- The texting service is provided as a core part of the C2k service and it is a matter for individual schools to consider if they wish to avail of this. Text messages cost 2.9p per text and can be purchased in advance from the text service provider. For guidance on how to register and use the C2k texting service please refer to the following C2k Exchange information sheets while logged on to your school network:

- [EN017](#) – C2k Text Preparation Guidelines (How to Register)
- [EN018](#) – C2k Text Messaging (How to Create a Message)

- All emergency closures throughout the school year should be recorded via the MY SCHOOL Portal functionality. Instructions on how to do this are provided on the C2k Exchange:
 - [EN083](#) – Emergency School Closure Notifications

- The closure notices can be submitted from outside of school or from within school through www.c2kschools.net.

For those primary, post-primary and special schools that use the BBC service to publicise emergency closures, please note that the BBC no longer accept emails to notify them of closures. All closures due to adverse weather that are recorded via the C2k MY SCHOOL Portal function will be automatically forwarded to the BBC. This is the only way for your school to **inform the BBC** of such closures.

Emergency closures recorded via the C2k MY SCHOOL portal will now also be displayed on the NI Direct website.

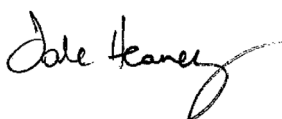
NURSERY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS PLEASE NOTE - As your school does not have C2k, a separate letter will be issued to your school's info@ account about how to notify the BBC of an exceptional closure due to adverse weather.

- **Please note that any exceptional closure still needs to be approved by the Department of Education. Applications for exceptional closures should be emailed to attendance@education-ni.gov.uk.**

The Department would ask that all School Principals ensure that the above actions are progressed as soon as possible and that reminders are put in place to ensure that this exercise takes place on an annual basis.

Thank you for your co-operation. If you have any questions in relation to this correspondence please email attendance@education-ni.gov.uk or telephone 028 9127 9543.

Yours sincerely



DALE HEANEY
Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team