BRACKENAGH WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL
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Principal: Mr M J Peacock B Ed

Exceptional Closures of School Due to Weather

As you know we have had to close the school on occasion due to the snow and adverse weather conditions, and I thought that it would be helpful for you to know on what basis such decisions are taken. Any school exceptional closure is unplanned, and is due to unforeseen circumstances such as adverse weather conditions, power failure, or situations which affect the safety of pupils and staff.

Schools have been given guidelines from both the SELB and the Department of Education when it comes to deciding whether or not they should remain open during times of adverse weather. I have outlined some of these below, so that you will have a clearer understanding of the rationale behind such decisions in the future.

We have to consider, amongst other things:

1. **Health and safety** questions, including:
- Can pupils and staff access the school building safely?
- Can pupils and staff be evacuated in an emergency?
- In an emergency, could the Emergency Services access the school?
- Is the area designated for disembarkation from transport safe for pupils?

2. **Transport** – Can buses reach the school, particularly if the unforeseen circumstances affect a large proportion of the pupils?

3. **PTR** - If a limited number of staff and pupils can attend, is the pupil/teacher ratio acceptable?

4. **Travel**
- Have local road conditions, including those for areas from which staff will be travelling, been considered?
- Are there any areas within the school locality especially dangerous in times of extreme bad weather?
- Can cars access the school grounds/car park safely?
- Is parking possible outside the school grounds until remedial action has been taken to make the area passable?

P.T.O.

5. Further considerations

- The rural location of the school and/or the majority of school personnel.
- Ensure that heating, lighting and water services are available.

If we do have to close the school we will always endeavour to take the following three steps to keep everyone updated:

(a) All parents will be sent a text message informing them that the school is closed.

(b) The information will be posted on the school website.

(c) We will contact the BBC and ask them to add our school to the list of school closures. These are normally displayed on the BBC NI website.

I hope this information will be helpful when we are faced with further instances of adverse weather.

Yours sincerely

M J Peacock
(Principal)