

EARLY CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

There may be occasions where a head of establishment may wish to, or is required to close an establishment early. Procedures to be followed in these circumstances are outlined as follows:

1. EARLY CLOSURE - EVENING EVENTS OR EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES ETC

This section deals with early closures which can be foreseen by heads of establishments.

The head of establishment may wish to close the establishment earlier than usual because of an evening event or other educational activity involving pupils and/or staff. In such circumstances the head must take into account the inconvenience such closures create for many families and for other sections of the working community (e.g. transport, staff, road crossing patrols etc). The head of establishment must also balance the educational loss involved against any educational gain to be secured from the event or activity. Any departure from normal hours of pupil attendance should be regarded as exceptional.

Heads of establishments have indicated that they are prepared to accept responsibility for their decisions on early closures and the practice of seeking prior approval has been discontinued. Heads should notify the education office and the parents in writing as far in advance of the event as possible and indicate the reasons for their decision. All appropriate agencies and staff of support services should also be notified from the school. It must be ensured that suitable arrangements are in place to safeguard the interests of pupils entitled to free school transport.

Heads of establishments should maintain a record of all early closures either in the school log book or other convenient file. Such a record will be of value in the event of any accident involving pupils of the school or establishment.

It should be noted that the heads' discretion does not extend to half day closures which require specific approval from the education office.

2. EARLY CLOSURE - PRIOR TO HOLIDAY PERIODS

As you are aware, it has been the practice that schools close early on the day immediately preceding certain major holiday periods. Clarification is given below of the arrangements pertaining to an early closure.

Permission for early closures prior to holiday periods is given in accordance with this section and should not be regarded as a matter falling within the discretion of heads of establishments.

It is open to heads of establishments to authorise early closures prior to the summer, Christmas and Easter holiday periods. You should note, however, that there is no obligation on heads to make such arrangements. Furthermore, such closures are contingent upon making transport arrangements which are satisfactory to parents and do not involve additional expenditure on the part of the authority. In any event, schools should not close earlier than 1300 hours on the day prior to the summer holiday period or 1430 hours on the days prior to a the Christmas and Easter holiday period. There should be no early closure prior to the October holiday.

I should be grateful if you would ensure that these arrangements are operated in your establishment.

Procedures to be followed in emergency situations are outlined in Procedure Manual No 3/09.

Heads of establishments should note that the early closure procedures outlined in Parts A and B are subject to ongoing review.