

Liberton High School – pupil dies after gym wall collapses



[A pupil at Liberton High School has died this morning](#) after an internal wall collapsed, apparently in the PE building.

The school has been closed and all parents were asked to collect their children from the school if they could. Parents were alerted by text from the school.

Parents at Liberton High School received a text message to alert them to the accident, reveals [@STVZara](#) <http://t.co/rq1HET04KM>

– STV Edinburgh (@STVEdinburgh) [April 1, 2014](#)

The school on Gilmerton Road has capacity for 850 pupils but currently has a school roll of around 640 drawn from the catchment area shown on the plan prepared by the council which we reproduce above.

All emergency services were called. Police Scotland remain on the scene along with officials from the Health and Safety Executive.

Only last week Education Scotland reported on its most recent inspection of the school. They reported an improved school ethos and a positive start by the head teacher in setting a new direction for the school.

It is expected that the head teacher will make a statement this afternoon.

The incident today follows another in December 2011 when a

female pupil fell into a lift shaft.

At the time the council issued this statement:-“”We can confirm that Liberton High School pupil, a 15-year-old girl, fell approximately five metres in a lift shaft at the school this morning.

“The emergency services were called immediately and the girl’s parents were informed and the pupil is now at hospital. We have initiated an investigation into the incident and we will be cooperating fully with the Health and Safety Executive.”

City of Edinburgh Council was fined after the schoolgirl was seriously injured when she fell more than five metres as teachers attempted to free her from a broken down lift.

Morgan Seaton, then aged 15, sustained three fractured vertebrae, bruising over her lower back and a sprained wrist as a result of the incident at Liberton High School on 8 December 2011. She remained in hospital for two days before being discharged and was unable to return to school for a further two weeks.

The incident was investigated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and a prosecution brought against the council for serious safety failings.

Edinburgh Sheriff Court heard in February that Miss Seaton was in the lift with three other pupils when it stuck between the first and second floors. She called the school’s office from her mobile phone and teachers quickly arrived and told the pupils to remain calm as they tried to affect a rescue.

Rather than use the emergency call button in the lift or call the fire service, teachers and the school janitor decided to fetch the lift key, open the doors and attempt to get the pupils out themselves.

After opening the lift shaft doors on the first floor, staff

could see that the bottom third of the lift car was visible at the top of the door opening. They forced open the lift car doors and spoke with the pupils who were trapped within.

One boy was helped to lower himself safely out of the lift down to the first floor corridor. Miss Seaton then manoeuvred herself out of the lift on her stomach until she was suspended feet first out of the opening. One of the teachers stood behind her as she attempted to drop to the floor but instead she fell through the gap between the bottom of the lift and the floor and into the lift shaft where she fell over five metres to the basement.

After her return to school, Miss Seaton continued to suffer pain and discomfort in her back for several months and needed regular physiotherapy and medication.

The court was told the fire service had found on arrival that power to the lift had not been isolated and the car could have resumed moving at any time during the pupils' ordeal or as the schoolgirl lay injured in the basement waiting for help to arrive.

HSE found that the council failed to ensure that staff at Liberton High School had been given sufficient instructions, information and training to deal with such incidents, and that no suitable risk assessment had been undertaken.

The City of Edinburgh Council, of City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh, was fined £8,000 after pleading guilty to breaching Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

Following the case, HSE Inspector Hazel Dobb, said:-

"A 15-year-old girl was seriously injured in an incident that was wholly preventable. As a result she spent several months in pain, her education was disrupted and her social life and part time job were both put completely on hold as she recovered.

“The teachers were well intentioned in their attempts to help, but had they received suitable information and guidance on how to deal with trapped people in lifts they would have called for help and not put pupils at such risk of injury.

“What was important was to make staff aware of the steps they ought to take in such situations. Simply distributing safety instructions to all staff and providing awareness sessions internally would have been sufficient. Unfortunately, this was not done because the risks associated with the use of the lifts had been entirely overlooked by the council.”

The non-denominational school was mentioned as a potential destination for some of the pupils at Castlebrae Community High School when that school was earmarked for closure last year.

In 2012 the condition of the school buildings was the subject of a detailed survey by the council. That report identified total repair required over the next 30 years of £13.7m, with £3.6m identified as required over the next five years.

The Council reported that the building was assessed as achieving a score of 71 out of 100 falling within Category B under the Scottish Government School Estate Core Facts guidance which is described as ‘Satisfactory – Performing adequately but showing minor deterioration.’ The building surveyors concluded that the buildings are in a fair condition but that there were a number of areas where repair, maintenance or replacement works were required.