


City of Edinburgh Council – update on schools closure

 The timeline of the closure of 17 schools in Edinburgh is as follows:

March 2016 : Following a storm, considerable damage was caused to Oxbgangs Primary School which was closed early before the Easter holidays. Alternative arrangements were put in place for pupils.

Tuesday 5 April : Council asked for assurance from Edinburgh Schools Partnership that all schools were safe to open. That assurance was given but then retracted. This is the first letter assuring the safety of the buildings:



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Friday 8 April : Report from Edinburgh Schools Partnership, the consortium responsible for running some of the city's schools, confirmed to the council that they could not guarantee the safety of those buildings, despite their earlier assurances.



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Saturday 9 April : Statement from Education Secretary Angela Constance:

“The safety of children, young people and staff in our schools is paramount, and I recognise the concern of parents. I am reassured by the prompt action taken by Edinburgh City Council.

“While this is primarily an issue for the council, the First Minister and I have spoken to the council leadership this afternoon and offered the Scottish Government’s full support to keep disruption to children’s education at an absolute minimum.

“The First Minister will today chair a meeting of the Scottish Government’s resilience committee to ensure that everything possible is being done to help.

“It is too early to assess any wider implications for schools in other parts of Scotland. However, Scottish Government officials have written to all local authorities this weekend to ask them to carry out any necessary checks on their own estate as soon as possible. We understand that all of the affected buildings in Edinburgh were completed over ten years ago. We will ensure that, as more information about the nature of the issue in Edinburgh is established, this is passed on to other local authorities to assist them in this process.”

Monday 11 April : Detailed structural surveys are being carried out to schools. Council trying to identify alternative arrangements for around 7,500 school pupils affected. The Scottish Government has also called for

Today 12 April 2016 : 17 schools across Edinburgh remain closed today. The Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee met to discuss an emergency motion on the matter this morning. [You can watch this here.](#)

The text of the emergency motion is here:



Some discussion ensued about the need for an enquiry, but the council leader was much keener to get on with the business of sorting out alternative arrangements for children in the short term whilst leaving the matter of any enquiry open for further debate on 17 May.

The council's Green Group were adamant that a full enquiry is needed into the failure of ESP buildings including the contractual and other arrangements with the consortium regarding the quality assurance of the construction. They also want to investigate whether the council has any liability in terms of their Building Control department who must have signed the buildings off when completed. Councillor Melanie Main said: "If a report is asked for in May this is too short a time scale, and that is why I want to have a full enquiry later."

The Council Leader, Andrew Burns said: "All costs will be the responsibility of Edinburgh Schools Partnership, but we still need to look at what has happened here in some detail. Our absolute priority is safety of these buildings.

"But I do not want to distract our council officers from the task of getting our students back into educational provision."

All senior politicians were at this meeting along with the Chief Executive, and all have worked since the announcement on Friday afternoon as a team with council officers to put contingency plans in place.

Tomorrow : Some secondary pupils will be back at school (although not necessarily in their own school buildings)

The Edinburgh Reporter snatched ten minutes with Chief Executive Andrew Kerr between the end of the Corporate Policy

and Strategy meeting and the start of the daily meeting which he convenes with all councillors and council officers who are involved.

He told us: "We are concentrating clearly on ensuring that all our young people are in buildings suitable for their education. Those who have examination requirements and who have special needs are our priority.

"We are trying to make sure that years 4, 5 & 6 are accommodated as fast as possible. We have made some progress. We think that some of those pupils will be back in class by as early as tomorrow and the rest by the end of the week. We currently expect that subject to some other health and safety checks that we can get all of our primary school pupils back in school by Monday."

Watch the full interview here:

[The Edinburgh Reporter News Andrew Kerr On School Closures](#) from [Phyllis Stephen](#) on [Vimeo](#).

The council does not anticipate shouldering any of the costs which might be incurred as a result of this matter. They have made it quite clear to Edinburgh Schools Partnership (ESP) that they will have to carry the can for all of that. ESP is a group of companies charged with the responsibility of building and maintaining the 17 buildings now temporarily closed.

Edinburgh Schools Partnership, made up initially of builders Amey and Miller won the £360 million PFI contract in 2001 to build schools for the council. The Bank of Scotland was also part of the consortium and the plan was to borrow £60 million from the Bank of Scotland and the European Investment Bank to build the schools. The council was then expected to pay £12 million per annum to the consortium to run the schools according to a service level agreement.

Amey had previously won the contract to build schools in Glasgow in a contract worth over £1 billion.

More information for pupils and their parents or carers can be found on the Council website [here](#).