

Boroughmuir will be ready for pupils by February

PHASED APPROACH FOR OPENING OF NEW BOROUGHMUIR HIGH SCHOOL

Despite thinking it might have been ready last year at this time, and in the face of several delays the new Boroughmuir High School will open in 2018. There will be a phased opening to ensure a smooth transition for pupils and staff and to take account of exams in early January.

Following extensive discussions with the head teacher and all those involved with the school it has been decided that the new school should be operational just after the February mid-term holiday.

This will mean that S4, S5 and S6 pupils will be able to complete their prelim exams in January with minimum disruption.

The school's contractors, O'Hare & McGovern, are said to be on course to hand over the building before Christmas.

The project team are confident the new building will be ready to be occupied in January 2018 but it has been agreed, at the request of the school's parent council and the Head Teacher, that the five week period between the new term start in January and the February break will be used as a transition and familiarisation period for the school.

The opening of this school has now been put back several times. The reason? We were advised by a council spokesperson some time back that the contractors were having difficulty in finding local personnel to do the work. This meant that they were having to bring workers from Northern Ireland and they could only work the equivalent of 4 days allowing for travel time backwards and forwards.

Notwithstanding this new building will be welcomed by pupils and teachers alike.

In 2016 David Dempster said he was ecstatic that his pupils and staff will be moving to the bespoke school in the New Year. That date was put back by a full year but we imagine his sentiments remain much the same.

He told The Edinburgh Reporter then : “The atrium in the heart of the new school is a fantastic open plan space. It will be used day in day out for catering as we have our main dining hall at one end and a satellite cafe at the other.

“But the most exciting thing about this space is that for the first time ever we will be able to have whole school assemblies, that is all 1200 pupils, in the same place at the same time. We will really get the sense of the school and the community that we are. Hopefully I will be able to use this space to address all the youngsters here and really feel proud of our new space and our new school.”

There is a rooftop games area meaning that the school is built on as small a footprint as possible and that every inch of space is being used. There will be plant installed at one end which although it will obscure the view to the castle will perhaps provide some wind protection. The area will have netting over and around it to ensure that the basketballs or footballs are not constantly falling into the compact play area below.



Photo of Boroughmuir taken during visit in September 2016

Jacqueline Whymark, Chair of the Boroughmuir High School Parent Council, said: “On behalf of all of the parents of pupils I want everybody to be reassured of the Parent Council’s complete support for the Head Teacher’s and Council’s current position.

“After discussions with the head teacher during the last couple of months, in which he spoke rationally, and particularly passionately on behalf of all the Senior phase pupils who will sit their Prelims in January, I endorse his rationale and he has my wholehearted support.

“The move to a new school is a huge logistical, educational and spiritual responsibility. It requires the staff’s certainty that everything is completely ready, before the school makes the move. Clearly our children’s wellbeing, and the high quality of their learning and teaching experiences come first.

“On behalf of us all, we support his decision to delay a move until after this crucial period of exams in January 2018 is complete.”

Head Teacher David Dempster said: “As Head Teacher I am certain that this is the right decision for the school. It will allow us to manage our move over an extended period and allow the life of the school and in particular learning and teaching to continue with minimal impact. December and January is a busy and important time for our senior pupils in the run up to their prelim examinations in January.

“The opening of the new High School is an exciting time for all in the Boroughmuir community. I’m convinced that with the extended transition period, the process of migration from ‘old to new’ will be a well-managed and enjoyable experience for us all.



Cllr Ian Perry

Councillor Ian Perry, Education Convener, said: “The contractors are handing over the school as planned before Christmas but the proposed phased approach to occupying the building will cause less disruption to the school community.

Moving to a new school can be a stressful experience for staff, pupils and parents and this approach will allow for a smoother transition period and is in the children's best interests."

Councillor Alison Dickie, Education Vice Convener, said: "We have listened to the Head Teacher and Parent Council and have agreed it is in the school community's best interests not to rush moving into the new building. There will be benefits resulting from this phased approach as the S4, S5 and S6 January prelim exams can take place in familiar surroundings for the pupils, staff can become familiar with the systems and technology in the building and where possible organise some timetabled activities, such as PE classes, in the new school."



Councillors on a familiarisation visit in
September 2016