

# Opinion – Education Convener has his say on the schools review



Cllr Ian Perry Education Convener

by Councillor Ian Perry who is the Education Convener at The City of Edinburgh Council.

The council announced plans in November of ways that they would look at dealing with an increased number of school pupils in the west and south west of the city. This has resulted in petitions to keep schools open, and although the council is clear that some of the schools need major works to improve them nothing has yet been decided.

“There has been a lot of debate over the proposals for changes to schools in the west and south west of the city over the past six weeks.

“Much of the focus has been on the potential impact any changes might have on local communities but it’s important to highlight the benefits that state of the art schools of an optimum size can bring for pupils and communities.

“Everyone agrees that we must prioritise the learning needs of all our young people and focus on our aspirations for them and future generations – we are not talking about the educational impact over the next six years but the next sixty years.

“Larger and newer schools can provide enhanced opportunities on site for all pupils both within and out with the curriculum. More pupils mean more staff so the curriculum choice can be expanded with extra subjects and advanced levels on offer to increase their learning experience. A wider

curriculum, increased sporting facilities and opportunities for more varied cultural/social clubs can only be of benefit for our pupils. Over three quarters of our high school pupils, around 15,000 young people, are currently or soon will be educated in new or refurbished buildings.

“Active links with special schools, such as those between Currie Community High and Woodlands, would still be maintained and where possible enhanced. Myself and my Vice Convener, Councillor Alison Dickie, have already met with the Woodlands head teacher and members of the parent council to reassure them. Some questions have been raised that suggest vulnerable pupils may not be supported in a larger school. This is not borne out by the experiences of our other larger schools in the city. We saw this on a recent visit to a 1,200 pupil high school with inclusion and nurture spaces that allow those pupils who need additional support a place where they can feel safe and be supported.

“Everyone should remember that we are only at the informal consultation stage with the review and I want to repeat our appeal to hear people’s ideas and solutions. As part of that process we will hold events at schools later this month and in early February which will allow discussion of the ideas proposed with Council officers. An update on the discussions and recommendations about what should happen next will come to the Education, Children and Families Committee in March.

“Yes, change brings with it hurdles to overcome but if everyone works together it can only be positive. Where community links presently exist with schools these will be maintained and if possible expanded and new schools, like the one proposed in the west of the city, will have new and strong community links established.

“We’re determined to improve attainment and achievement for all and to make sure no child is left behind. The educational outcomes for our young people should be at the heart of our

future plans and providing schools that fully meet the needs of our learners is key to our success moving forward.”

Full details of the schools review can be found on the [Council website](#).