

Councillor explains holiday time is not the best time for all children

by Councillor Scott Arthur, Labour councillor for Colinton/Fairmilehead.

The end of the school holidays means an end to hunger for some.

Edinburgh's children will soon be heading back to school with memories of what was almost certainly the hottest and driest summer they have ever experienced.

For many households, however, recent days would have been dominated by trying to find the time and money to equip Edinburgh's future doctors, engineers and carers with a school uniform. The financial challenge this poses many in Edinburgh is a reminder of the inequality present in Scotland's capital. I am hugely proud that my motion in Council this year resulted in Edinburgh's school clothing grant no longer being one of the worst in Scotland. I am really disappointed, however, that despite a further top-up from the Scottish Government, Edinburgh still can't offer the very poorest households the £129.50 charities say is needed. Indeed, the £100 Edinburgh offers does not compare well with the £135 available in neighbouring Labour run West Lothian.

I know from my own upbringing in Kirkcaldy that the school holidays can be grim affairs for low income families as money must be found for school uniforms and to fill the space left in stomachs normally filled by free school meals.



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I had hoped that our capital could emulate Labour run North Ayrshire and provide free school meals right through the summer. Unfortunately, my proposal to do this was not funded. Instead, a more targeted scheme branded "Discover!" was trialled in Oxgangs Primary School in my Ward and also elsewhere in the city. This targeted the most vulnerable households in a way that went well beyond just providing free food.

At city level, I know that this scheme supported families with a range of problems – from mothers who were victims of domestic abuse to armed forces families struggling to deal with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Although I still hope that Edinburgh will next year follow in the footsteps of North Ayrshire, I hope "Discover!" is not lost as when I visited the Oxgangs Primary School I have never

been so impressed by the commitment of Council staff, or so proud to say I am an Edinburgh Councillor.

When I was there I saw parents sharing their experiences, lonely children building friendships and everyone coming together to share a filling plate of cheesy pasta (see image). I was proud that our capital is using what little money it has to help those in most need, but I can't help wondering what more we can do if the council was better funded.