

Call for a halt to school inspections

Calls are being made to halt school inspections as the pandemic continues to take its toll on teachers and pupils across Edinburgh.

Responding to a stark warning that schools in the capital are “close to breaking” amid rising Covid-19 infections, councillors say inspection visits should not go ahead again until the new academic year at the earliest.

The body responsible for conducting the reviews announced last week it will carry out “recovery visits” starting in February to support schools as they continue to deal with the fallout of the pandemic.

Education Scotland said the visits will only go ahead “if Covid-19 conditions allow” and added inspectors will not report on specific quality indicators or give grades.

Two motions tabled at the council’s Education and Families Committee on Tuesday will call on members to support taking action to prevent school inspections resuming across Edinburgh early next year.

The first, submitted by Green councillor Mary Campbell, reads: “The resumption of school inspections is not appropriate when schools are under such pressure.

It will also demand that the committee writes to the Government’s Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

sharing the concerns raised by EIS.

A second motion, submitted by Labour councillor Ian Perry, states: “We recognise this as one of the toughest times in educational history for our teachers and school staff due to pandemic related issues.”

He also asked that the committee expresses “its deep gratitude for the sheer workload that all school staff have undertaken to keep our schools open and to ensure that there is no further educational impact on our children and young people.”

Cllr Perry’s motion will also call on Education Scotland to “suspend school inspections during such challenging times”. Last month Scotland’s largest teaching union, EIS, urged The City of Edinburgh Council to do “all in its power to prevent inspection activity in Edinburgh schools” to take the pressure off teaching staff.

“Many schools and many staff are close to breaking,” the union’s Edinburgh secretary, Alison Murphy, wrote in a letter to the council. “We are very much in a recovery phase – indeed, many would say we are still in the midst of the pandemic, with some pressures being worse now than they were last year.

“We need to make efforts to dramatically reduce the burden on staff, and particularly, headteachers.”

She said the union would welcome a “strong commitment” from councillors to back a campaign opposing the return of school inspections.

The council’s Education Committee will meet on Tuesday at 10am. Watch the webcast [here](#).

by Donald Torvill, Local Democracy Reporter.

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