

Edinburgh school pupils blocked from accessing YouTube in school

Edinburgh pupils have been blocked from accessing YouTube in school after some were caught viewing 'concerning material' on their devices.

Following the move youngsters have called on the council to restore access to the video sharing platform without delay, with several reaching out to councillors to emphasise the important role the site plays in visual learning and studying.

In a statement, the council said it has "temporarily suspended access to YouTube across the education estate while we review permissions to access online services".

It added it was working to reinstate access for teachers but did not confirm whether pupils would be allowed back on the site on school devices, which include new iPads rolled out by the local authority last year.

Councillors were told some students had managed to access "concerning sites" with officials saying they had "no choice but to take down YouTube while we investigate".

One pupil who was prompted to get in touch with Labour councillor Ross McKenzie said the ban was negatively impacting teachers and learners, who rely on YouTube for research, lesson material and studying for exams, with visual learners

most affected.

Cllr McKenzie said: "If it's a temporary thing while they get their firewall in order then that's one thing but the concern for me is that they're saying 'we're doing all we can to re-establish access for teachers' when they need to make it clear that they'll be doing what they can to re-establish access for pupils as well.

"YouTube is pretty essential, especially when you're doing Highers and Advanced Highers. There's a lot of stuff out there whether it be lectures or documentaries."

He said the move defeats the "whole point" of the council's decision to give all Edinburgh pupils from P6 to S6 iPads, which was to improve access for pupils who don't have any devices at home.

"I'd be surprised if this decision was taken by anybody who has been educated in the last 20 years or so," Cllr McKenzie added. "The fact that they don't realise now that the kids need to be reconnected suggests whoever is making the decision isn't in touch."

Meanwhile, Steve Burgess, Green Party member of the education committee, said: "I have been contacted by young people saying that YouTube is a valuable resource to them in their school work and so very much hope that the council can restore the services as soon as possible."



Steve Burgess Green Party councillor PHOTO ©2019 The Edinburgh Reporter