

# Anger as 'lifeline' school transport to be withdrawn

A bus service described by families as a 'lifeline' after their children were suddenly moved out of their school is to be axed this summer.

Pupils at Mayfield Primary School were suddenly told they would be moving to Easthouses Primary School – a mile away – in December after years of using temporary classrooms at their own school.

Midlothian Council provided buses to take the pupils from a pick up spot to the new school, which opened last summer, and provided youngsters with a booklet to reassure them over the sudden change.

But the local authority has now confirmed it will stop the buses after the summer holidays saying they were only introduced to support the 'initial transition period' and pledged to work with families impacted by the withdrawal.

Mayfield Primary School Parents Council has now written to councillors urging them to review the decision and accusing the council of neglecting their school to the point where they were forced to leave.

The parents council said repeated calls for repairs and reinvestment in the Mayfield school were ignored by the local authority leaving them in a situation where they had to be moved.

In their letter to councillors, chairperson Laura-Jane Watson said: "I know we cannot turn back the clock on the horrific mistakes made by Midlothian Council, but I implore you to not make another one.

"Mayfield Primary School students need/want and deserve these buses after having a substandard school for many years and being forced to now be in a temporary building for three years.

"These buses are a lifeline to many families. They have allowed for continued attendance and a way for families to know their children are getting to school safely."

Ms Watson said there are numerous cases where families have been left devastated by the possible loss of the service.

She highlighted one grandparent with osteoporosis who cares for an eight-year-old child attending the school who has additional support needs and does not understand danger.

She said the grandparent told her: "My grandchild struggles to cross the road by themselves never mind walk the nearly 2 mile walk to Easthouses.

"Moving to Easthouses was not my decision. I will struggle to walk. The walk to school is not accessible for disabled parents or children. parking is very limited.

"I was assured at the walk round that the buses would remain until the pupils returned to their school which should have been built by the end of this year. The alternative to this has been suggested to cycle to school.

"This option is very ableist in my opinion. Whilst I am extremely grateful that the children have been moved to a safe school the underhand tactics from Midlothian Council leave many people angry and let down."

Ms Watson said: "I have many more cases like this."

And she accused the council of not being transparent about how long the buses would be provided adding: "I believe the only reason you provided them in the first place was to distract us from the fact that you let our children down by allowing our school to fall into disrepair."

Executive Director, Children, Young People & Partnerships Fiona Robertson said: "The decision to relocate Mayfield Primary School pupils to the Eastfield Primary campus had to be taken at short notice before the Christmas break to minimise disruption to children's education at the start of the new term.

"While we are able offer bus transport for pupils during the initial transition period, given the relative proximity of the two locations the decision was made to end this for most pupils after the summer holidays in 2025.

"We appreciate that many parents are upset about this, but we are in regular contact with the Parent Council and aim to ensure that they are kept informed and involved moving forward.

"We want to reassure families of Mayfield children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) that they can discuss individual travel arrangements with us directly."

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter