

New primary school heads appointed for East Lothian schools

Two new head teachers are set to start in their posts months before their schools even open their doors in East Lothian.

The newly-built Blindwells and Craighall Primary Schools are in final stages of construction and not due to open until after the summer holidays this year but their new heads will be in place within the next couple of months.

East Lothian Council said the move will allow the head teachers to start building their school communities ahead of welcoming pupils.

At Blindwells Gemma-Rose Lansdown, who is currently head teacher at Leith Walk Primary School in Edinburgh, is taking the helm. Ms Lansdown will start in her new role following the Easter break and will work out of Cockenzie Primary School which has been hosting the new Blindwells pupils ahead of their own building opening in August

Jamie Wilson, currently head teacher at Morebattle and Yetholm Primary Schools in Scottish Borders will move into his new post in May when similarly he will work from Stoneyhill Primary School, in Musselburgh, ahead of the new school opening.

East Lothian Council said once in post the new heads will be responsible for the establishment of their respective school

communities, recruiting staff teams and developing their curricular ethos, vision and values.

Families living in the catchment areas can now enrol their primary school-aged children in the schools and both schools have nurseries which will open during term time only.

Construction on the two schools started in February 2024 and the council said the buildings' exteriors are almost complete with remaining roof details and brickwork due to finish imminently while, indoors, fit out is well underway.

Hard and soft landscaping is ongoing with sports pitches formed and seeded. The buildings have been designed using Passivhaus principles to provide energy efficient as well as inspiring modern learning spaces. East Lothian Council's development partner Hub South East was appointed to deliver the schools with Balfour Beatty working as the principal contractor.

Councillor Fiona Dugdale, cabinet spokesperson for education, said: "These are real milestones in the development of our newest primary schools at Blindwells and Craighall.

"Establishing a brand-new school community is a rare yet exciting challenge for any education leader. As well as our full support, Ms Lansdown and Mr Wilson will benefit from modern, inspiring environments in the purpose-designed buildings.

"We're pleased to welcome them to East Lothian's education service; our central teams and their fellow head teachers will assist them as they shape Blindwells and Craighall Primary schools.

"It's an exciting time for everyone involved in the development of Blindwells and Craighall primaries and the establishment of these new school communities."

For information on enrolment at the new schools go to the council's websites: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/blindwells-ps and www.eastlothian.gov.uk/craighall-ps

Nursery places, which do not operate in catchments, are available and information can be found by going online at www.eastlothian.gov.uk/earlylearning

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter