

Parents win backing to upgrade playground

Parents at a primary school with no fixed play equipment in its playground have won the backing of councillors in their bid for an upgrade.

Newtongrange Primary School, in Midlothian, marks its 100th anniversary this year but parents say its outdoor areas remains locked in the past with no modern facilities, and rusty railings which they say pose a hazard to its 450 pupils.

At a meeting of Midlothian Council's petitions committee today (Monday), members heard that senior pupils in the school use the neighbouring park to play but younger children only had access to what was 'essentially a tarmac area'.

The school's parent council presented a petition with more than 460 signatures calling for more equipment, safer surfaces and new paint for railings which they said were a hazard.

And they called on the council to look into bringing a disused area of the park next to the school into its use during playtimes to provide more space.

Parent council member Ben Miller told the meeting: "We do not think the playground is fit for purpose."

The petition said the playground has deteriorated over the years and with the school preparing to mark its 100th anniversary it was keen to address the issue.

It said: "Our school is a great community with wonderful teachers and support staff, however, the facilities available do not match the staff's passion and dedication.

"The playground is essentially a hard tarmac surface and is not stimulating. The playground railings create a hazard for our children with rusty fragments and flaking paint. There is a large disparity between the Newtongrange playground and many other Midlothian Primary School playgrounds. While ours lacks basic facilities like shelter or play equipment many others feature engaging spaces and accessible play zones to enhance learning experiences."

The committee agreed to pass the petition to officers to look into ways to improve the playground and bring a report back to council on possible work.

The petition revealed the parent council itself successfully raised more than £700 through Crowdfunding to improve the playground and recognised a contribution from local ward member Councillor Kelly Drummond from her allocated environment funding towards "new play items and benches," which made a difference.

However it said more was needed to create a play area for all the children to use.

The committee also agreed to ask its officers to look into the possibility of bring part of the neighbouring park into dual school and public use as well as repainting the railings.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter