

Oxgangs Primary School Parent Council Meeting with  
CEC Head of Schools, Andy Gray

Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2016, 7.00 – 9.00 pm

Waverly Court, Market St., Edinburgh

Agenda

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies
2. The structural integrity of the School Building
3. Decisions made by the Council relating to the School Closures
4. Lines of accountability.
5. How do we go forward with confidence
6. AOCB

## 2. The structural integrity of the School Building

- Q1. We have been told that the initial wall failure was due to the ties between the inner and outer leafs of brickwork. Can you give more specific details, e.g., number of ties, depth of embedment, mortar strength?
- Q2. We have been told that the latest closure, the third announced, is the result of inadequate "Header ties". Can you give more specific details, e.g., number of ties, size of ties, attachment?
- Q3. What was the likelihood of further catastrophic failure due to either of these building faults?
- Q4. Are there any more structural integrity problems with the building?
- Q5. Why weren't these construction failures detected at build or certification?
- Q6. Are the building problems across the city related to the same building problem in each case?
- Q7. Has the Health and Safety Executive been informed?
- Q8. It has been reported that the same structural fault that led to this crisis was responsible for the closure of a Glasgow primary (Lourdes) in 2012 – was there any review of Edinburgh school structures at that time?
- Q9. What basis does Edinburgh Council have to believe the structural advice provided by ESP?
- Q10. Has the Council sought any independent structural assessment out-with ESP?

## 3. Decisions made by the Council relating to the School Closures

- Q1. The Council has maintained that safety has been at the forefront of their thinking. However, after the wall collapse in January our children were back in the building within a matter of days, based upon the results of only a preliminary non-invasive structural inspection.

Given the catastrophic nature of the wall failure, and that any further such failure would have significant consequences, why wasn't a thorough investigation carried out after the initial wall collapse? Plans for decanting the school to effect repairs could then have been established on a more rational basis. By not doing so the Council appear to have endangered our children –

as evidenced by subsequently given closure notices based upon safety concerns.

- Q2. Why was the School decanted to other schools rather than being kept together in, say, temporarily installed porta-cabins?
- Q3. Was the Council aware of the impact that making very last minute, indefinite, closure announcements would have on the organisations that support Oxfords, such as the After School Club and Active Schools Club as well as the employers of parents and carers and self-employed parents and carers? If so what contingencies were put in place?
- Q4. Why was WHEC deemed a suitable temporary location for P6 and P7 primary children? Was the council aware of the state-of-repair of these buildings – which are apparently used on a temporary basis – relative to the rest of the WHEC?
- Q5. Did the Council consider the loss of education incurred in closing the school for currently 7 working days, and in the loss of hours each day from bussing pupils over the south of the city? What impact do they think this will have?
- Q6. Did the Council consider the impact of their decisions on school staff, in terms of additional workload and in terms of them being the front line face of the Council in unprecedented circumstances.
- Q7. Does the council have any emergency action plans for such eventualities? The planning appears to have been made in reaction to latest events rather than in consideration of an overall problem. Are there any assurances that lessons will be learned from the handling of this crisis – both at Oxfords and city wide?

#### 4. Lines of accountability

- Q1. What controls does the Council have on ESP under the terms of the PPP1 contract?
- Q2. ESP appear to have admitted liability – what is the extent of their liability in terms of both repairs and compensation?
- Q3. Did the Council's Building Control have any oversight of the build projects generally, and specifically at Oxfords?
- Q4. Why was self-certification thought appropriate when the designer, consultant, builder and certifier were all within the same umbrella organisation? Was this not considered to be a conflict of interest?

- Q5. Were the surveyors and engineers who signed the school off as safe after the initial wall collapse, and subsequently, the same as those who self-certified the building?
- Q6. Given the risk associated with the catastrophic nature of the failure, and that it could not normally be called a “maintenance issue” why was ownership of the problem given back to ESP, which was responsible for it in the first place? Surely ESP has a vested interest in concealing or obfuscating relevant information? The advice supplied to the Council to date, such as has been made public, and as affecting schools across Edinburgh, affords little confidence in their competence.
- Q7. Who is responsible for compensating the associated support organisations at Oxfangs, parent employers and parents for loss of earnings? Such compensation is a matter of urgency for some organisations.

#### 5. How do we go forward with confidence?

- Q1. Can the Council indicate how long the school building is likely to remain closed? If not, can the Council indicate how long before they will know?
- Q2. What assurances will pupil, parents and staff have that the building is safe to occupy when it reopens?
- Q3. Will there be a public review into the organisational, as well as building, causes of the wall collapse at Oxfangs and its consequences?
- Q4. It has been estimated that every man, woman and child in the UK owed more than £3,000 due to PFI deals. Will there be a wider reaching review of the effectiveness of PFI build projects, subsequent to the PPP1 building problems, in delivering value for money? The PPP1 deals appear to have not even crossed the first hurdle in providing buildings of sufficient structural integrity. Given the cost of these projects, and the seeming lack of accountability that goes with them, the Tax payer must be satisfied they represent a worthwhile expense.