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Subject:Oxgangs School Closure

Date:Fri, 08 Apr 2016 22:13:05 +0100

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To:andy.gray@edinburgh.gov.uk

CC:Elaine Aitken <elaine.aitken@edinburgh.gov.uk>, Gavin Corbett
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Dear Mr Gray,

It goes without saying how deeply, deeply, disappointed and upset we are that the decision has been made to, yet again, close Oxgangs, and, yet again, make the announcement at the last possible part of the working day before the closure, giving very little indication as to what the nature of the new problem found was, nor what long term impact this continuing fiasco will have on our children getting back to a safe, reliable, education routine.

I am tempted to suggest that if parents acted in such a manner, the council would rightly bring some sanction against them for impairing the education and safety of their children.

I'm afraid Edinburgh Council and those under the umbrella of the ESP are losing what little patience and goodwill remained with Oxgangs' Parents. I have tried to establish a "benefit of the doubt" approach, though I must confess, with this latest closure it is impossible to sustain. To be honest, even the expert letters made available on the Council Closures web page gave very little detailed information on the nature of the structural problems with the building, nor did they give any real assurance that the school would reopen on the 11th inst. - there was only an inference that the building would be made safe by the 11th.

Furthermore, the suggestion made in the latest text release that "parents consider childcare arrangements for next week" are very oblique and destroy parental confidence that the school will open any time soon or that there is, or has been, a considered response. If I can convey a little of the parents views it would be that the approach has been knee-jerk, responding to stimulus. We await word on yet another round of "contingency arrangements" - with a palpable angst about the impact these closures and contingencies are having on our children's education and safety.

We are not hostile, but we are angry that a proper and complete structural survey was not undertaken at the time of the initial collapse. It is just not good enough to deploy a piecemeal approach when the lives of infants and parents are at stake. No other school, or building, in Edinburgh lost a wall during Gertrude. If the wall had come off hours later, there would certainly have been numerous fatalities and casualties amongst our infants and parents. The fact that we no one was hurt should not placate anyone into thinking that a full and comprehensive survey was not needed from the start.

There was a communication to the effect that the problem was one of construction and not contractual. Again, I trained as a Structural Engineer. In my experience, construction problems are more likely to arise from a poorly detailed contract than from construction issues. But you don't need to take my word for it - you will be more acutely aware of the systemic problems in the affected buildings across Edinburgh, and

generally aware of those across Scotland.

Finally, Oxfords Parents need clarity on the following:

1. Exactly what are the "new issues relating to the school's construction" in terms of their impact on building safety and timescale for it reopening?
2. Following on from 1, and mindful that many families at Oxfords have two working parents, parents would, I believe, much rather know that they needed to arrange childcare for the rest of the academic year rather than on a week by week basis: are the timescales one week, one month, longer?
3. Resilient as they are, for the rest of the academic year, our children require a stable environment in which to learn. They also require the requisite amount of learning time - we have lost 5 days through closure to date, excluding what time is lost in transiting classes across the South West end of the City to remote locations.
4. I appreciate that many of the motivations for the, now three, short notice closure announcements have been predicated upon safety concerns, but I would urge you to consider this more broadly in developing contingency plans - in terms of both transport to/ from remote locations, and in ensuring that there are no more "surprises".

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Parents, to commend all the teaching and support staff at Oxfords, who have done, and continue to do, their utmost to make the best out of a very bad situation.

Yours sincerely,

Crerar Christie
PC Chair Oxfords Primary School