

On 10/04/2016 23:29, Andy Gray wrote:

Apologies Mr Christie for getting the names mixed up.

With reference to your specific questions:-

1. The recent new information does indeed relate to the absence of header ties. I am not qualified to provide detail on this aspect but suffice to say the structural engineers deemed the absence to be sufficient to warrant withdrawal of their previous statements providing confidence in relation to the safety of the building.

2 We are told by ESP that the remedial works will take weeks rather than months. It has been suggested that it could be as soon as two weeks but I am reluctant to be precise at this stage.

3. I can assure you that the Chief Executive has demanded that full structural reports are carried out for all PPP1 schools. The Council is also very frustrated by the late notice provided to us in this latest information from ESP and totally understands the anxiety caused by such pronouncements. At the same time, if such information emerges, it is important that the safety issues are paramount and while it was very disappointing for parents and families, I am sure you will agree we were left with little alternative but to inform parents on Friday that the schools will be closed . It is very regrettable this was so late in the day. The Council only received written confirmation of the withdrawal of the engineers confidence of safety after 6pm on Friday.

Please be in touch if you require further information.

Kind regards

Andy Gray

Sent from my iPhone

On 10 Apr 2016, at 20:52, Crerar Christie <crerarchristie@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Mr Gray,

Thank you for your email. FYI, my surname is Christie, my christian name is Crerar - the perils of Microsoft Outlook addressing.

Sadly no, the announcement does not answer all my questions. Outstanding are:

1. What is the nature of the latest structural problem forcing this closure - the media is reporting that is related to header ties? I appreciate there may be pending legal issues relating to the release of this information, however, parents need to assess for themselves the reliability of what information they are being provided.

2. How long is the school likely to be under contingency measures? Is it weeks, months? - Parents need to plan childcare in advance, i.e., not on an ongoing weekly basis. Also, if it is a problem requiring a significant period of time to rectify: our parents would not be satisfied that their children are likely to be bussed over this end of the city for a protracted period.

3. Are any further structural inspection works being carried out at Oxfangs? I.e., do you have any guarantees from ESP (though their value must be significantly deprecated) that they have caught all their structural defects and that these remedial repairs will be the last, or are they still adopting a piecemeal approach? Please bear in mind that parents must have confidence in the structural competence of the building they send their children to each day. ESP appear to have developed an unfortunate habit of issuing bad news at the last minute, which, to many parents way of thinking, is not a sign of competency. I cannot stress strongly enough the clamour from Oxfangs parents for the building issues to be rectified satisfactorily.

I suspect from the number of (local and national) schools under investigation, and those where fault has been found, not least the life endangering nature of the failure at Oxfords, the problems found elsewhere, a full public investigation will be required into the failure of the PPPI initiative to deliver safe public buildings.

I do hope you can answer these outstanding questions. I trust you understand the anger - the righteous anger - felt by parents, which is fueled in no small part by the lack of clear, prompt and definitive information. If you can't answer these questions, then Oxfords parents would appreciate a reason as to why not.

Yours sincerely,

Crerar Christie
PC Chair Oxfords Primary School

On 10/04/2016 19:49, Andy Gray wrote:

Dear Mr Crerar,

I hope by now you have received a text message alerting you to the update on the Council website. I hope this answers the points you have raised.

It is our very firm intention that the decant arrangements for Oxfords PS are implemented just as soon as bus transport can be finalised. We expect to be in touch with parents tomorrow to confirm.

Kind regards

Andy Gray

Sent from my iPhone

On 8 Apr 2016, at 22:59, Andy Gray <Andy.Gray@edinburgh.gov.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Christie

I note your comments and I can assure you that I fully understand how frustrating and disappointing this situation is for families.

Until today, we fully expected the schools to be open. Every effort is being taken to minimise what is a very challenging situation.

I will share your comments at a meeting being held during the weekend with senior colleagues and get back to you with some detailed responses to the points you raise.

Kind regards

Andy Gray

Sent from my iPhone

On 8 Apr 2016, at 22:13, Crerar Christie <crerarchristie@gmail.com> wrote:

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 Oxfords, 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 Oxfords' 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 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 Oxfangs, 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 Oxfangs Primary School
0131 443 4472

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