

Green Councillors say no to school closures

Edinburgh's Green councillors are backing parents campaigning to keep primary schools open.

The Lib Dem/SNP-led City Council wants to close schools in Drumbrae, Fort, Royston and Burdiehouse. It has also refused to say that the closures will stop there. This is in spite of an SNP pledge to reduce class sizes in P1-3. Although SNP ministers have condemned councils for failing to cut class sizes, SNP councillors in Edinburgh are backing proposals which will increase class sizes!

Council leaders claim that there are thousands of surplus places in primary schools in Edinburgh. However, this claim was blown wide open by Green City Councillor, Alison Johnstone, in a briefing sent to all Parent Councils in Edinburgh back in June. The briefing challenged the City Council's arithmetic that leaves some schools with severe overcrowding, while others face closure.

Green councillors have attended many of the school closures meetings. Listening to the arguments both for and against, they have concluded that the City Council has:

- Failed to take account of population projections which see

the number of primary school aged children in Edinburgh rise by over 20% by 2020.

- Failed to recognise schools are community assets, rather than just places for children between 9am-3pm, Monday – Friday.
- Failed to account for the knock-on impact on “receiving” schools.
- Carried out the closures consultation without a full city-wide review of catchment areas in relation to changing populations.
- Based its case for closure on fictional school capacity figures which suggest that schools with well-recognised over-crowding problems actually have free places!
- Failed to take account of the community, social, road safety and environmental impact of closing local neighbourhood schools.

Green councillors believe that there should be a moratorium on school closures until the City Council carries out a full strategic review of catchments, capacity and long term options for the school estate. In the meantime, we will stand in support of those parents and communities battling to save schools.

- *Contact us on schoolclosures@edinburghgreens.org.uk*

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