

Members of Midlothian Cabinet  
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Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2004

Dear Councillor,

Due to the recent reports in the newspapers, we felt compelled to write to you as a member of the Cabinet for Midlothian Council. These reports speculated on the proposed closures of Temple and Borthwick primary schools. The press coverage, along with confirmation from the Director of Education, Donald MacKay, established that the possibility of the closure of these schools is included within the proposals for PPP2.

While we realise that at this stage nothing has been agreed, we hope you will appreciate that parents and members of these communities, having read these reports and receiving no denial from Midlothian council regarding closures, are extremely anxious. The intensity of feeling is such that both Borthwick and Temple school Boards, at the request of shocked parents, have collaborated on this letter to each member of the Cabinet.

The priority, you will agree, is of course the pupils and as you know, these years at primary school provide the foundations on which they build the rest of their academic lives. As parents, we are extremely happy with the education and learning environment our children receive in these small schools. The pupils at both schools are themselves happy and secure and have high expectations of their own achievements. Their self-esteem is fostered and individuality is developed and catered for in this small, caring, family environment.

One of the achievements of both these schools is the close partnership between home and school. In Temple, parents, grandparents and villagers attend the school regularly; they are involved in lessons and activities. This successful relationship is another indication of the commitment of families and the wider community to the schools and is achieved through the warm and welcoming environment created by the staff.

Attainment levels are higher in some areas of the curriculum than the Midlothian average and in areas of reading and writing are indeed higher than the National average. Surely, this is an illustration of how well the smaller educational environment is reflected in pupils learning.

Both the school rolls are very healthy. Temple is over 86% full and because of the close links with the successful Partnership Nursery in Temple Village, it is likely to remain so in the future. Although Borthwick's roll is lower than that of Temple, it is arguably artificially low, due to the 'cap' that has been in place for the past three years. The school roll prior to this cap was always high and Borthwick remains one of the most popular schools in the area. Despite the capping, the school is constantly approached by prospective pupils wishing to attend. Unfortunately, because of the cap, access has to be denied.

Both these schools are at the heart of their respective communities. The consequences of school closure would have an adverse impact on both the Nursery in Temple and the Village Halls – not to mention the effect on the wider community. Take away the heart of any community and it dies. What you are left with are overpriced housing estates attracting only commuters and sounding the death knell to local farms, small local businesses and other community facilities.

Opinion has been widely canvassed already and both Temple and Borthwick schools are well supported by their communities. The groundswell of public opinion is that if we are to face definite closure plans, then both communities would be united in a bid to overturn this decision.

We hope that members of the cabinet will take into consideration this strength of feeling from parents and members of both communities when they make any decision regarding the future of these schools.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Richard Lock  
Chairman of Temple School Board  
Written on behalf of Temple and Borthwick School Boards

cc: Mrs. J Chatham  
Councillor Bob Jenkins  
Mrs. J Lambley  
Donald MacKay  
Councillor Jim Muirhead