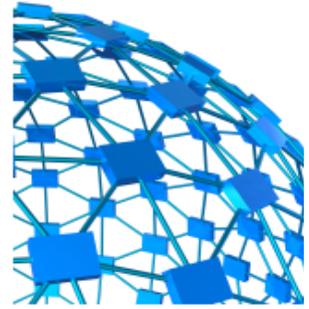


**Edinburgh
Parent
Councils
Network**



A parent-led initiative

**Cuts to School Budgets
2009-10 to 2012-13
Evidence and views from Edinburgh's
Parent Councils**

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1 SUMMARY

- Schools are facing the prospect of 2.5% cuts to their budgets in 2010-11. This is on top of 1.5% cuts in the current year, amounting to 4% in total. A 4% cut is around £40,000 for an average primary school, up to £160,000 for a larger secondary school.
- The most immediate impact of cuts is on head teachers and other senior staff spending more time in classrooms to the detriment of the management and development of their schools. Many staff are working unsustainable hours to cope.
- Learning assistant hours are being and will be cut, affecting children with additional support needs.
- Materials budgets are being slashed, with erosion of previous stocks. Parents are paying for new materials like smart boards and playground equipment but also for basics like jotters, books, chairs and window cleaning.
- Maintenance of buildings is being reduced with impacts on future improvement costs as well as compromising basic health and safety.
- During 2009-10 schools have been asked to shoulder the burden of additional costs without being given adequate additional budget to do so. These are in, in effect, cuts by the back door.
- Parents fear for the success of major developments – most obviously the new curriculum, which is nearing a critical phase for implementation.
- In 2011-12 and 2012-13, cuts totalling 6.5% and 9% respectively are being trailed. Parents describe the impact of such cuts as “horrendous”, “meltdown” and “catastrophic” and “no longer able to meet the basic needs of pupils.”
- In contrast, parents point out the need for additional investment in education budgets – not simply to enhance the experience of children and young people; but also to reap savings in future years – for example, by having more energy-efficient schools.
- School closures are being mooted as one way of dealing with budget cuts. There is a diversity of views among parents as to whether this is a legitimate course of action. More broadly, there is concern that parents should have a more sustained and strategic input into the future size and distribution of the school estate.
- Decision-makers need to take account of the significant difficulties already being experienced before opting to add even greater financial pressure on a core and essential public service.

2 Introduction

In the autumn of 2009 schools in Edinburgh were told that they would be expected to find 2.5% “efficiency savings” in their budgets for 2010-11¹. This comes on top of 1.5% efficiency savings for 2009-10. So the cut that schools are facing is 4% in 2010-11.

This brief report outlines some of the findings from a survey of parent councils in December 2009. The survey sought to quantify the scale of the projected cuts at individual schools and what those might mean for the day-to-day work of the school. We have reported the submissions as they were reported to us; however, in some instances, schools did not wish to be identified.

Edinburgh Parent Councils Network is a parent-led network, set up in 2008 to facilitate sharing of ideas, information and good practice among state schools and nurseries across the city. It currently has 126 members from 80 parent councils: around two-thirds of all schools.

At the point of issuing the survey, our understanding – and that of senior staff within schools – was that the 2.5% cuts would be devolved to schools. That is, it would be up to each school to decide how best to take 4% of costs out of their budget.

However, two weeks after the survey was issued the City Council gave a presentation to all Parent Council Chairs² which set out a different scenario. While the original 1.5% cut would remain devolved to schools to decide best how to handle, the additional 2.5% cut would be managed centrally. That is, devolved school budgets would still be cut by 4% overall, just that part of the cut would not be within the discretion of individual schools to control.

¹ By “their budgets” we mean devolved school management budgets (DSM) – ie those that are in the control of head teachers and business managers. Some costs – building improvement, for example – are held centrally by the City Council. However, in the current year, there has been an increasing trend to devolve additional items to schools: exam fees, water charges, waste collection and accrued leave for staff on maternity, for example – see later for more detail.

² See <http://bit.ly/8LnTpW>

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In the presentation, the following items were identified as possible components of the 2.5% savings package (this is draft and subject to change as the budget process continues):

• Full Year effect of 2008/09 staff savings	£0.4m
• Primary School Closures 2008/09 & 09/10	£0.8m
• CPD	£0.4m
• Foreign Language Assistants	£0.3m
• Visiting Specialists	£0.2m
• Discipline Task Group	£0.6m
• Secondary SMTs	£0.4m
• Classroom Assistants	£0.2m
• S1 and S2 reduced classes	£0.2m
• Librarians sessional and shared	£0.3m
• Short term absence cover	£0.6m
• PA Transition funding	£0.1m
• Ad hoc anomalies	£0.1m
• Other savings (mainly roundings in above)	£0.1m
• Learning Assistants special Schools	£0.1m
• Secure Services Income	£0.2m
• Total	£5 million

In the remainder of this report we have described cuts as though fully devolved. This is partly because this is the information provided to us. However, the decision as to how to pass on the additional 2.5% cut has not been finalised.

Are efficiency savings “cuts”?

An efficiency saving is a cut. However, it is not as straightforward as a cash cut. This is best illustrated by an example. Let's say a school has a devolved budget of £1 million in 2009-10. A simple cash cut of 2.5% would mean that the school had £975,000 in 2010-11.

Efficiency savings work in a different way. The school has a budget of £1 million in 2009-10. For the following year, it is then given a starting budget of that plus 2% to allow for the fact that staff salaries have increased, for example, or that new responsibilities have been added. That means its nominal budget is £1.020 million. However, it is then told to apply an efficiency saving of 2.5%. That is: the school will be expected to spend no more than £994,500.

The efficiency saving means the school has more than if it were a simple cash cut, but much less than it should have at a time when costs are also rising.

This is a simplified example. Efficiency savings are also cumulative. An efficiency saving of 1.5% in 2009-10, with 2.5% further savings each year, becomes 4% in 2010-11, 6.5% in 2011-12 and 9% in 2012-13.

3 Financial pressures in 2009-10

As mentioned above, schools already faced 1.5% cuts in 2009-10. In cash terms this equates to around £15,000 for an average primary school, up to £60,000 for an average secondary school.

It is easier to observe the effects of current cuts than to speculate about the precise impact of future cuts so this is why we asked first about the cuts in 2009-10.

Parent councils described the impact in various ways.

3.1 Senior managers spend more time in class; less time on development

Probably the most common way for schools to cut budgets is for senior staff to spend time in the classroom to cover for absent staff rather than drawing on the supply teacher budget.

When the Head teacher was absent all staff 'shuffled' up to avoid incurring supply costs
Victoria PS

The two depute head teachers both had to increase their direct teaching in the classroom by 1.1 days each - so 2.2 days in total and therefore reduced the time available for them to contribute to the management of the school.

Anonymous PS

Running with only half a management team for 3 months did have a significant impact on the school, even with the huge efforts of the DHT: for example, there was no real dialogue about the SQIP, communication with parents faltered a bit; and other areas of development like ASL policy and homework policy were delayed.

Craiglockhart PS

Additional hours in classroom also has an impact on staff directly.

The head teacher has covered classes to reduce the supply staff required, and he has been severely stretched at a time when he would like to be concentrating his efforts on implementing the improvement plan from the recent School Review and HMI inspection.

The impact is an HT who is grey with the fatigue of working the hours required to do it all.

Parsons Green PS

3.2 Reduced time for learning assistants

Schools have reduced the number and time allocation for learning assistants in the class.

Two Learning Assistants have left in the past year and have not been replaced. This has increased the workload on the other LAs. If any are on excursions or off ill this means remaining LAs tend to be pulled in all directions to cope with demands.

Bruntsfield PS

We have lost 0.15 of a teacher and 2 learning assistants.

Braidburn Special School

3.3 Loss of specialist staff

French specialist no longer employed to support the learning of a foreign language

Balgreen PS

3.4 Materials

Sections 2.1 to 2.3 above describe the impact of cuts on staff-related matters. Staff account for 80-90% of schools budgets meaning the budgets for other areas of expenditure are very small. Nevertheless these budgets are under pressure too.

Stationery supplies will run out before end of year

Reduced photocopying of worksheets / resources

Greater dependency on charity from business partners / donations

Increased requests for support from parent fundraising

Broughton HS

Average available spend per pupil on resources (e.g. jotters, paper, etc) has reduced from £80 to around £22. This was manageable because bulk purchasing in previous years meant that supplies were available but these are running out and there is no money to re-stock.

Broughton PS

3.5 Parents are paying for core budgets

The result of these budget pressures is an acceleration of the trend towards parents paying for core parts of school budgets.³

PSA is buying jotters, books and classroom chairs and it paid for window cleaning.

Flora Stevenson PS

The school is using fundraising to maintain the resources essential for the school: the school video camera broke at Benmore Centre and has yet to be replaced.

Leith PS

The school has had to depend on the generous financial support from the Parent Council to provide Promethean boards in all classrooms and to enable the update of reading books for our Infant Department.

Bruntsfield PS

We appreciate that, at Sciennes, we are fortunate to benefit greatly from successful fundraising by School Council and PTA. This has supported SMART/Promethean boards in all classes, staging and audio equipment, playground equipment and sports coaching.

Sciennes PS

3.6 Building maintenance

It has a drastic impact on the maintenance of the buildings and grounds. The council is putting schools in a position where head teachers have to choose between purchasing new novels and teaching resources or paying for roof repairs, and general maintenance of the school.

Anonymous PS

³ There is something of a dilemma for parents here. Many parents are able and willing to help out in practical ways with their children's schools: indeed, members of Edinburgh's parent councils have estimated the value of parent input to schools at something between £4-7 million a year already. But when does this become embedded in the way the service is planned rather than the "added value" which parents envisage? Further, there are significant barriers to parents doing more. At least one school's parents have sought permission to paint flaking window frames in order to preserve them better, having been told that the City Council can no longer afford a cyclical maintenance programme. However, they have not been able to secure permission to do this because of health and safety concerns.

3.7 In a nutshell...

- *Reduction in Teaching and Support staff – 1-2FTE*
- *Reduction in Advanced Higher courses/courses for less able*
- *Larger class sizes throughout especially S1/S2*
- *Closure of the Support Base*
- *Little/no ICT/Property Development*
- *Reduction in Senior Management Team*
- *No funding for implementation of Curriculum for Excellence*
- *Huge impact on staff morale*
- *Little/no discretionary spend*
- *Great reduction in Staff Development*

Boroughmuir HS

3.8 Budget planning and back door cuts

We also asked if schools had started the year 2009-10 in deficit or surplus. The majority indicated surplus, albeit modest in some cases. This may seem curious if, at the same time, schools are saying they are stretched. However, this time last year schools were told that cuts in 2009-10 would be 3.5%, a threat that was eventually removed only 6 weeks prior to the year beginning. So it is reasonable to assume that many schools would have tried to have a buffer in place for that coming year.

We had planned underspend in anticipation of cuts but also to invest in property refurbishment to meet needs of increase in school roll.

Sciennes PS

However, it is equally clear that such a buffer will not be available in future years.

Plans to improve the school building have been seriously curtailed due to lack of large carry forward which was planned to develop the school environment for the community.

Anonymous PS

As well as management of carry-forwards, schools are also subject to budget changes within any one year. We understand that school business managers currently do not get their final budget until the second half of the financial year to which it applies. This seems quite at odds with the emphasis placed on the flexibility that schools are meant to have to decide their own priorities.

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Finally, in the second half of 2009-10 a number of budget items⁴ were transferred from central to devolved budgets, but in each case without the transfer of budget actually reflecting the cost to the school.

The budgets which were transferred to the school in the second half of 2009-10 left little time for the school to deal with them effectively. For water and refuse alone there is a £9,158 deficit between our projected spend and the budget that has been given to us. That amounts to a further 1% cut in our budget this year.

Craiglockhart PS

Additional devolved costs such as Water, Refuse and Maternity holiday pay have been devolved. Based on the costs of these last year (and the number of expected maternity leavers) the budget being devolved is short by £5,500. This will further impact on the Supplies and Services funds.

Blackhall PS

The newly devolved areas of water, waste, gas/electricity and maternity leave will cost an additional £18,226, equivalent to a further 2% cut.

Clermiston PS

Understandably, parents view this transfer of budgets in the course of the year as little more than a set of back-door cuts.

⁴ These were water charges, refuse collection, the costs of accrued leave owing to staff off on maternity leave and for secondary schools, exam fees.

4 Budget cuts in 2010-11

The main purpose of the survey was to look ahead to 2010-11 and the possibility of 4% cuts to budgets. This is inevitably more speculative than is the case for the current year 2009-10. We asked about impacts in four key areas⁵. These are:

- Staffing
- Services and supplies
- Repairs and maintenance
- Future development

We look at each of these in turn.

Four per cent of cuts does not sound much on the face of it. However, this amounts to around £40,000 per year for an average primary school – ranging up to £160,000 for a secondary school. And the critical point is that there is very little room for manoeuvre in a school budget.

4.1 School staffing

School staffing is 80-90% of a school's budget so it is inevitable that cuts of the magnitude of 4% will impact on staffing decisions. However, it is also an area of cost that is tightly bounded. For example, the level of staff pay is subject to national agreements between CoSLA and trade unions, while the patterns of work for teaching staff and, indirectly, support staff are heavily driven by the McCrone agreement.

Many of the responses from parent councils see a 4% cut as an acceleration – or deepening – of the present 1.5% cut, albeit to a much more dramatic degree. That is:

- Loss of senior management development time as heads and deputies spend more time in class
- Fewer specialist teachers
- Loss of learning assistant time

The following examples illustrate how much deeper the cuts would go.

⁵ See section 2 for more detail on whether the cuts to devolved budgets are to be determined at a local or central level – in the text which follows we report it as the former.

Likely to be concentrated on non-teaching staff; increased teaching cover by senior managers (some of whom are already in school over 60 hours on some weeks); reduced support for less fortunate pupils in need of serious social / welfare support
Broughton HS

Management time would be severely stripped back or we would have to lose the equivalent of one learning assistant.
Stockbridge PS

McCrone cover by Head teacher, no visiting specialists i.e. PE and MUSIC and reduction in Learning Support teacher hours - currently £13,000.
Victoria PS

- 1. It is likely that no temporary contracts for Learning Assistants will be renewed. A significant reduction in the number of learning assistants.*
 - 2. Learning Assistants with permanent contracts will be spread more thinly with fewer pupils receiving the additional support that they need.*
- Broughton PS

Any staff with temporary contracts would come under scrutiny (i.e learning support, specialists, learning assistants) would be required to be cut. This underscores how the budget cuts are most likely to affect the most able and those with additional learning needs.
Parsons Green PS

There are 2 learning assistants who could have hours reduced, although this would have a very detrimental effect on the teaching staff and quality of education our children receive. Another possible impact could be that the headteacher would have to cover all staff absences where possible, reducing the need for supply teachers (£220 / day). However this would mean that the headteacher would not be available to attend to their other duties and issues as they arise.
Ratho PS

However there are some new themes as well. The extent of the projected cuts has an impact in kind as well as degree.

Significant reduction (around a third) in Support for Learning teacher's timetable
Anonymous PS

There is already insufficient staff to support current educational needs. A high percentage of children require full support for their personal care. There are already health and safety concerns for staff and children due to insufficient staff being available for manual handling for toileting etc.

Braidburn Special School

Reduction in course choices in senior school to reduce teaching requirement

Broughton HS

We would lose pupils to private sector

St Thomas of Aquins HS

4.2 Services and supplies

Services and supplies covers the provision of basic classroom materials as well as expenditure on staff development and training. It is a relatively small part of a school's budget – for example, in a typical primary school it is around 5%.

Our PA has embarked on a fundraising drive to put a smart board in every classroom - we only have 5 at present; we need another 9 at a unit cost of £1700. The school cannot afford these even though they are provided as standard in new schools.

Craiglockhart PS

The Supplies and Service budget comes to £23,226. This will be managed tightly - and likely to be supplemented from PSA fundraising.

Blackhall PS

No replacement of old/broken furniture or equipment

Anonymous PS

Rigidity of council procurement policy, and unwillingness to publish the cost / saving by school further reduces head teacher ability to achieve most efficient spend

East Craigs PS

IT would suffer as the school will be unable to maintain the school's hardware (PCs and smart boards).

Parsons Green PS

The reduction in the CPD budget will result in fewer opportunities for teachers to update their skills - which will affect the on-going development of Curriculum for Excellence.

Broughton PS

4.3 Repairs and maintenance and buildings costs

The premises part of a schools budget covers charges for water, heating and electricity as well those repairs for which the school is responsible (larger scale improvements are the responsibility of a different department of the council).

In PPP schools, repairs and maintenance are part of the contract with the private sector provider. However, even here one secondary school predicted that their building would be under-used (and hence lets income reduced) as staff were diverted into other priorities.

No money to upgrade the kids' toilets. The proposed heating budget for next year 2010/11 has been set at only £17k, while the real cost of heating the school using the oil fired boilers was over £36k. On that basis the school could only afford to open half the winter months!! In reality, funding which should be ear-marked for school improvement activities will be used to pay the essential utility bills!

Gracemount PS

Essential maintenance may be deferred, resulting in damage to the fabric of the building. For example, some window frames desperately need painting and will begin to rot in the absence of maintenance

East Craigs PS

For a number of years now the school has been unable to do simple decoration etc. This will continue to lead to the building becoming shabbier with an impact on how children feel about their place of learning!

Leith PS

Maintenance and repairs are already restricted to absolute essentials. In the future, these will only be dealt with if there is a specific Health and Safety issue (e.g. loose roof slates, blocked toilets). There will be no funds for routine maintenance, such as painting classrooms, replacing worn carpets, etc). Up to now, this has been a well-maintained, Victorian school which is in good shape and still very much fit for purpose. However, with a lack of routine maintenance, it is expected to deteriorate rapidly, resulting in even bigger costs in the future.

Broughton PS

We already have a situation with one of the playground surfaces having completely eroded. This has created a huge pothole, severe flooding when it rains, and a surface that is so rough that children's injuries are more severe than would be the norm on a normal playground surface. A letter to the council in August from the PC was completely ignored. The bill from the council via their procurement service was astronomical (double an independent quote) and could not possibly have come from the school's budget given the cuts. It won't be long before a parent sues the local authority for the permanent scars left on their children from this - and other - vital health and safety issues.

Parsons Green PS

Already desperately neglected - the school is about 120 years old. Parents have already had to offer painting etc which is made difficult by the City Council.

South Morningside PS

4.4 The impact on future development

Parent councils are, of course, concerned about the day-to-day running of their schools. But they are also aware of areas of development, the most prominent of which is Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). Over the last year the implementation of the CfE, the biggest curriculum shift for a generation and affecting the newest nursery-starter right through to sixth-year pupils – has suddenly seemed a lot closer.

Although we did not directly ask a question on CfE, an event back in September 2009, hosted by the City Council, suggested that there is significant goodwill from parents towards the new curriculum. That goodwill is at risk if budgets are cut. While one parent council re-affirmed the school's determination to implement CfE, many more expressed misgivings.

Serious effect on ability to deliver CfE, particularly if management time is stripped back
Stockbridge PS

C for E would be a 'big ask' at any time, however against a background of staffing cuts and severe reductions in the supply of educational materials it will be extremely difficult for schools to deliver.

Trinity Academy

The cuts in staff and resources will have a profound impact on the speed of the school being able to develop the Curr for Ex. These cuts will have a huge impact on the moral of staff.

Leith PS

Unable to purchase new resources to support C for E. Only essential CPD would be funded, therefore not enough time for staff to properly implement C for E

Anonymous PS

No Money, so teachers cannot be released to go on training as we cannot afford the supply cover. It is unlikely that teachers would volunteer to do training in their spare time as morale is very low and they do not feel that they or the schools are valued as a result of these cuts.

Victoria PS

Insufficient time & resources to develop new course materials, or engage in innovative teaching experiences

Broughton HS

No resources mean no CfE. This will limp on to the stage and will take 5-10 years to come into real effect. A generation plus of children will suffer because of this and the effects will ripple into the future for decades. A major, major new initiative like this should have a huge support and preparation allocation - putting CfE stickers on an old banger will fool no-one especially, the kids or the teachers. There will be a lot of good teachers leaving this system because of all this.

Boroughmuir HS

Although CfE was by far the most cited example of future development risk, there were a number of mentions of risk to GLOW⁶ in which Edinburgh is already quite far behind other areas of Scotland and longer-established initiatives like eco-schools.

⁶ GLOW is billed as the world's first national intranet for education. Formerly called the Scottish Schools Digital Network, it provides materials and tools electronically to enhance learning. Edinburgh is already trailing some other council areas in rolling out GLOW.

5 Future years

In the normal run of public sector budgeting, summer and autumn of 2009 would have seen a comprehensive spending review at both UK and Scottish Government levels. This would have meant that the draft Scottish Budget for 2010-11 would have been accompanied by indicative spending for 2011-12 and 2012-13. As it stands there are no such published budgets and there will not be until at least summer 2010 when the next spending review may be announced.

However, that has not prevented many commentators predicting that 2011-12 is when public spending will really face the squeeze. And, in Edinburgh, the City Council has speculated that even after 2.5% cuts in 2010-11, then further and cumulative cuts of 2.5% to schools budgets will be needed in the succeeding two years.

So we also asked Parent councils about the impact on future years: 2011-12 and 2012-13 where these cuts of 6.5% and 9% respectively have been mooted.

This is where predictions become much more speculative so we have simply picked out a few views which illustrate the depth of anxiety. Words like "catastrophic", "horrendous", "devastating" and "drastic" were used by parent councils.

For Craiglockhart the real crunch will come in 2011-12. We cannot fathom where to get 6.5% and then 9%. Staff is 90% of our DSM budget but there are legal and contractual constraints on how much time can be cut. It is not possible for a school like ours to take 9% off its budget on its own.

Craiglockhart PS

Meltdown! Teachers and management are already stretched too far; fewer pupils will stay through to S6 due to reduced course choices; teachers will withdraw support for extracurricular activities; morale of pupils and teachers will decline; greater anticipated absence due to stress; attainment will suffer as a result of these

Broughton HS

Serious decline in the services offered to young people. Budgets would no longer meet the basic needs of pupils

Balgreen PS

Devastating, equivalent to the loss of 10.5 members of teaching staff.

Craigmount HS

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Horrendous. School budgets have been cut back to the bone already. This will affect pupils' futures. More high school pupils are opting to stay on longer (because they cannot find jobs). So there are already pressures to provide more choice and more classes at the senior level, and the allocated funding does not cover costs. Schools like ours are already coping with extra demand and helping senior pupils to find their way into a difficult job market.

St Thomas of Aquins HS

Making the current cuts has cut our budgets to the bone. It means that we will have drastically reduced Learning Assistant provision; a Principal Teacher who is teaching full time; a Deputy Head Teacher who is teaching a great deal of the time; and a Head Teacher whose strategic effectiveness is compromised by undertaking sickness cover for her staff. We have no money with which to maintain our ageing building, or purchase classroom resources other than the bare minimum. This is just about sustainable in the short term, but not for a longer period of time. And should the proposed cuts of 6.5% and 9% for 2011/12 and 2012/13 be applied, it does not seem that St Mary's will be able to find a way to comply

St Mary's RC PS (Leith)

These cuts are impossible to make. The school will go into deficit for the first time ever. We exist without a DHT and used that money for extra teaching, resources and maintenance. That money is now long gone.

Anonymous PS

6 Final comments

The survey was mainly about the impact of *cuts*. But parents councils have emphasized that schools really need and merit being in a period of expanded budgets, particularly with Curriculum for Excellence reaching such a critical phase.

So we asked parent councils what else they wanted to say about the current financial environment.

For a number of years our energy costs have been significantly greater than budget – ours is an oil-fired school. We will have to spend to save, to incorporate newer / eco technologies.

Sciennes PS

The council needs to protect essential, statutory education provision from further cuts. If the council invested in better building insulation and more efficient boilers - then savings from the heating bills could be re-invested in the school services.

Gracemount PS

I do not believe there is enough publicity about this issue and many parents are only aware via their Parent councils. This impacts every child in the city (and some outwith who attend special schools) but children with special needs to a greater extent due to the level of support they require which does not seem to be being considered by these blanket cuts.

Braidburn Special School

There are many good reasons that the budget allocations should be increasing year on year - to make up lost ground, facilitate CfE, to maintain the dilapidated school building stock, to improve on the whole educational experience for all stakeholders. The budget cuts will drive good teachers out of education and the whole system will become a miserable travesty of an educational system within a generation.

South Morningside PS

While as a parent body we do appreciate the pressure the Department is under, we are concerned that the proposed cuts will place an intolerable pressure on the school, and, eventually, have a detrimental effect on the education of our children.

St Marys RC PS (Leith)

How can it be right to so severely cut a vital resource such as education, which underpins the future of every man woman and child in Scotland?

The wasteful practices that occur in our local authority make a budget cut in education hard to swallow I recently received eight identical letters telling me that lets could no longer be booked on Thursdays, but addressed to the Chair of the PC, the PC Chair, Chair of the PTA, PTA Chair, the HT or PTA Chair, Ruth Currie, and the names of the two previous PC Chairs - this could have been achieved by a single email.

If you multiply this level of waste by every team, department, and Service throughout the local authority, how much of the required savings could be made by taking a team and departmental look at practices, and applying some process control, continuous improvement and LEAN principles?

Parsons Green PS

Cuts on this scale imply the complete loss of learning assistants, this is not compatible with the McCrone settlement and cannot be implemented by schools . Further it is our view that cuts on this scale cannot be implemented within the freedom of action which a Headteacher has.

The devolved financial management scheme gives Headteachers responsibility for much of the financial management of their schools and can only work if they are given a reasonable budget to work with. If the budget was reasonable a couple of years ago it cannot now also be reasonable after a £96 K cut.

Bruntsfield PS

Primary schools have very little control over their so-called 'devolved budgets'. As over 80% of the budget is on costs outside the schools' control (number of teaching staff, salary increases, utilities providers, etc), any cuts have to come out of the budgets for 'extras' such as jotters, paper, heat and light.

Broughton PS

Frankly I think the Council is not aware just how schools are stretched at the moment to even contemplate a budget cut this year and then ongoing years. At the moment a lot of the things devolved to schools budget are not under their control i.e. water rates, staff salaries, heating but they are expected to find ways to cut things.

In small schools we are penalised as we incur the same costs as larger schools i.e. salaries, heating etc but the quality of education and sense of belonging that children get

in a small school is overlooked as all the current Education Department can see is pound signs.

Education is vital as it enables our children to grow and develop and go out into the world and become successes in their own individual ways. This should be the right of every child. It is very sad that the future of our City is being held back because of the short sightedness of the current Education Department.

Victoria PS

Frontline services should be protected and not cut, show some leadership and give young people the start they deserve in life.

Leith PS

Education in Edinburgh is in danger of slipping further backwards should these cuts go ahead. The implications for the future are dire. With a new curriculum designed to equip Scottish children to compete in the 21st Century, education in Edinburgh needs to move forward to reflect this. Cuts have already affected schools to the point where school management is put under severe stress. Services, such as learning support or specialist teachers, that are designed to benefit children, especially the most vulnerable are being stripped away. Parents increasingly finding themselves funding essential equipment.

Flora Stevenson PS

7 School closures

Since the survey was drawn up and issued, the subject of school closures has loomed very much larger. On 17 December 2009 the City Council decided to close 4 primary schools by June 2010 with an estimated saving of £800,000 in 2010-11⁷. At a meeting of all parent council chairs the evening before (16 December) the Education Convenor sought to canvass the views of those present as to whether school closures should continue or be accelerated. Although a number of individual PC chairs gave their view, both for and against, no overall view was proffered or recorded.

In this current exercise we did not specifically ask for views on school closures and in section 5 above – general comments – it was not mentioned by parent councils responding to the survey. It would therefore be inappropriate to seek to characterize the views of parents on closures.

However, it seems as though further closures feature very firmly in the City Council's plans for dealing with budget cuts. And therefore it would be odd to avoid mentioning them altogether in a survey about budget cuts. While it is fair to reflect a diversity of views among parent councils on the extent to which closures can and should be a response to the budget situation we have described, it is equally fair to say that parents on every side of the argument would like a deeper, more meaningful and sustained engagement with the City Council at a strategic level (as opposed to only at a school-by-school level).

This might include looking at:

- What are the future projections for the number of Edinburgh's school-aged children, how reliable are they and how well do they relate to plans for future development of housing?
- How robust are current methods for estimating school capacity and to what extent do they match with schools' own views of optimal use of buildings?
- What is the role of catchment area review in trying to balance out areas of surplus spaces with overcrowded schools?
- What vision is there for neighbourhoods in the city and how does school provision sit within that? What is the scope for co-delivery of local services from functioning schools?

⁷ This estimate of £800,000 was in the papers prior to the decision being taken. However, at the same Council meeting the Council agreed to additional transitional funding for the children in the four schools going to new schools. This means that the saving in 2010-11 will be something less than £800,000.

Cuts to School Budgets 2009-10 to 2012-13: Evidence and views from Edinburgh's Parent Councils

- What evidence is there for the relative educational well-being of children in different settings – large or small schools, large or small classes?
- What are the revenue budget implications of closing schools and how does that change with the scale of closures possible? How significant are those budget savings compared to overall savings needed? What other budget areas would deliver savings?
- What are the potential capital receipts from releasing sites, how can they be retained for the school estate and how do these receipts compare to the capital funding needs of the remaining estate and the projected need for new schools?

These questions are illustrative rather than conclusive but without a better level of engagement with parents it is difficult to see school closures being anything other than more and more divisive.

8 Conclusions

The purpose of this report has been to illustrate the impact of budget cuts as they affect schools and children both now and in the future. Discussions about budgets can become technical and arcane. We think that one of our responsibilities, as parents representing wider parent bodies in our schools, is to ensure that the day to day reality of schools is kept on the radar.

- The 4% projected for next year is around £40,000 for an average primary school, up to £160,000 for a larger secondary school.
- Head teachers and other senior staff are spending and will spend more time in classrooms to the detriment of the management and development of their schools. Many staff are working unsustainable hours to cope.
- Cuts in learning assistant hours affect children with additional support needs.
- Materials budgets are being slashed, with erosion of previous stocks. Parents are paying for new materials like smart boards and playground equipment but also for basics like jotters, books, chairs and window-cleaning.
- Maintenance of buildings is being reduced with impacts on future improvement costs as well as compromising basic health and safety.
- During 2009-10 schools have been asked to shoulder the burden of additional costs without being given adequate additional budget to do so.
- Parents fear for the success of major developments – most obviously the new curriculum, which is nearing a critical phase for implementation.
- In 2011-12 and 2012-13, cuts totalling 6.5% and 9% respectively are being trailed. Parents describe the impact of such cuts as “horrendous”, “meltdown” and “catastrophic”
- In contrast, parents point out the need for additional investment in education budgets – not simply to enhance the experience of children and young people; but also to reap savings in future years – for example, by having more energy-efficient schools.
- School closures are being mooted as one way of dealing with budget cuts. There is a diversity of views among parents as to whether this is a legitimate course of action. More broadly, there is concern that parents should have a more sustained and strategic input into the future size and distribution of the school estate.

We do not have glib solutions to a funding crisis of such depth. We are aware that the message needs to go to national politicians (both UK and Scottish) as well as local – although we are dismayed at the apparent tendency of all three groups to shuffle responsibility one to the other.

In the meantime, the City Council has said that it wants to leave no option unexamined in seeking to adapt to new straitened circumstances; that there should be no sacred cows. We hope that this logic applies to the City Council's budget as a whole and, indeed, to public sector funding more generally.

Appendix

The following schools took part in the survey between 1-20 December 2009

Gracemount Primary
Craiglockhart Primary
East Craigs Primary
Stockbridge Primary
Balgreen Primary
Flora Stevenson Primary
Leith Primary
Clermiston Primary
Victoria Primary
Broughton Primary
Ferryhill Primary
Bruntsfield Primary
Craigmount High School
Parsons Green Primary
Blackhall Primary
St Mary's RC Primary (East London Street)
St Mary's RC Primary (Leith)
St Thomas of Aquin's RC High School
South Morningside Primary
Boroughmuir High School
Braidburn Special School
Ratho Primary
Sciennes Primary
Trinity Academy
Broughton High School

In addition, 5 primary schools took part in the exercise but wished to do so anonymously.