

**PHS Parent Council Meeting on New School Building**

**1 March 2023**

**Vision for the Future of Education Lesley Munro, SBC Director of Education & Lifelong Learning**

Our aim is to provide the opportunities, experiences, skills and qualifications to achieve and positive and sustained destination.

Our young people need to develop skills to be flexible and adaptable, with the capacity to continue to develop new skills that they will need for the rapidly changing challenges of life, learning and work.

We are committed to creating the best possible learning and teaching environments for all children and young people. Design needs to look forward and be flexible and adaptable to respond to the changing demands.

High Schools cater for young people from age 11, coming out of Primary School having experienced a very different curriculum and learning environment through to the young adults of 18 and heading into their next stage of life.

We must seek to provide spaces to suit the diversity of age and stage, allow a sense of belonging appropriate to this while also providing preparation for the future in places of work and study beyond the school years.

Education in Scotland is undergoing a period of review and reform:

The Organisation for Economic Co-ordination and Development (OECD) report 2021 confirmed that the intent of CFE remains sound however in reviewing the success of implementation, there were 12 recommendations for education reform. These were fully accepted by Scottish Government and include the need to achieve a better balance between breadth and depth of learning, a review of senior phase to align with the vision of CFE and provide improved pathways and guidance on learning, teaching and assessment approaches and a refreshed focus on curriculum design and capacity.

A national system level change requires us to be both responsive and forward looking and the opportunity to design learning environments which can support future reform is very welcome.

The curriculum is the totality of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, wherever they are being educated.

Building the Curriculum 3 A Framework for Learning.

There is no fixed pathway through learning and a blend of vocational and academic opportunities should be brought together in a skills based curriculum which meets the needs of all young people.

Creating suites of diverse types of learning spaces which support a range of opportunities for learners to explore, collaborate, create and develop provides the platform for a broad curricular offering and a range of rich learning approaches.

Children and young people’s rights and entitlements are central to Scotland’s curriculum and every child and young person is entitled to experience:

• a curriculum which is coherent from 3 to 18;

• a broad general education, including well planned experiences and outcomes across all the curriculum areas from early years through to S3. This includes understanding the world, Scotland’s place in it and the environment, referred to as Learning for Sustainability;

• a senior phase after S3, which provides opportunities to attain and achieve, including to study for qualifications, awards and other planned activities to develop the four capacities;

• opportunities for developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work;

• opportunities to maximise their individual potential, benefitting from appropriate personal support and challenge;

• support to help them move into positive and sustained destinations beyond school.

There are 4 contexts for learning:

* Ethos and Life of the School
* Wider Achievement
* Curriculum Areas and Subjects
* Interdisciplinary Learning

Subject choices and their associated individual qualifications can no longer be seen as the only way to develop a flexible, responsive and changing workforce who are as happy in life as they are in work. We must nurture the skills and attributes they will need to respond to the opportunities and challenges presented to them in a rapidly evolving, and sometimes frightening world.

Some of this learning will be specialised, subject-specific knowledge, but other more ‘informal’ learning is of equal importance and should be valued as such. Measuring school success purely on that which can be easily measured, ‘traditional academia’, is outdated and potentially harmful to the wellbeing of our young people and to the constructs of our society as a whole. “ Education Scotland: Learner Pathways 2020

Peebles High School has identified a number of objectives to prepare the opportunities the new school can provide, including:

• Continue to develop staff knowledge of pedagogical approaches to support effective teaching and learning in a variety of learning spaces

• Develop curriculum planning, exemplifying best practice in pedagogy for the learning space that our new building provides.

• Extend sharing practice offer, with focus on maximising our use of learning spaces (both physical and digital) to deliver effective teaching

“Connecting People, Places and Leaning” is Scotland’s Learning Estate Strategy. Produced by Scottish Government and COSLA, the strategy has guiding principles which identify:

* Learning environments should support and facilitate excellent joined up learning and teaching to meet the needs of all learners;
* Learning environments should support the wellbeing of all learners, meet varying needs to support inclusion and support transitions for all learners;
* The learning estate should be well-managed and maintained, making the best of existing resources, maximising occupancy and representing and delivering best value;
* Outdoor learning and the use of outdoor learning environments should be maximised.

In schools, the fixed concept of learners being recipients having knowledge delivered to them by experts in the form of teachers is dated yet has remained the driver in the organisation of the buildings where education is “delivered”.

Legislation as a driver adds further layers of control into spatial organisation – class sizes, age and stage of learners, pupil-teacher ratios for example can be over-used in timetabling, layout and use of buildings and can become an obstacle.

In seeking to achieve a flexible approach to learning spaces, there are many tangible examples which can offer a richer opportunity in a different environment:

Larger spaces effectively support approaches such as team teaching where rather than a similar activity is mirrored across a number of classes and teachers, with each individual class being differentiated separately; an integrated approach where a larger number of pupils access the style of learning and delivery that suits their need, with a range of teaching approaches can be offered to dynamic groups.

Interdisciplinary learning, where for example, a number of subject area teachers might be delivering a planned suite of learning within a context or theme, is also very effectively enabled with more open or varied spaces.

Smaller, more intimate spaces might be utilised for tutorial groups or for a pupil accessing learning through a digital platform in a remote establishment.

The opportunities presented by Digital Learning support the ambition to:

• Raise educational attainment

• Create a pupil-centred curriculum which will provide engaging pupil-centred lessons

• Enable children and young people to access the most up to date educational resources

• Raise levels of engagement, motivation and interaction

• Improve facilitation of different learning styles

• Support remote and/or independent learning

• Improve self-management

• Improve the digital skills needed for the future workplace

There is still of course a place for a traditional classroom spaces. These serve the needs of episodes of learning which rely on direct teaching to a class size group, allow effective assessment activity and can be important factors in meeting the needs of young people with specific need for this particular space.

It is important not to conflate curriculum with timetabling which is simply a tool which simply organises places and people to enable the delivery of the curriculum. Dynamic timetabling allows teachers and faculties to plan not only what is to be learned, but where is best suited to deliver this learning.

It is critical that there is a planned and extensive programme of change management and professional learning to prepare for the move into a different learning environment and to enable change to be effected rather than provisioning for the same experience in a new place.

**Current plans for the new school Steven Renwick, SBC Project Manager**

Steven shared [slides](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/SBC-Evolution-of-Plan-Presentation-1-March-2023.pdf) on the changes in design made since the public engagement sessions in early February and further engagement with the Parent Council Subgroup.

 The **main changes in design** are:

* Teaching spaces – open v fully enclosed:
* Ground Floor - up to mid 70% now enclosed
* First floor was 40% enclosed, now 76% enclosed
* Assembly hall has been moved to allow for a double height space (single height at the stage end) which is enclosed to allow for assembly, music performance, exams. There is now no timetabling issue affecting the drama classrooms. Capacity of this space is now 350

Main construction phase is due to start late Spring/early Summer 2023 and complete Summer 2025. This will be followed by demolition and landscaping up to December 2025.

**Update from New Build Working Group Tristan Compton, Lead**

What you have seen tonight is the result of a huge effort involving Parents, Community Councils, Primary Parent Councils, as well as Elected Councillors and SBC Officers.

These plans are a significant improvement on what was proposed in October, and I want to thank everyone who has taken the time to give their feedback to SBC and to the Parent Council, over recent weeks. I also want to thank SBC officers for listening to our concerns, and improving the plans as a result of that feedback.

2 key areas of concern were around Hall and Performance space and Open Plan design.

As a working group we are pleased with the changes to the hall. Details remain to be resolved, including getting confirmation that it can be fully enclosed (eg for quiet during Exams as well as for containing rehearsal and performance noise), and that the staging, performance area, and technical box can be accommodated.

We are also pleased with changes to reduce the open plan teaching rooms. We have always wanted flexibility, because teachers told us that in a teaching space it needs to be possible to create a calm environment, free from distraction, while at the same time the option to make use of break-out spaces and larger areas will sometimes be beneficial. Having the flexibility is key. Timetabling our way out of needing to use the remaining open plan spaces won`t always be possible and the school will be at or near operational capacity when it opens. There will be demand to expand the curriculum, and timetabling is already a challenge. As a working group we remain concerned about the 4 open plan teaching spaces on the first floor and the 4 open plan science teaching spaces on the ground floor. Our request remains for SBC to introduce flexibility to those spaces, but tonight it will be great to hear from parents here if you share these concerns – as a working group it`s important we represent the views of as many parents as possible.

Having visited 4 modern secondary schools in different local authorities including Jedburgh, it is clear that acoustics can make a huge difference to the quality of learning. Many of you will have seen feedback from pupils at Jedburgh, and having stood at the edge of an open plan classroom in Jedburgh last Friday myself, I saw how difficult it was to hear the teacher and how some pupils struggled to engage in the lesson in those circumstances. The working group will continue to call on SBC to ensure the minimum acoustic standards are exceeded wherever possible, one easy and cheap way to do this is to put carpet on the floor, ceiling tiles above and to have a door.

The working group has also sought reassurance that the change involved in moving to a new building that enables different teaching methods, will be budgeted for, and that staff and school management who need to be involved in the project are backfilled so current students teaching doesn`t suffer. We have asked that parents, pupils, and teachers be involved as partners in the project on an ongoing basis. We want to be consulted, not simply communicated to, on any important decisions that arise as the project progresses. I hope Lesley will open the Q&A session by giving parents that commitment this evening?

**Q&A on vision and plans**

A number of parents thanked SBC for listening and making the changes presented.

***Regarding the partitions shown in the presentation – will they be glass?***

Steven - We need something that can slide, whether glass or solid we don’t have that detail yet.

***Regarding capacity – can you say anything about the school roll?***

SBC noted their methodology is tested as far as possible and are confident with the projection that the roll is going down. The figure of 1400 is a metric used by funders to determine what the project is worth. The capacity is actually 1500 – 1800. Occupancy was monitored on the 3 ‘worst’ days of the timetable, and 1 in 4 rooms weren’t allocated for timetabling. They have calculations around Nursery intake rates, leavers rates, which differ across Borders schools eg Peebles has quite a high stay-on rate. The projections also take account of the Local Development Plan and infrastructure is a sticking point in Peebles, a 2nd bridge is not even featuring in next 10 years which would be required to open access to those sites, also water, power. If all that happens in 15 years time – we would look to expand this school but there is no data to suggest we need to do that.

Mr Wilson confirmed roll for S1 next session is currently 229, which is 30 fewer than current S1 and S2. 2025/26 roll is expected to be 1378 which is the same as now, however no one thought we’d be a 1400 pupil school as roll 12 years ago was 1211. It’s true that a good new school could mean the roll will be greater.

***Is the roll dropping next year just because of birth rates or are more sending their kids to private school because of PHS poor condition? Do you know percentage of kids who go to private school from P7?***

Mr Wilson - 3 children in current P7 in feeder primaries are going to private school which is a typical level.

***Is there a support group to help parents of additional needs children – what to expect etc?***

Lesley - There is a staff team and parents working with our additional support needs team. Neurodiversity is very much a focus, young people have to have an individual plan to look at how different aspects of the environment support different needs, eg reducing noise sensitivity.

Mrs Mooney – our principal teacher of additional needs is really happy with the design of the new building and additional space being provided for support for learning.

***Is there teacher space for time away from class?***

Lesley - There are numerous spaces for staff welfare and non-contact time, some enclosed and some not.

Mr Wilson - currently staff have a ‘base’ for each faculty

***What is the timeline for decisions around fitting out of classrooms (furniture etc).***

Steven - It is a staged arrangement, we don’t need to choose actual items until further on in the process.

Lesley - If you have white wall around the room you can project anywhere, project onto ipads, fit out of specifics comes as late as possible to get the most up to date technology. It’s not based on a screen at the front of the room, instances of this are not that common. These are interdisciplinary learning spaces, we need flexibility.

***Is the timeline still Summer 2025?***

It’s a 2 year build starting late spring / early summer 2023 therefore finishing summer 2025.

***Toilets – what have you taken onboard in relation to the current challenges with pupils being scared, antisocial behaviour?***

Steven - As seen in Jedburgh, each toilet will be a cubicle open to corridor space. A bank of fully enclosed toilets with wall floor to ceiling, wash-hand basin and paper hand towels in each cubicle. Designation of male/female/all gender is up to the school.

Lesley - toilet design is based on the Tapestry building in Gala if anyone wishes to see for themselves.

***The subgroup did lots of school visits and these schools probably had all same aspirations around changing the way we learn, teach and had to then make changes, eg put in additional walls.***

Lesley - When those buildings were designed, education in Scotland was different from now. We do go out and visit other schools, we do look at best practice. The pinnacle is not to have every single room closed off.

Steven - Equality Impact assessment will be carried out.

Lesley - Communication is key, it was an oversight to not have communicated the ‘why’ before the ‘what’.

**Next steps**

Commitment was made by SBC to share the slides that were shown at the meeting, these can now be viewed on **phsparents.org.uk** [**here**](https://phsparents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/SBC-Evolution-of-Plan-Presentation-1-March-2023.pdf). In addition a more comprehensive summary report of all the changes made to the design will be published on the SBC website in March.

Any parent who wishes to get involved with the subgroup, make further comments or ask questions please get in touch: newbuilding@phsparents.org.uk