

City school kitchens 'mothballed' [UK] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Primary school kitchens in a number of Edinburgh schools and nurseries are being axed to make up a shortfall in council budgets.

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Last week, the minister for schools and skills, Maureen Watt, outlined the government's commitment to improve nutrition in school meals.

But from Thursday a number of kitchens will close to make savings of £500,000.

The council claimed there had been a fall in demand for meals over the last few years and stressed hot meals would still be transported in from nearby kitchens - but the measure has angered parents at many of the affected schools.

Marilyne MacLaren, Edinburgh City Council education leader, said there had been a fall in demand for meals over the last few years.

She said: "These kitchens will be mothballed for up to a year while we monitor the uptake of schools meals.

"The current trend shows numbers are now starting to increase and I hope that if there is sufficient demand this will allow us to re-open these kitchens in the future.

"I am confident that pupils will still be served a high standard of healthy meals which will be prepared in a nearby school.

"The fall in demand is a national problem and we are in the process of setting up a working group to address the issue in Edinburgh."

Grace Walker, assistant cook at Kirkliston Primary School, has already collected hundreds of signatures on a petition to keep its kitchen open.

She said: "Nobody is happy about this. The meals are very popular with staff and children. We must supply about 100 a day. Everything is cooked from scratch, and we supply two other schools.

"We've increased the amount of fruit and vegetables the children eat over the last few years.

"We're now going to have to change to transporting meals in, but they don't transport as well.

"This doesn't make sense."

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- reprinted from BBC News

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