As Glasgow numbers decline, Calderwood head calls on parents to ‘make the school viable’

Headteacher: ‘We need your children’

THE HEADTEACHER of Scotland’s only Jewish school has said that the school needs to attract greater numbers of Jewish children to maintain its Jewish ethos.

Speaking to an audience of almost 300 people, Dr Jim Duffy, the acting head of Calderwood Lodge School, said that while the community is likely to have a Jewish school for the foreseeable future, the community needed to support the school by sending its children to the Newlands-based primary.

Dr Duffy, who has been acting head of Calderwood since March 2006, was speaking this week at the first lecture of the recently formed Glasgow Jewish Educational Forum. He outlined his priorities for Calderwood and said that in the future the school will have to “integrate the study of other world religions”.

He added: “The excellent nursery helps with the continuity and the school has small class sizes, a good number of staff and tremendous parental involvement.” He also said that the school scored excellent results in national tests and was in the top 10 per cent of Scotland’s primary schools. “This, he said, “bodes well for the future of the school”.

He explained that the main problem the school faces is the declining Jewish population in Glasgow and the fact that many Jewish children in Glasgow attend local schools.

Dr Duffy urged the parents in the audience at Giffnock and Newlands Synagogue banqueting suite: “Send your children to Calderwood in order for it to remain viable.” He appealed to the audience: “We need the support of more Jewish families.”

He also told the audience: “The school is perfectly viable. There is no intention to close Calderwood. East Renfrewshire Authority is committed to supporting Calderwood.”

Dr Duffy added that he was hopeful that Calderwood will find a replacement head teacher as he returns to his own school, St Cadoc’s, in September. Ricky Zinger, chairperson of Calderwood Lodge School Board, who attended the meeting, told the JC: “The school is viable. We have the backing of East Renfrewshire Council. Should numbers continue to decline we will cross that bridge when we come to it.”

Tony Tankel, one of five members of the forum, told the JC: “This lecture series is dealing with critical and vital issues facing the Glasgow community and the high attendance at this meeting is indicative of the importance of Calderwood Lodge to this community.”

Calderwood Lodge has 150 pupils on roll, of whom 88 per cent are Jewish. Ten years ago the school had 215 children, and 95 per cent were Jewish.

The next lecture in the series takes place in February when Jim Murphy MP will speak on “What is the British government’s policy towards Israel and the Peace Process?”