CALDERWOOD Lodge Primary School needs more pupils if it is to continue to be viable and to prosper.

That was the warning given by Dr Jim Duffy, acting head teacher, when he spoke at the inaugural Glasgow Jewish Education Forum meeting, held at Giffnock & Newlands Synagogue.

He told the 200-strong audience: “Calderwood is an excellent school. It is one of the top schools in Scotland and a Jewish one.

“Attainment is at an all-time high and our pupils go on to achieve great things. However, we need the support of the entire Jewish community in order for it to maintain its Jewish ethos.”

Asked by a member of the audience if he thought that the school would be able to continue at its present site in the long term, Dr Duffy responded: “East Renfrewshire Council is committed to Jewish education and there are no plans for the school to close.

“If the numbers continue to fall though, it is possible that the school might be integrated into a new shared campus school elsewhere in the future.”

Dr Duffy explained his professional background before talking about the school.

He began his career as a teacher in 1976.

He has been head teacher of St James’, Paisley, St Joseph’s, Busby and St Cadoc’s, Newton Mearns. As a young head teacher he was part of a trio who organised and delivered staff development for fellow heads in providing a public service.

Talking about being asked to perform the role of acting head of Calderwood, he said: “I was a member of the interview team for the position last year.

“It was the first time I’d been on an interview panel and ended up getting the job. When asked, I decided instantly to accept the request to go to Calderwood.”
Dr Duffy announced that he would be leaving in June to return to St Cadoc’s.

Interviews would be held in the spring for the new Calderwood head and he planned to work until his departure with whoever was appointed.

His initial thoughts on the school were that it was an impressive site, but very large for the number of pupils — currently 149 — and better use could be made of the building.

The school required a small facelift, particularly to improve the appearance of the entrance. Many of the resources were very good and there was a large, excellent and committed staff, with a high staff/pupil ratio. Everyone had been very welcoming.

Among the main changes he brought in, have been the introduction of quality assurance for staff through a staff appraisal system, improved communication within the school and with parents, regular assessment of all pupils and more support for pupils with special needs.

A tangible example of how performance has improved has come through national testing results.

Calderwood pupils scored their highest results ever, with 90 per cent achievement in writing, 92 per cent in reading and just under 94 per cent in maths.

These figures place the school in the top 10 per cent of Scottish primary schools.

The meeting was chaired by Nigel Allon and at the end David Barnett presented Dr Duffy with a signed copy of Rev Ernest Levy’s new book, The Single Light.

Speaking after the talk, GJEF member Tony Tankel said: “The turnout was most encouraging and as organisers we were very happy with the event. Dr Duffy was an excellent speaker and we have only had positive feedback. It was a very good start and we now want to keep the momentum going.”

The next meeting, when Jim Murphy MP will speak on ‘What is the British Government’s policy towards Israel and the Peace Process’ will be held on Sunday, February 18.

GJEF has set up a website and a blog, which has already received a lot of feedback, at gjef.wordpress.com