

James Gillespie's High School
Parent Council Meeting and AGM
Wednesday 18th November 2020

Note of meeting

This meeting was held using a Microsoft Teams presentation due to ongoing limitations on group meetings related to Covid-19.

Questions from parents and carers were invited prior to the meeting and could also be added during the meeting using a moderated chat.

The following are notes of the presenter names, agenda and action points to accompany the video of the meeting held on Teams and available to view at:

<https://youtu.be/YICdgNAxPTk>.

Presenters:

Donald Macdonald – DM (HT), Sarah Scott – SS (Chair), Laura Stewart – LS (DHT)
Ben Lewis – BL (DHT)

Moderators:

Graeme Davis – GD, Cath Downie – CD

Minutes:

Laura Young – LY (Secretary)

**1. Welcome and note of last meeting (14th October 2020, AGM) –
Sarah Scott (0:00:00- 0:02:04)**

SS welcomed everyone and outlined the format of the meeting.

Formal minutes were not recorded for the previous online meeting as a video record is available at <https://youtu.be/utGwuDatRmE>.

2. Update and Annual Chair Report - Sarah Scott (0:02:04-0:07:53)

SS gave feedback from recent City of Edinburgh Council North East/South East Locality meeting with representatives of local parent councils. Further information is available at: <https://jghscouncil.btck.co.uk/News>.

She highlighted several points from two presentations at the Locality meeting:

- Darren McKinnon, CEC Quality Improvement Manager (Secondary Schools) provided a presentation discussing the plans for 2021 exams.

There will be no National 5 exams and no external assessments. Results will be based on teacher judgement supported by assessment resources and quality assurance supplied by The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

Darren noted that 3-5 (subject dependant) pieces of evidence will be required however at present ways of capturing performance for subjects such as music, PE

and drama are being explored by SQA and Education Scotland. Work will be done across schools to co-ordinate the advice given.

Plans are in place for Highers and Advanced Highers exams to take place from 13 May-4 June 2021 with the results being issued on 10 August.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) will issue a final decision in February on whether the exam diet can go ahead, which will be dependent on the pandemic situation.

There is no advice as yet in relation to contingency planning however learners will be assessed along the way. Planning on assessment is ongoing but a date will be set by the Parent council very shortly for a meeting regarding SQA arrangements for this session.

- Jackie Reid, Quality Improvement Manager (Primary Schools) and Louise Stevenson Senior Development Officer (Teaching and Learning) presented the “Edinburgh Learns Assessment & Moderation Framework” advising that it is still in draft form.

The Framework will assist in the consideration of attainment levels and predictions and help young people who need to catch up using home and school-based learning and support deployment of “Closing the Gap” task force who will be utilised to support young people who have lost learning during lockdown, those who are self-isolating and those who may require more support.

This task force will consist of 58 primary school, 48 secondary, 14 special and 11 home link teachers. 26 primary and 33 secondary teachers have been recruited thus far, the latter with a mix of subjects. Staff will be deployed to clusters and managed by cluster headteachers.

- Edinburgh Council is seeking parents' views in two consultations.

One is a formal consultation on the Council's budget (closing date 10th Dec) and is available [here](#). City of Edinburgh currently has a revenue deficit and needs to save £47 M over three years. This is a good opportunity for parents to lobby to maintain spending on Education.

The other is an informal consultation on Gaelic-medium secondary education (closing date 11th Dec) and is available [here](#).

SS reported that there are ongoing efforts to lobby the Council for the reinstatement of extracurricular activities. The Education, Children and Families Committee passed a resolution before the October holidays to restart school sports on a rolling basis after the break, but it remains the case that only Council staff can lead extra-curricular activities, and that most have not re-commenced.

SS shared information from Ros Ingle, PC Treasurer, regarding the PC accounts. The breakdown given noted £195.00 raised from the PC run refreshment stalls,

£46.00 raised through Easy Fundraising and £1,200.00 granted by City of Edinburgh Council to assist the running of School Parent Councils. The current balance stands at £3,376.00.

This money will be used to grant Teacher requests for funding through the annual Small Sums Scheme. In recent years, the scheme has granted funding to help support pupil equity work, and the STEM Club, amongst other good causes.

SS also noted that parents can help with fundraising by:

- Donating via ParentPay
- EasyFundraising

See documents uploaded on the JGHS Parent Council website at:

<http://jghscouncil.btck.co.uk/Minutesandfiles>

Finally, SS thanked the staff of JGHS for their dedication and professionalism at a very difficult time.

3. Overview - Donald Macdonald (0:7:53-0:24:51)

DM thanked SS for her overview, the PC for organising the event and his colleagues for their presentations.

During the first term the School have recorded 6 cases of Covid-19 amongst young people and one positive case amongst the Staff. Track and Track noted that in all of these cases transmission had occurred off of school premises. DM gave a quick update on how the School is managing Covid-19 and keeping both young people and staff safe. Measures the School has taken include a one-way system, the wearing of masks by Senior pupils and Staff (JGHS was the first school in the UK to introduce this), regular disinfection, ventilation and social distancing. The School applies the latest Government and NHS advice regarding Track and Trace self-isolating procedures. Overall, DM remains pleased with the School's handling of Covid-19.

DM also noted that Home Learning is available via Teams for pupils that are self-isolating. He acknowledged that the provision of work had been patchy up to this point. He apologised and promised that the situation will improve. Holly Gordon has been recently appointed to co-ordinate the work on Teams. DM welcomed Holly to the JGHS Team.

DM spoke of the ongoing SQA assessment planning and noted that a final decision regarding exams will be taken by John Swinney at the end of February. As yet, the school does not have all the information. At a Headteachers meeting with John Swinney this afternoon more information was promised to Schools by the end of the week. DM noted that each school is different and will need time to process the information received. The School does not wish to present this information to parents and young people until they are sure that it is unlikely to change. By the next PC meeting in December there is likely to be a detailed plan for SQA assessment to share with parents.

National 5 prelims are likely to still take place as robust evidence will be needed and young people require experience of the exam setting. Higher and Advanced prelims are likely to take place at the end of January/ beginning of February but dates are yet to be finalised.

Course Choice meetings for S2 into S3 will likely take place at the end of January. Notice of dates will be given in advance. As yet, there is no date for the P7 online parent presentation. The S1 intake in August 2021 is likely to be 316 which is testament to the ongoing popularity of the School. Such a large intake presents organisational challenges for the school but also brings more staff and opportunities for broadening the curriculum.

It is with regret that Covid-19 restrictions mean the annual JGHS Christmas Concert at the Usher Hall will not take place this year. The performing arts departments at the school are planning a suitable alternative online event.

DM noted that extra P.E, activities are embargoed by City of Edinburgh Council and that this situation is frustrating for parents and young people alike. The School has, however, welcomed the music instructors back into school. Some have changed days, and all are using i-Pads to provide online music lessons for young people. Pupils in S4-6 being the current priority. As yet, S1 auditions have been unable to take place. DM noted that the Pipe band are back on campus albeit in a restricted format.

Full P.E, indoors with certain restrictions is likely to recommence soon. More information and guidance for Schools is expected to follow in the next few weeks.

Finally, DM reported that the School is currently fully staffed and that in actual fact, Staff absence was at a lower level than would normally be expected at this time of year.

4. Darroch refurbishment delay contingency – Laura Stewart

(0:18:52-0:40:46)

DM introduced this presentation by sharing the facts that the current school capacity is 1450 but that by August 2021 the school roll is expected to be 1550. Covid related delays to the refurbishment of Darroch means that it will not be ready until Spring 2022 at the earliest. DM's best guess for the opening of the GME stand-alone secondary school was August 2025. A shortage of classrooms in the coming session has necessitated contingency planning. LS, acting DHT, gave a presentation regarding the contingency plans that the School has made to help mitigate the shortfall of accommodation. These plans centre around the use of Flexible Digital Learning. LS noted that her presentation provided a lot of vital, new information to absorb and asked that parents take time to process the information as opportunities for questions would be made very shortly.

5. Anti-Bullying Policy – Ben Lewis (0:40:46-0:53:17)

BL thanked Cait Pearce (Pupil Support) for leading on the policy review and for supporting BL in his new role. BL's presentation updated parents on the school's

revised, in light of City of Edinburgh Council Guidance, Anti-Bullying Policy. The policy is at the consultation process. A third of the School cohort have participated in the recent survey regarding bullying. BL is now looking for parent volunteers to get involved in an initial discussion on Wednesday the 25th of November (17:30-18:30). To take part please email BL by November 22nd. A draft policy is expected by mid-December.

6. Questions and answers (0:53:17-1:12:32)

Questions and answers included access to psychological support for young people, feedback regarding the recent S3 Parents' Night, the likelihood of S1-3 having to wear masks, S4 P.E. arrangements, the importance of prelims for pupils, alternative arrangements for the Christmas Concert, access to Teams for Parents, availability of private swimming lessons, whether Track and Trace are contacting friendship groups, the Covid restrictions in light of disruptive pupils being moved seats in class, the use of outdoor spaces, the catchment area, S6 research skills, Flexible Digital Learning, the possibility of less presentations at future PC meetings so there is more time for questions and answers, use of innovative design spaces, the possibility of a temporary unit and the ongoing issue of GME's future location.

Where it was not possible to answer questions during the meeting a written response will be provided by the appropriate staff in due course. These responses will be posted to the PC website - [JGHS Parent Council website](#)

7. Thanks – Sarah Scott (1:12:32-1:14:08)

SS thanked all the presenters and the parents for their questions. She noted that in the current climate definitive answers are not always possible but that the School were doing their utmost to keep parents and young people informed.

10. Date of next Parent Council meeting – December 2020, exact date to be confirmed.