

James Gillespies High School Parent Council

Minutes

Tues 10th May 2016

Attendance : Donald Macdonald (HT), Ian Porter (DHT), Cath Downie (Chair), Tanya Potter, Loraine O'Sullivan (Step in my shoes), Lucy Norris (Communications), Jane Cudby, Alison Platts, Ailsa Macintosh (Committee), Alastair Philp, Phil Acott, Richard Jin, Zaki El-Salahi, Pamela Ballina, Ruth Tiplady, Roser Vich, Kate Pearce (JGHS Sfl), Connie Smith, Gillian Clarkson, Anna Christal (Committee), Susi McDonald, Julie-Ann Sime, Daniel Johnson (MSP), Graeme Davis, Alison Macleod (Secretary)

Apologies: Karen Finlayson (Events), Shelagh Shields, Cllr Ian Murray.

1. Welcome & Apologies

CD welcomed everyone and in particular Lorraine O'Sullivan and Cait Pearce.

2. Step in my shoes appeal

Lorraine O'Sullivan spoke about her personal experience of the refugee crisis and described it as the largest humanitarian crisis since the war. She initially started with React and was involved in sending items to Calais. She then volunteered for a week and joined a lifeguard team in Greece. She described her experiences during this time and what she learned. Her account was very moving and inspiring. Following on from her experiences she is now running a charity known as Step in my shoes. The aim is to send as many shoes as possible to give to refugees as they arrive off boats. Currently they are asking each person to donate a pair of shoes (these must be suitable for walking a good distance and in a good state of repair), a pound donation (to cover storage and transport costs), a note from the child/adult to the refugee child/adult (this has been one of the most important things particularly valued by the recipient) & a pair of socks. The Scottish Government are now backing this campaign. An inexhaustible supply of shoes is needed. Containers are going out at beginning of May and June. Anyone offering help should see the website. DM said it was a moving and touching story. He said it was important that youngsters take ownership of this cause and hoped Ms O'Sullivan would be able to speak at school assemblies. CD agreed that the PC are very keen to support this and a link to the charity website will be put on the PC website. **Action: Cath**

3. Minutes of last meeting

Lights : there was discussion around when lights were still appearing to be on in the school.

Small funds allocation : details are on PC website

S6 common room : before DM became HT at JGHS no common room for S6 was included in the plan for the new building. Current idea is to have a pre designated space for S6. Within the new building there is no space for a common room. S6 would have first call over a new space for their use but no traditional common room. There has been a common room at Darroch. Space will likely be one of the spaces in the

Malala building. A parent asked about S6 personalising the space but DM said that this space will also be a teaching space during teaching time and so this would not be possible.

Changes in Guidance system – discussed later in the meeting

Active schools vouchers: this is now up and running and Active Sports vouchers are being collected.

4. SPTC Parent Partnership

Cait Pearce (SfL JGHS) spoke about this. Key idea behind this scheme is raising attainment – speakers at the course had been very inspirational. SPTC have secured funding to do a five year scheme working in partnership with parents within school. Parent Partnerships - SPTC have been watching this grow with interest and think now is the time for Scotland to take this on. The scheme is based on research and has been fine-tuned and proven to work. Attainment can always improve. Key partners in children's education (teachers, parents, potential employers) come together as an action team for partnership. With reference to the school improvement plan four goals have been identified - academic, parenting, communication, working with community.

Cait is keen to hear from parents who would like to get involved. Getting involved entails two or three training sessions of a couple of hours a week and meetings every four or six weeks. Leaflets are available and interested parents / guardians should email Cait Pearce via the school. Should this be taken on by the PC ? Volunteers are needed from the parent body. Employability is a key area to be targeted in the Edinburgh area. DM commented that there was solid evidence that these partnerships can help the youngsters that we want to help. Parental engagement is the most powerful element of the success of such a scheme. This would dovetail into things which are already happening. Examples were asked for. Cait pointed to ATPraising literacy in the school – paired reading with pupils and parents, tutorials for parents about how to help their children. The PC decided to go forward on this. Minimum number of parents needed is 12 to 16 for the whole team. The training is funded.

Action: Any parents who are interested in getting involved to contact Cait Pearce via school Admin address.

5. School closures

S2 from Craigmount HS currently at Darroch. (PC on behalf of the Gillespie's community have bought biscuits for the Craigmount pupils and staff to welcome them). Concerns have been raised re noise and disruption. School closures came up at the South Neighbourhood update. Have new school builds such as Gillespies been properly checked? CD has drafted a letter to council asking about checking at JGHS. Craigmount S2 pupils have been at Darroch for several weeks now. Previously JGHS had Darroch as an exam centre. There have been a couple of incidents such as noise during an exam. (Exam was stopped for 15 mins and then re-started - the adjudicator makes this decision. Pupils were very responsive when spoken to). Need to keep perspective on how desperate the situation is for many pupils and families. In an ideal world Darroch would be just an exam centre, however the reality of the situation is

that the Craigmount pupils are with us. DM was asked to accommodate Craigmount S2 pupils by CEC. Next year exams will all be sat at the Lauderdale site. Younger children on their own tend to be noisier. Communication was an issue in the last few incidents. This was discussed. Noise is always a bit of an issue. The underlying issue is about communication. JGHS need to keep S2 as long as required by CEC. There was discussion about the cost of the decant situation including building work & currently CEC incurring huge additional costs due to transport costs and free school meals & packed lunches to displaced pupils. There was discussion about who would be covering these costs given the Council's already tight budget. Daniel Johnston (newly elected member of the Scottish Parliament for the area) reassured parents that this cost would not be coming from the Council's education budget. A comment was made that given the nature and disruption involved it is thought to currently be costing £1.2 million per month to service the decant.

6. Rising rolls

243 pupils originally enrolled for next year in catchment and capacity was previously set at 200. The new intake capacity is now set at 240 following discussions with the school & Boroughmuir HS Headteacher; however, current numbers are 229. 220 has been set for 2017 onwards. Discussions are going on re the Gaelic medium provision at JGHS. Increasing numbers of those involved in Gaelic medium education across Edinburgh – already happening in primary schools. Numbers have grown as a result of the success of Gaelic medium provision. Future of numbers : in next two to four years CEC thinks the school will be able to cope with the numbers in the catchment area, including Gaelic medium. The future for Darroch will be part of the consultation on this issue. The intention is there to keep Darroch open. A report on this will be published on the Council website on 18th May.

7. Events group

The whisky tasting event took place as a fundraiser. DM reported that it was a very good evening with twenty five in attendance.

8. South East Locality update

Discussions took place about ongoing school closures.

There was an interesting presentation from the police liaison officer which highlighted the key thinking behind this scheme where a police officer is based in and around a high school. Key ideas behind the scheme are that the officer gets to know pupils, and becomes familiar with the community. Officer also interacts with classes through PSE. Does that happen at JGHS ? DM said that PC Karen Stewart started in September (taking over from the previous officer) and she is shared with Boroughmuir HS. A view was expressed that her profile needs to be improved.

9. HT report

School improvement plan

Various feedback involved in drawing up this plan eg. parent feedback on the school. Lots of information is used to help to set priorities for improvement. The plan is drawn up within the National Improvement Framework. Five key areas – raising

attainment in literacy & numeracy, children's health & well-being, closing the gap, developing employability skills & supporting youngsters with autism.

Ethos, staff welfare & communication seen as priorities.

Information has been pulled together to produce a draft plan which was recently shared with SLT. Plan incorporates tasks, designating those carrying these forward and how outcomes will be evaluated. It is hoped that this information will be shared with parents at the end of May. Proposed changes to timetable structure have been shared with parents via e mail. During the decant process the timetable operated with extended breaks to give travel time. Now moving back to one site no travel time is needed. JGHS now has to implement some changes which happened in other CEC schools but which were delayed due to the decant. One of these changes is a reduction in the number of Guidance teachers which will now decrease from six to five. (The Increase in the number of pupils has enabled JGHS to only lose one Guidance teacher rather than two).

Ian Porter made a presentation to PC about the restructuring of pupil support.

Key goals: Quality learning and teaching, positive relationships and sense of belonging

Vision : young person getting into a sustained and positive destination. More time and resources given to those who need it more.

Current situation : 3 communities and within each community – 2 guidance teachers and 1 SfL staff member.

New situation : (Tartan structure) 5 communities - Deputes as year heads

IP Year Head for S1 & S6 / Neil McCallum Year Head for S4 & S5 / Sally Westerman & Deirdre O'Brien Year Heads for S2 & S3. Each community will have one Guidance teacher and one SfL staff member.

Registration groups will change.

A key aim is the consistency of interaction between pupil and staff.

Key adult : The key adult has a holistic overview of the individual. Every pupil should feel that they are known. Personal support should be given to each pupil and is essentially enabling pupils to reflect on their learning, alongside building relationships between staff and pupils. Each pupil should be able to sit down and talk with one person. All key adults have undertaken training in coaching conversations.

Task to ensure the key adult is someone that the pupil gets on well with.

There are approximately 60 key adults on the staff and each key adult will have a range of 20 pupils. Key adult time should tie in with the report card. JGHS have looked at best practice and learned from other schools.

Model for JGHS : 8.40 Period 1 / finish at 3.40 as normal. Registration twice a week on Tues & Thurs. No registration on Mon, Wed & Friday (each extra 10mins) when key adults can meet with pupils. The new guidance system will not come into effect until after the summer holidays.

DM reminded parents that the last day of term is now Wednesday 29th June and not Thurs 30th June. This is to enable staff to pack up for the move back into the new buildings at the end of the holidays. Pupils also get an extra day at the start of the new term in August.

S6 prom and champagne reception for parents and pupils will be at Greyfriars Kirk on Wednesday 29th June.

10. AOCB

There will be a book sale for pupils to sell on their exam course textbooks. Information about this will be coming out shortly.

Dates for PC meetings next year were discussed and the following dates were agreed : 13th September, 25th October (AGM), 6th December, 24th January, 21st March and 30th May

There will be a tour of the new buildings for parents before the PC meeting on 13th September. An official opening is planned. After that the Open Day for former pupils and members of the local community will be at the end of October. It was mentioned that the Open Day would be a good opportunity for the Events group to do some fundraising.