

JGHS Parent Council

Tuesday 13th September 2016

Present : Cath Downie (chair), Donald Macdonald (HT), Ian Porter (DH), Jeff Warden (Acting DH), Julieann Sime (Treasurer), Robert Cochran, Stuart Robertson, Andrew Shields, Norman Brown, Mairi Brown, Robert Waddell, Jason King, Nils Thorin, Graeme Davis, Fiona Lynch, Gaya Grot, Sarah McIntosh, Farah Akbar, Jenny James, Ros Ingle, Jane Davidson, Saida Farah, Bruce Crawford, Rachel Davison, Suzanne Mackenzie, Paula Lobos, Gomez Pepita, Jesus Villarino, Alison Platts, Anna Christal, Su Twissell, Melanie Main, Karen Burke, Barbara Mole, Damian Mole, Karen Finlayson, Lorraine Gormley, Heather Campbell, Jennifer Rodger, Helen Anderson, Matthew Williams, Cathie Sudlow, Choults Warpow, Samiya Taha, Yousif Nasr, Natalia Rybtsova, Tanya Potts, Srinivas Saraswatibhotia, Ailsa Macintosh, Alison Macleod (Secretary), Gillian Clarkson, Connie Smith

1. Welcome and apologies

Cath Downie welcomed everyone and in particular new parents to the school

Apologies were received from Shelagh Shields and Ian Murray (MP).

2. Minutes of last meeting (10/5/16)

Step in my shoes charity : information and a link to this charity are on the PC website

SPTC parent partnership : anyone interested in getting involved with this should e mail Kate Pearce.

Action: DM to check if this group has been set up.

Dates of PC meetings for this session are listed in the minutes

3. Q & A on new buildings and timetabling

Facilities for current S6 : Ian Porter (year head for S6 and S1) and Jeff Warden (in acting position replacing Neil McCallum) spoke about this. There has been a lot of change over the last three years. In June JGHS ran with new one site timetable across two sites. Starting back in August however more issues with timetable have arisen as it is now operating over one site only. S6 facilities for study. IP spoke about this. Had hoped S6 would come in first thing in the morning. Feedback from S6 – study areas not ideal. Spaces around the campus have now been allocated for only S6. During study times S6 can use the dining room. Cone, computer area, cyber cafes and library also available for S6. There are spaces but not up to the expectations of the S6. Classrooms free during the day. There are a few free and these can also be used. Specific room numbers and times will be shared with S6. Priority is to attend timetabled classes. In S6 attendance and work ethic is their responsibility and they should have a mature conversation with IP where problems arise. There was discussion about other alternatives including the library. Pupils can sign out during study periods

Late policy : two major drivers – over split sites time keeping had become lax. Walking time between the two sites had to be allowed. Late coming : classes start at 8.40 am. If arriving late, pupils must go and collect a late slip. This makes them even more late. Half are genuinely late caught in traffic, etc. Twenty five to thirty however live close to the school and have no valid reason for lateness. Lunchtime lateness has now dropped to about five being late. Gate locking at break and lunch to reduce access to site. There was further discussion about this and school will continue to review it.

Modern languages take up : % of pupils taking languages in S4 has dropped in Scotland overall but this is not the case in JGHS. JGHS maintains a traditional structure re taking a language in S3 & S4. JGHS values diversity.

Swimming pool chlorine levels : one day last week chlorine levels higher than should be, so pool was closed. Janitors have been trained in how to deal with this.

Exam results : JW will give full feedback on the school results at next parent council meeting. Overall absolutely delighted with the S6 results. Star pupils in Maths and Languages – top in Scotland. Lots of different success stories.

School uniform : discussed and surveyed at length over the last session and it has now been put to bed for 7 to 8 years. Levels of decency are however expected in choice of clothing eg. bearing midriffs is not deemed acceptable. DM will send out a letter on dress code sometime this term but the weather may also dictate changes in attire. An incident of bullying re dress choice was mentioned and JW said that this was unusual and he was disappointed to hear this. Young person should report this to their pupil support teacher.

Numbers on the school roll : by 2022 all secondary schools in Edinburgh will be full. JGHS will be full in 2 – 3 years. There will be discussions and consultations. DM thinks that Darroch will be used in some capacity in the next few years as the school will reach capacity very quickly. It is regrettable that this was not foreseen in the planning for the new building, although raised by the PC in 2011 and earlier.

Information being communicated to parents : registration first thing in the morning is no longer part of the timetable. Unfortunately information screens around the school are currently not working. DM said that a decision has been made today that notices will be read during period 3 on Mon, wed and Friday. Long term – what is the best way to communicate ? eg. how could the school use Twitter to communicate ? JGHS will be looking to put together a committee with parents to tackle this.

S1 parental feedback : homework comparison with primary school – a big contrast. Lack of knowledge on the part of the parent compared with primary school. Sally Westerman (DH) has been surveying homework and has produced a new homework policy which will be going out in the next two weeks. Monitoring pupil planners can help.

Communication : parents have expressed thanks for the recent S3 information to parents which was e mailed from the Maths department. If other departments could give this level of key information and assessment dates to parents it would be very helpful. DM pointed out that the school does a lot of e mailing to parents and was probably at the moment erring on the side of sending too much but thought this was better than too little, as parents need to be informed.

Parental appreciation : a parent expressed her gratitude at how the school had been able to accommodate her children and said she was really pleased at how the school had handled this. She felt also the decision to fight to keep music staff was great. She also said that she felt that the teachers of SfL in JGHS were amazing people and an asset to the school.

Dates of parents nights and reports : these are now finalised and will go on the website calendar. These will also be sent out by e mail. **Action: DM**

Wish list : a parent expressed thanks for the tour of the new buildings and congratulated the school on the new sports facilities. He suggested a wish list to finish off and complete certain areas and fill the gaps ? Could DM come up with a list that PC could help with ? DM welcomed this idea and said he would consult and give feedback on this. **Action: DM**

4. Update on sports facilities

The school has been accepted to become a community sports hub and now has Community Sports Hub status. Edinburgh Leisure are now running out of school hours for all the facilities. There had been concern that this might mean JGHS has less use of the facilities however DM felt that Community Sports Hub status gives JGHS an enhanced position. Adult clubs operating in the building will be involved in promoting and encouraging their sport in the younger school clubs eg. table tennis – provide coaching sometimes during curriculum hours. Pupils eventually feed into the adult clubs. Fifteen clubs now have this arrangement. Down side for the school is that there is no financial income directly to the school from lets. Edinburgh Leisure is now working with the school. This is now in its second week and is going well. To find out what clubs are on in the evening there will be updates on the school website.

5. South East Neighbourhood update

All the different schools within a geographic area meet to discuss various issues. This meeting is due to take place next week and CD will attend to represent JGHS. If there are any issues common to other schools that parents would like CD to raise please e mail Cath Downie. **Action: all**

6. Headteacher's report

Outstanding results in S6. Will continue to raise the bar for those that follow. A lot of recruitment of staff took place in the month of June. 26 staff contracts changed. Every position in school is now filled with a qualified teacher. Currently there is a computing vacancy and a science technician vacancy which closes at the end of this week. A lot of staff secured permanent positions following the decant. DM to give a full report later on staffing. All staff offered flu jab from a qualified nurse. This investment is considered very worthwhile against the cost of cover.

There have been various articles in the press suggesting HTs are going to have more autonomy . DM welcomes autonomy for HTs working alongside their parent councils. Council has now removed from budget cuts its proposed cuts to music services. DM felt PC had contributed to that decision and thanked the PC for leading opposition to this proposal. Another recent proposal is to reduce office staff within schools by one third. This could have drastic effects on the school and its communication.

Mrs Croall (Acting DH) finishes with the school on Friday. She has been a tower of strength through the rebuild, bringing to her liason role with the builders her experience as an architect. The school will be thanking her for her important role in the rebuild.

Official openings of the new buildings : the first official opening will be with John Swinney and Paul Godzik on the morning of Monday 26th October. A second opening for the school community will be on Saturday 5th November from 10 to 13:00 (times to be confirmed). This will be open doors for friends of JGHS, neighbours, friends and former pupils, to visit the new school.

The history of the school from 1803 onwards is now available to buy (potential Christmas present?) from Blackwells http://bookshop.blackwell.co.uk/jsp/id/Faithful_Brave/9781780273822

Olympic success : former JGHS pupil Callum Skinner won gold and silver medals in the Rio Olympics. It is hoped that he will be visiting the school sometime this session and it was suggested that the new fitness suite should be named after him. DM also mentioned that another JGHS former pupil Ellen King had also been a world record holder in swimming.

7. Date of next meeting : Tuesday 25th October. This will be the Parent Council AGM.

8. A.O.C.B.

Female leadership in Business : this new initiative is a joint event with Watsons & Boroughmuir and will be held in Bruntsfield Hotel on 28th September at 6.30pm. All pupils both male and female welcome. The flyer for this event is on the school website.

Fire alarms : these have been set off again several times since the start of term. DM will be asking police and fire brigade to speak at assemblies. Fire alarm sounder covers: seventy of these are to be fitted in JGHS. It is hoped that this will help. Alternative to this is CCTV. The need for pupils to practise fire alarm arrangements was discussed. DM agreed that the school would be sorting the fire drill. Within the JGHS campus, currently buildings evacuate individually depending on which one the alarm has gone off in. This makes a fire alarm plan more complicated.

National survey on PC website : this is a survey into how well engagement with parents operates through parent councils. CD encouraged parents to complete this on the website.

Easy fundraising : JGHS does operate easy fundraising and this information will be passed on to new parents. It was agreed that this information will be resent to all parents.

S1 Parents and Carers Social Evening : this is a good opportunity to meet staff and other parents. The date for this is Wednesday 5th October. Time to be confirmed.

S1 Halloween party: plans are in place for this to go ahead again this year now that the rebuild is complete.