

James Gillespie's High School

Parent Council Meeting

Tuesday 5th December 2017

Draft minutes

Present:

Donald Macdonald – DM (HT); Ian Porter – IP (DHT), Bryan McPhail (PT Pupil Support), Ailsa Morgan (Careers Advisor SDS), Ailsa Macintosh – AM (Chair), Graeme Davis - GD (Communications), Elke Versmessen – EV (Fund-raising), Adam Paton, Alistair Philip, Mary Kernohan, Robbie McVeigh, Melany Jackson, Suzanne MacKenzie, Barbara Mole, Connie Smith, Ruth Tiplady, Gillian Clarkson, Charles Warlow, Cath Downie, Karen Burke, Ros Ingle, Pau Navarro, Melanie Main, Pam Billina, Anna Christal – AC (Secretary)

Apologies:

Julie-Ann Sime - JAS (Treasurer), Shelagh Shields -SS (Events), Cynthia Berry, Tanya Potter

1. Welcome, apologies and minutes of last meeting (24th Oct 2017)

AM welcomed everyone, especially Bryan MacPhail, Pupil Support Leader at JGHS and Ailsa Morgan, Careers Advisor at Skills Development Scotland and Adam Paton, pupil and member of the Scottish Youth Parliament.

The minutes of the last meeting on 24th October 2017 were approved.

1.1. Actions completed/carried forward

1.1.1 (1.1.8) Parent volunteer needed to organise the JGHS Parent Council Pub Quiz in February 2018

There have been no volunteers to organise this event so it will be postponed

1.1.2 (5) Work experience and employment related activities

IP emailed details of work and employment related activities at JGHS to EV.

Ian Porter has linked with Rachel Davison for further discussions, but AM informed the group that Rachel Davison was no longer able to work on developing a Careers Event due to new work commitments.

1.1.3 (6.1) Visit to Innovation Centre for Education

DM and CW coordinated JGHS staff and pupil attendance. See item 4. for further information.

1.1.4 (6.1) Feedback on CEC working group on BYOD

See item 4. for DM feedback to Parent Council on CEC Working Group about BYOD.

1.1.5 (7) Sharing information about staged intervention process

Action: DM still to share stage intervention processes with parents.

1.1.6 (7) Position paper about rationale for visits

Action: DM still to share position paper about rationale for visits with parents.

1.1.7 (7) Use of fingerprint scanning technology for catering payments

A CEC representative has been invited to the next Parent Council meeting.

2. Work experience, career education and links with industry

Bryan McPhail (BM), Pupil Support Leader at JGHS and Ailsa Morgan (AMo), Careers Advisor at Skills Development Scotland led this session discussing work experience, careers education and development of links with industry.

BM noted that previously the school had a work experience week for all S4 pupils. This meant that most of the S4 had a work experience week, but there was a sense that placements were not always appropriate or worthwhile. In recent years, pupils have instead been allowed to take a week of work experience during the senior phase. This has been voluntary and pupils have organised placements themselves. Since appointment in January 2017, BM has been working to develop a more formalised approach to encourage all pupils to find placements within S4 to S6.

Pupils will be given accreditation for organising and completing a work experience placement with an SQA N5 Personal Development Award. The S4 PSE course has been revamped to allow pupils to plan and prepare for work experience and achieve this award. It was felt that this approach would mean that most pupils will complete a self-found placement aligned to their own individual skills and interests. BM noted that he has monthly meetings with Ailsa and they have identified pupils in need of additional support. Provision will be made for pupils with additional support needs. BM noted that he was keen to develop links with parents to support placements. Curricular Leaders have also been asked to share links to industry. BM noted that 6 weeks' notice was required to complete all the relevant paperwork for placements.

The hope is that all pupils will organise a week of work experience in a placement of their own choosing during the senior phase.

A parent noted that some pupils, and arguably those that would most benefit from the experience, will lead a lot of encouragement if the system remains voluntary. It would be useful to monitor the success of this approach.

A parent asked if it was difficult for teaching staff if pupils were all going out at different times and noted that pupils may be reluctant to engage if they have to catch up on school work.

BM recognised these difficulties, but felt that this approach avoided the difficulty in finding enough suitable placements if all pupils are out of school at same time.

A parent asked if there was any obligation on employers to provide placements. AMo answered that there was no statutory requirement, but lots of governmental encouragement. Guidance was available for employers.

A parent asked if a fragmented approach could be used e.g. in which a pupil is on placement for 5 consecutive Fridays. BM noted that placements would be discussed on an individual basis.

BM noted that the system was still being developed, but information will be added to website when finalised.

A parent suggested that there were benefits from mentoring prior to a placement.

In discussion about identifying link to industries, it was agreed that it would be best for the school to send out an email to ask for help. A parent suggested that the use of Google forms or equivalent might enable a database to be established.

This could ask about willingness to support work experience placements, participation in Careers Fair type activities, talks or individual discussions. AMo outlined the recruitment of My World of Work ambassadors in S1 and S6 to encourage the use of this resource (www.myworldofwork.co.uk). The Ambassadors are working on posters for faculties to show possible career links and a promo video for assemblies and parents' nights. Teachers are also being asked to promote career opportunities within their curriculum.

AMo noted that My WoW has a Marketplace search engine in which organisations can advertise events and opportunities. Similarly, the Gateway website (www.ceg.org.uk) lists businesses interested in providing support.

AMo distributed SDS booklets called 'A Guide to Careers Services in Scotland – Information for Parents'.

3. Chair update (Ailsa Macintosh)

3.1. Scottish Government Empowering Schools consultation

AM outlined that this consultation was focussed on giving Headteachers and schools more responsibility. She also noted that this included increased duties for parent councils. AM will coordinate response in January 2018.

3.2. CEC budget consultation

No significant issues for schools, but significant cuts to Edinburgh Leisure and £21 million cuts are proposed for 2017/18.

3.3. Forthcoming Estates Report

AM noted that CEC were publishing an Estates Report next week with relevant information on capacity.

A parent asked for information about the size of S1 intake in 2018.

DM reported that numbers were not yet available, but he was having a meeting with the relevant CEC officers to look at adaptations to the building if the intake is greater than 200.

A parent noted that the planned informal consultation on capacity discussed at the previous Parent Council meeting has not been conducted. DM noted that this is still planned, but will follow publication of the forthcoming Estates Report.

A parent asked about the impact of increasing rolls and adaptations to the building on the provision of a full curriculum.

DM acknowledged that rising rolls may impact on the curriculum unless adaptations are made to the existing building(s).

Several parents noted the need for longer term planning, especially with ongoing problems with rising rolls in feeder primaries.

It was noted that 10-20 year school roll projections are available on the CEC website. (www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20256/school_places/1551/school_roll_projections)

It was discussed whether GD and CW, in addition to raising concerns about WiFi access at JGHS, could also raise concerns about capacity and accommodation issues at the forthcoming Education Committee Meeting 12 December 2017.

Action: GD and CW to investigate whether they can also raise issues of capacity and accommodation at next CEC Education, Children and Families Committee Meeting

Adam Paton noted that pupils were already concerned that there were already accommodation issues caused by rising rolls, notably the lack of a languages lab and a S6 common room.

It was suggested that pupil representation on this issue would also be useful.

It was agreed that it would be useful to invite a CEC representative to a future meeting to discuss accommodation and capacity.

Action: AM to invite CEC representative to a future PC meeting on accommodation and capacity.

3.4. Other business

AM noted that Fiona Denvir had volunteered to take up the other JGHS parent position with the JGHS Trust.

Shelagh Shields is looking for parent volunteers for catering at the Senior Drama production on Friday 8 December 2017.

Cynthia Berry had raised issue of access to JGHS pool for Edinburgh Kayak Club.

DM noted that additional pool edge protection and lining is required and there are ongoing discussions about facilitating access.

4. WiFi update (Charles Warlow)

See document in appendix describing issues related to WiFi access for pupils; actions completed by the Parent Council and a request for help in emailing local councillors for support. The document includes a list of CEC councillors in catchment wards with email addresses.

GD and CW are attending the forthcoming Education, Children and Families Committee Meeting 12 December 2017 to raise continuing concerns about WiFi access at JGHS. They are keen for parents to write additional letters of support.

CW and GD thanked Melanie Main for advice in accessing the appropriate CEC representatives.

Adam Paton noted that he is working nationally on policy through the Scottish Youth Parliament.

In discussion, a parent noted that autistic pupils may need support to limit use of WiFi enabled devices. GD noted that it is an expectation of the curriculum to teach pupils to use devices appropriately.

Another parent noted that equity of access to WiFi at home is also an issue.

DM reported that meetings of the CEC Working Group on BYOD were ongoing.

Action: AM to write to councillors prior to meeting to inform them about the delegation and viewpoint.

5. Fundraising update (Elke Versmessen)

Fundraising focus is in preparation for the Christmas concert. This will use envelopes for donations, as 2016. In addition, Gift Aid will be reclaimed through the JGHS Trust. There will be more people in the auditorium at the interval for collections. More volunteers are needed.

Parents discussed whether the PC should make an on-stage announcement about the fundraiser. Parents expressed the views that the number of announcements should be limited, were uncertain that the concert was the right platform for talking about the PC and were particularly concerned about having a negative impact on the sixth form fundraising efforts for their South Africa trip.

Action: Please email jghscouncilcomms@gmail.com if interested in helping with fund-raising.

6. STEM/Science Fair update (Pau Navarro)

Pau Navarro outlined discussions from her meeting with Jen McKenna from JGHS Science Department. Plan is to use S6 organisers for S1/S2 participants with 3 selected activities. However, this will not take place this school year, but hopefully next year.

DM thanked Pau Navarro for her input and support.

7. Communications update (Graeme Davis)

No updates

8. Treasurer's update (Julie-Ann Sime)

No updates

9. Head teacher's report (Donald Macdonald)

DM noted that JGHS was top placed Edinburgh State school in the annual Sunday Times schools' tables. JGHS was listed 6th in the Sunday Times.

He welcomed the prospect of more autonomy and, following consultation across the school community, more control for the school to enable them to best use resources.

DM noted that the School Improvement Plan is now available to view on the school website at <http://jamesgillespies.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/SIP-2017-20.pdf>

DM noted that recent bike thefts were attributed to four youths with bolt cutters entering the school at the end of break. He has been in liaison with CEC Security, the campus police officer and crime prevention officers. Advice about bike security has been shared through the weekly newsletter. D-locks appear to be the most secure.

A parent noted that some bike racks are loose and need repaired. DM stated that repairs would be followed up.

DM noted that Christmas concert tickets are selling well.

In response to a question about electronic homework diaries, DM noted that this needs IT support and school staff. The need is noted, but there are currently not staff resources to support this development.

10. AOCB

A parent raised the issue of truancy and antisocial behaviour especially for a group of pupils in S3. It was suggested that the school would benefit from an Education Welfare Officer. DM acknowledged that this issue has also been raised by staff and in the local community. DM noted that EWOs were previously employed in each

Edinburgh school with a focus on working with parents to improve attendance and punctuality. Restructuring has meant that EWOs are placed in schools according to need. JGHS can currently make a referral to CEC for EWO support, but there is not a designated EWO for JGHS. The benefit of early intervention was noted.

Action: DM to follow up with CEC with the full support of the PC

11. Date of next PC meeting – Tues 23rd Jan 2018

Appendix:

WiFi access for pupils in the JGHS school buildings

- At present our children have no access to WiFi within the school buildings except when they are working on school computers, generally outside their classrooms. They cannot, therefore, access educational material on the internet during most of their classes.
- To develop independent study skills relevant to the modern world pupils require access to WiFi. For example, in an English class to look up the spelling of a word, in Art to look at a painting, in French to hear a word pronounced properly, in Modern Studies to look at an online article.
- We understand that from early 2018 there will be no technical or filtering (of unsuitable material) difficulties in providing WiFi within the JGHS buildings. However, CEC policy does not permit pupils to bring their own devices to access WiFi.
- Some High Schools have opted to buy ipads for their pupils, and we understand there are some 25000 in circulation in Edinburgh schools. This is an expensive option as hundreds of tablets have to be bought, maintained, replaced when broken, and also replaced when they are outmoded. Our Head Teacher and senior team, supported by the Parent Council, believe it would be much less costly to the already stretched school budget for pupils to bring their own devices, whether they be a smart phone, tablet or laptop.
- This 'bring your own policy' is now being adopted by the Borders Council and we would very much appreciate it if the City of Edinburgh Council were to implement something similar in our school.
- In the interests of equity, for the very few pupils who do not own a device, the school has absolutely guaranteed to provide access to one.

What we have done so far in 2017

- Emailed all our local councillors
- Sent a deputation to the CEC Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee
- Richard Burgess head of CEC Digital Learning Team's Innovation Centre for Education attended a Parent Council meeting.
- Met with the head of CEC IT services – Bruce Strang
- Visited the CEC Digital Learning Team's Innovation Centre for Education
- Met with the convener and vice convener of the Education, Children and Families Committee
- Will be sending a deputation to the Education, Children and Families Committee on December 12th

How you can help

Email your local councillors (list overleaf) as soon as possible, asking for their support, and to put pressure on the Education Committee. In your own words best.

James Gillespie's High School is in Morningside Ward

Councillors in the Ward of Morningside are:

nick.cook@edinburgh.gov.uk

melanie.main@edinburgh.gov.uk

neil.ross@edinburgh.gov.uk

mandy.watt@edinburgh.gov.uk

Feeder Primary school wards are:

James Gillespie's is in Morningside Ward – as info above

Preston Street is in the Southside/Newington Ward

Councillors in the Ward of Southside/Newington are:

steve.burgess@edinburgh.gov.uk

alison.dickie@edinburgh.gov.uk

ian.perry@edinburgh.gov.uk

cameron.rose@edinburgh.gov.uk

Royal Mile is in the City Centre Ward

Councillors within the ward of City Centre are:

karen.doran@edinburgh.gov.uk

claire.hi.miller@edinburgh.gov.uk

joanna.mowat@edinburgh.gov.uk

alasdair.rankin@edinburgh.gov.uk

Sciennes is in the Southside/Newington Ward – as info above

Tollcross is in the City Centre Ward - as above info

Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce is in the Leith Walk Ward

Councillors within the ward of Leith Walk are:

marion.donaldson@edinburgh.gov.uk

amy.mcneese-mechan2@edinburgh.gov.uk

susan.rae@edinburgh.gov.uk

lewis.ritchie@edinburgh.gov.uk