

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

### **October 2016 – October 2017**

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#### **1. Post Holders 2016/2017 & Committee Members**

Chair:	Ailsa Macintosh
Communications:	Graeme Davis
Events:	Karen Finlayson and Shelagh Shields
Fundraising:	Elke Versmessen
Secretary:	Anna Christal
Treasurer:	Julie-Ann Sime

There are four Parent Council (PC) Committee members, in addition to the post holders, who contribute to the running of the PC and who, along with many parents, who are not formal members of the PC, are active helpers at school events and parent evenings, and who regularly attend and contribute to PC meetings, organise collections and donations and help with various school activities. All their time and help is much appreciated.

As parent representatives we would like to express our thanks to everyone involved with James Gillespie's High School – to Moira Leslie and her admin team, to all the teachers and support staff, to the senior leadership team, to the Headteacher (HT), Donald Macdonald, and to the pupils and parents who bring their ideas, enthusiasm and expertise.

As Chair I would like to express my gratitude to all the PC committee post holders for their support this year – Graeme, Anna, Elke, Julie-Ann, Karen and Sheilagh.

#### **2. Parent Council Meetings**

Wide-ranging discussions this year including:

- JGHS attainment vis-a-vis virtual comparator
- S6 common room; subsequently accommodated in the staff common room
- Discussion regarding the provision of books and other materials and subsequent launch of Amazon Wishlist
- Parents invited to join working group to contribute to School Improvement Planning
- Trial of electronic booking for parent/teacher evenings for S2
- Discussion around pupil equity fund, with a particular focus on the cost of school trips
- Discussion around parent pay and acceptance that a small surcharge was reasonable cost for the convenience of online payments

- Parent Council contact with the City of Edinburgh Council regarding school capacity, pupil access to WiFi on personal devices and electronic information boards
- School/PC communications
- Homework and sharing information about assignments and classroom requirements.
- The role of the JGHS Trust and its relationship with JGHS.

#### **Teacher presentations at PC meetings**

- December 2016 – Ben Lewis (Head of Faculty) presented the results from a recent self-evaluation exercise by the Maths Department and shared their strategy for improved communications with parents.
- Jan 2017 – Sally Westerman (Depute Head Teacher) gave a Homework update including survey feedback, expectations of pupils, staff and parents and possible use of electronic diaries
- 2017 - Ashleigh Kennedy (Social Subjects Curriculum Leader) gave a Faculty update for History, Geography and Environmental Science

We would like to express our thanks to those teachers who have given their time to come to PC meetings to give presentations and to answer our questions and, in particular, to Jeff Warden, Ian Porter and Donald Macdonald, for their time and contributions at our meetings.

We would also like to note our appreciation of the work of all the teachers who have added to our children's experiences inside and outside of school - from the S1 residential weekend to the S2 party; from the S3 WW1 battlefields trip to the senior pupils trips to Sorrento, South Africa, Hong Kong (to name but a few).

#### **Head Teacher updates**

Headteacher updates are an informative, integral part of the PC meetings and essential for sharing information with parents. More widely parents have also expressed their appreciation of the HT's Friday email update. There have been various highlights throughout the year but, as Chair, the one I would like to note is the invitation from Donald Macdonald for parents to be involved with the School Improvement Plan. This is not standard practice in all schools and is a sign of the open and inclusive style of leadership here at JGHS. Four parents joined the School Improvement Plan group to address school priorities including raising attainment, closing the attainment gap and communications. The parent/carer survey (approx 30-35% sample size) also informed the School Improvement Plan.

#### **Issues and engagement this year**

JGHS PC responded to the Scottish Government consultation on Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education: A Governance Review

A wide range of topics were covered at the South East Locality meetings; of particular interest for the JGHS community settling into their new school building was the PPP report on the safety of school buildings and the reassurance that the City of Edinburgh Council is carrying out intrusive inspections across the school estate.

#### **Capacity**

- The City of Edinburgh Council published a report 9 December 2016 looking at options regarding future pupil projections. It has been predicted that by 2022 all Edinburgh high schools will be at capacity and the city will need two new secondary schools. JGHS and Boroughmuir High School are under particular pressure in the short term. The report

included the option of possible shared use of Darroch and that there would be a consultation later this year.

- JGHS PC emailed CEC education officials regarding rising rolls and the possibility for continued use of Darroch. Further discussion on this was expected to take place after the Council elections and CEC officials assured there would be no action without consultation.
- In Sept 2017 it was confirmed that CEC is planning two informal consultations to look at capacity in South and South East Edinburgh and Gaelic Medium Education. CEC officers are planning to hold informal events for parents in schools affected before December 2017. This informal feedback would then lead to formal consultations in early 2018.

## **WiFi**

There are continuing issues with the lack of WiFi access in the school. Parents have expressed their particular concern when this means that senior pupils cannot use online resources for their studies.

- The PC has raised this issue at City of Edinburgh parent groups including the South East Locality meetings and the Consultative Committee with Parents. CEC expressed concerns are regarding: technical capacity, equity and duty of care.
- The PC has coordinated emails on this issue to CEC's Digital Learning Team and Education and Children and Families council officials and to all local Councillors, suggesting a pilot allowing access for senior JGHS pupils
- Richard Burgess, Manager of the Digital Learning Team, City of Edinburgh Council accepted the PC invitation to attend the PC meeting in May to hear parents' concerns regarding the lack of access to WiFi.
- PC representatives attended the meeting of the Audit Committee at CEC to represent parents' views on this and the PC would like to give particular thanks to Charles Warlow and Graeme Davis for their ongoing work on this issue.
- A report on this issue is expected at a future Education, Children and Families Committee and a parent, teacher and pupil visit to the CEC Innovation Centre for Education is in the planning.

Earlier in the year the City of Edinburgh Council Digital Learning Team increased filtering of internet materials without consultation, following an incident of inappropriate access. This had immediate impact on access to YouTube clips and many materials students and teachers accessed online, especially impacting on Modern Studies. The PC wrote immediately on this issue and the filter was lifted.

Alongside campaigning on WiFi, the PC was active in supporting the school in raising the issue regarding the school information screens which were not working two years after the new build. The school information screens are now working.

## **3. Financial Summary**

The financial annual statement is available as a separate document.

We would like to express our thanks to Julie-Ann Sime for her work as treasurer and organising and managing the small sums fund and for the auditing by Carol Philip.

## **4. Events/Fundraising**

Events and Fundraising were split this year.

Events included: wine-tasting, pub quiz, and Spring Fling and new this year was the pilot introduction of Eventbrite for electronic ticketing. As a PC we recognise the value of these events in helping to

create a strong school community, and also the challenge of building that community. We would like to express our grateful thanks to Karen Ferguson who has been central to all these events and is stepping down this year.

Thanks to Shelagh, Alison, Freya, Karen, Cynthia, Gillie, Cathie, Tanya and all our parents who have given up their time to provide hospitality at parent-teacher nights, at the James Gillespie's Trust Alumni Event, at Divercity and many other events. It is much appreciated.

#### Fundraising included:

This year fundraising at the Christmas Concert took the form of a donations drive, rather than a raffle, to great effect. Many thanks to Elke Vermessen for the direction and vision and to Graeme Davis who stepped in to help organise the volunteers and our thanks to all the parent and pupil volunteers. A more direct donations-drive increased the funds raised from ~£700 in 2015 to ~£1500 in 2016

The Scottish Schools Pipe Band Championship was hosted at JGHS in March 2017. Under Elke's stewardship parent and pupil volunteers ran a successful Tuck Shop and Cafe raising over £2200 in profit and we would like to express our gratitude to all those involved.

The PC would like to thank: Carol Philip for leading on the Active Schools Vouchers collection which brought in more than four times last year's total. Stuart Boutell and Jenny James for their work in launching the Amazon Wishlist and all the behind-the-scenes work involved. And Amelia Beattie for continuing to encourage parents, pupils and teachers to purchase goods via Easyfundraising.

#### **5. Communications**

The PC website has been regularly updated and information has also been shared via emails to the Parent Council mailing list and the HT's Friday email update. Our thanks to Graeme and those parents who have worked and are continuing to work on improving our communications and online presence.

#### **6. Contact Information**

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<http://ighscouncil.btck.co.uk/>