

James Gillespie's High School
Parent Council Meeting
Tuesday 19th March 2019
Draft minutes

Present:

Donald Macdonald – DM (HT), Ailsa Macintosh – AM (Chair),
Jeff Warden – JW (DHT), Graeme Davis - GD (Communications),
Julie-Ann Sime - JAS (Treasurer), Charles Warlow, Dora Lola Luz,
Alastair Philp, Ros Ingle, Karen Burke, Tanya Potter, Shelagh Shields,
Sarah Scott, Pamela Billina, Ruth Tiplady, Luxshmi Soundranayagam,
Mari Primrose, Gail Edwards, Anna Christal – AC (Secretary)

Apologies:

Ian Porter, Cynthia Berry, Cath Downie

1. Welcome, apologies and minutes of last meeting (22nd Jan 2019)

AM welcomed everyone.

Action: Approval of the minutes of the meeting on 22nd January 2019 still required.

1.1 (1.1) DM to check whether gift aid can be claimed on donations through ParentPay.

DM reported that Gift Aid cannot be claimed on donations through ParentPay. To claim Gift Aid, JGHS Trust would have to set up their own Parent Pay fund which is not feasible.

1.2 (1.2) Raising funds through donations added to tickets for Christmas Concert.

Ongoing

1.3 (1.3) Production of JGHS Parent Council banners

Ongoing.

1.4 (2) JGHS Parent Council concerns about school holidays

AM raised JGHS Parent Council concerns at SEL and queried lack of consultation. AM also liaised with DM to establish JGHS viewpoint. AM reported that proposed solution from Royal High Parent Council was not accepted as it stands, but concerns were raised at the Consultative Committee with Parents and the dates will be reviewed by City of Edinburgh Council.

1.5 (5) Request for volunteers for JGHS Wine tasting event

Cynthia Berry has sent out questionnaire to volunteers. More volunteers are still required. AM has shared details with feeder primary schools and feeder primary Parent Councils.

1.6 (6) Transfer of funds raised through Parent Pay to JGHS Parent Council account

JAS liaised with David Anderson, Business Manager at JGHS, to transfer funds.

2. Chair update (Ailsa Macintosh)

AM reported on the recent South East Locality Meeting (SEL – with PC parent representatives from South East Edinburgh schools) on 7 February 2019 and the Consultative Committee with Parents, Edinburgh Council's meeting with Education Officials, Edinburgh Councillors and PC parent representatives from across the city.

Discussions at the SEL focussed on best practice for course choice evenings, capacity/rising rolls especially at primary. AM noted that development of the new Morningside Primary has been delayed to 2022 and that current projections are that Liberton HS will also be full in 4 years.

Pupil access to WiFi was also discussed and it was noted that Liberton HS is moving from a policy of providing iPads for pupils to investigating options for pupil access to school WiFi.

ICT was also discussed at Education, Children and Families Committee meeting on 5th March 2019. AM formally thanked Charles Warlow and Adam Payton for representing JGHS.

City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) held a Budget Consultation meeting for Parent Council representatives on 4th February 2019. AM attended and reported that CEC have to make savings cuts of ~£40 million for 2019/20 and ~£147 million over the next 4 years. Parent Council representatives were asked to complete an exercise in allocating limited funds to CEC activities. Although this exercise was not specifically targeted at education, parental representatives were keen to minimise the impact of budget cuts on education. AM noted that 40% of the CEC budget is spent on education and 97% of that is on staffing costs. As such there is little room for savings within the education budget. CEC are not currently looking at cuts for music tuition this year, but AM noted that this could be possibility going forward.

AM noted that the JGHS Parent Council had received an email from the Edinburgh City Fairtrade Steering Group detailing support available to schools. This has been passed onto the school.

AM reported that Robbie McVeigh has stood down from the role of parent representative on the JGHS Trust. A volunteer is now required to take up this role and anyone interested should get in touch via jghscouncilcomms@gmail.com. AM also requested that parents share this information with their parent contacts. AM formally thanked Robbie on behalf of the Parent Council for his work as parent representative.

3. Curriculum planning (Jeff Warden)

Jeff Warden outline the course choice process at JGHS within a 2:2:2 model. This means that S2 pupils have just chosen courses to start in S3 with most pupils getting awards in 8 subjects at end of S4.

Course choice for S3 requires that all pupils continue studying Maths, English and have to choose a language, social subject and a science, leaving further choices for three other subjects. There is no fixed column structure for these three other subjects.

Course choice for S5 requires pupils to select 5 subjects. There is no fixed column structure.

Course choice for S6 requires pupils to select subjects to ensure that they meet a points obligation.

After all initial choices have been made, software is used to allocate to columns and classes. JW uses the software to optimise the number of pupils being able to study all their selected subject options. The school has been very successful in ensuring that most pupils are able to take the subjects requested. There is flexibility for pupils to switch subjects if required up to first week in September.

JW has shared information about Edinburgh School/College Partnership courses that take place on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons in the 'travel' columns. Edinburgh College is holding information sessions through March.

Information about Foundation/Modern/Graduate Apprenticeships has also been shared.

JW identified a number of new courses offered to S3 in 2019/20 including:

- N5 Gaelic History
- N5 Dance
- N5 Beginners Mandarin
- RMPS
- Practical Craft Skills
- Languages Skills for Life and Work

JW noted that there is a minimum of 10 pupils required for a course to be given the full teaching time allocation. If only 7-9 pupils select a course, there would need to be a reduced time allocation. If 6 or less pupils select a course, then options are explored to complete the course at neighbourhood schools or within bi-level classes.

Demand for N5s in S5 is limited, so it can be difficult to get enough pupils. N5 laboratory science is a new course offered in S5. Pupils can also consider taking a Higher over two years.

JW outlined current improvement plans for the school curriculum.

A curriculum improvement team has been set up to look at reviewing the current curriculum, planning and future offerings. This group is also looking at further development and publicising of learner pathways/journeys.

Options for S5/S6 include the International Baccalaureate, school based diplomas, new courses and options with neighbourhood planning.

Options for the Broad General Education (S1-S3) include electives, specialisation.

Curriculum planning at all levels also includes a focus on health and wellbeing, wider achievement and work experience

JW noted that 40-50 different subjects are currently offered at exam level at JGHS.

4. WiFi update and work experience data base (Charles Warlow)

4.1. Pupil access to WiFi pilot

Charles Warlow and Adam Paton (S6) attended the Education, Children and Families Committee meeting on 5th March 2019. Charles shared an update on the JGHS WiFi pilot and this meeting. The notes circulated by CW are available at: <http://jghscouncil.btck.co.uk/News>.

The next meeting of the Education, Children and Families Committee meeting is in May and conveners have requested costs for different options for pupils to access digital learning.

DM and JW noted that the school adapting as scheme develops and that there have been many positive benefits with pupil access to WiFi. Initial sign-up was slow as school requires all pupils to sign a contract about first. 325 senior pupils have now signed up. To ensure pupil equity, the school has purchased a set of iPads for library that can booked out by individual pupils. The school has also bought some additional class sets of iPads and laptops (80 iPads in total). Support for Learning also have some new laptops. This is in recognition that tablets and laptops are sometimes preferable to phones for some tasks. The school is developing its Digital Learning Strategy with an increased focus on digital learning opportunities and training for pupils and staff. JW noted that accredited Microsoft training modules were available for pupils and staff. DM noted that it would be useful to confirm that pilot will extend beyond May and into next session to allow planning for next session.

A parent asked if a pupil would be disadvantaged if they did not have a smartphone. DM replied that school devices will be available to borrow.

4.2 Work experience

A parent asked if a list of careers and possible placements was available in school. JW noted that Pupil Support Leaders have access to the Gateway database of approved placements/placement providers, but that many placements are self-found. For NHS placements, there is an NHS application form that needs to be submitted through Pupil Support Leaders. Bryan MacPhail is lead on work experience and he has previously emailed to ask parents/carers for further suggestions for work experience placements or careers advice. AM suggested that this email probably needs to be resent several times each year as a reminder to parents and carers.

5. Fundraising and Events (Fiona Denvir/Cynthia Berry)

5.1. Fundraising & volunteer engagement survey (Gail Edwards)

Gail Edwards is keen to identify options for parental engagement with focus on new S1 parents. Parents shared that concerts have been successful in engaging parents and there has previously been an annual pub quiz, wine tasting, S1 parent's social evening, but these have not been held routinely and some events were not well attended. The S6 South Africa Quiz Night was well attended by parents and pupils involved.

It was agreed that a survey would be useful, but support would be needed to hold events.

DM noted the benefit of increasing parental engagement.

A parent noted that school-run events were largely focussed on music and drama and that it would be good to have a broader range of events such as a sports day or prize giving.

Parents were also keen to develop more informal links with teachers.

It was recognised that regular events are useful to build the community.

A parent suggested that specific topics/information evenings could be held, separate from Parent Council meetings, with tea and coffee.

Luxshmi Soundranayagan is happy to support Gail Edwards in developing survey.

Action: AM to share Parent Council and Luxshmi Soundranayagan contact details with GE and offer support for survey of parents.

5.2. Wine-tasting social event on Friday 26th April

AM noted that Eventbrite tickets will go on sale shortly. More volunteers are needed to help at the event.

Cynthia has submitted licence application.

Fiona Denvir is organising food.

Action: DM to send information for feeder primaries

6. Finance update (Julie-Ann Sime)

JAS noted that with addition of £1139 from Christmas appeal monies, Parent Council funds are currently £4340. Teas and coffees at events have also raised £400. Donations attached to ticket sales through the Usher Hall Box Office are still to be added.

7. Head teacher's update (Donald Macdonald)

DM noted that there are currently 271 pupils registered for S1 in August 2019. This would lead to 280 intake. 6 additional temporary classrooms will be built this summer. In 2021 the school extend to include the Darroch Annex. Additional staffing will also be required.

A parent noted that change to the charitable status of private schools might have future impact on JGHS rolls.

DM reported on the recent School Values Survey. Parents, staff and pupils have all been consulted. There were 412 response to the parental consultation. Values identified include: respect, kindness, integrity, inclusion and high expectations. DM noted that inclusion includes the values of equity and equality and there was still debate about including diversity as a value.

Action: DM to send out results from School Values Survey.

DM noted that JGHS was well represented at the climate protest on 15th March 2019, with ~50% of the school roll attending. However further protests are not authorised by CEC.

DM noted that the S1 residential will include ~200 pupils. He also noted that for post-Brexit trips, there may be EHIC card issues and pupils will require a minimum 6 months remaining on passports.

DM noted that study leave will start on Thursday 25th April with pupils returning on Monday 3rd June. The S6 Leavers Event will be held on 31st May 2019.

8. AOCB

A parent raised the issue of an S6 Common room. DM noted that the school are looking at allocating timetabled rooms for next session.

GD noted that he was looking for someone to help with the Communications role on the Parent Council and ideally take over next school year.

Action: Contact GD via jghscouncilcomms@gmail.com for further information about the Communications role on the JGHS Parent Council

9. Date of next PC meeting

Tuesday 28th May 2019