

Email received via Cllr Steve Burgess, 24 January 2025, from Dr Lynne Binnie, Head of Education - Inclusion

Dear Cllr Griffiths, Cllr Pogson, Cllr Ross and Cllr Burgess,

Thank you for your email passing on concerns from the Parent Council at James Gillespie's High School.

In my capacity as the Head of Education for the school I have shared these concerns with school and authority staff and can provide the following updates and additional information.

A review of Secondary School Capacities has been undertaken over the past two years with the aim of applying a consistent, agreed methodology to calculating a revised planning capacity for all Secondary Schools. This is aligned with Scottish Government principles to apply a consistent approach across Scotland. Meetings were held with the Senior Leadership team at JGHS to assess existing accommodation and calculate an agreed capacity.

The revised planning capacity for James Gillespie's High School, which includes both the main building and the Darroch Annexe, is 1855. The current roll as of 21st January 2025 is 1762.

A report was taken to the Education, Children and Families Committee in November 2024 to approve the revised planning capacities for all Secondary Schools. Listed alongside a number of the schools were specific suitability issues that had been raised by Headteachers. As a result, the Education Committee requested that those schools listed with a suitability issue should be reviewed and brought back to Committee in March 2025 for further consideration.

Suitability issues reported for JGHS were: limited dining and social space and a need for additional Science, CDT and HE spaces. These suitability issues raised by the school are being addressed. There is a particular focus on the scope for repurposing and reconfiguration of existing spaces - alongside the use of some additional space - to provide increased practical subject facilities and improved social space. The school are also exploring options to use space more efficiently at Darroch to deliver learning and teaching for the Senior Phase and options for a dedicated Secondary GME provision continue to be explored.

Your concerns regarding the suitability of the space within the school estate, and the impacts on pupils, especially those with ASN have been shared with senior leaders at James Gillespie's as well as local authority officers who review and plan the development of school estates so that they are aware of this concern moving forward and can consider this when planning improvements to James Gillespie's High School.

The Projected Rolls at JGHS

There was a significant increase in the S1 intake for August 2024 (360), but the intake for August 2025 has dropped to a figure that is within the maximum intake limit (320) for the revised planning capacity, which is in line with the S1 intake projections.

The table below provides an assessment of the future roll at JGHS based on the current roll projections.

Year	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Total
2025	320	360	300	320	280	260	1840
2026	340	320	360	300	300	240	1860
2027	300	340	320	360	280	240	1840
2028	300	300	340	320	340	220	1820
2029	260	300	300	340	300	300	1800
2030	260	260	300	300	320	240	1680
2031	260	260	260	300	280	280	1640
2032	260	260	260	260	280	260	1580

Based on these projections the total roll remains within or around the agreed revised planning capacity for the school until 2030 when the overall declining rolls in Primary schools begin to impact on the Secondary rolls.

In relation to the concerns raised about limitations in the school experience for pupils, I have spoken with the Headteacher Mr McCallum and he has advised that:

- Pupils have been streamed for Maths in previous years. The decision to not stream this session was due to a number of factors, not solely capacity. Staff report that pupils are making expected progress and experiencing the same curriculum in their current class arrangements. Staff also recognise that there are benefits to not streaming pupils at this stage which include an opportunity for them to settle in and show their capabilities before being grouped based on ability. This is being constantly reviewed by the faculty. School staff are working on the timetable for next session and are looking at the potential of streaming pupils again when they move from S1 into S2. Staff would use teacher judgment, primary data and the tests in S1 to make classes going into S2 and would communicate any class change to parents via email if and when it does happen.
- School staff are working with colleagues from the centre to review the school accommodation as mentioned above to increase the number of spaces available to facilitate experiential learning in certain subject areas. There have been some staffing challenges in FHT this session which has reduced the opportunities for pupils to experience practical lessons. These have now been resolved this and pupils will be engaging in more practical lessons as they progress through the term. In relation to Art and Design, the school are currently fully staffed and have the appropriate spaces for these classes.
- Senior Leaders have been working with S6 pupils to ensure that they have appropriate spaces for study and to ensure there are opportunities for them to be part of the school community. They have met with the S6 and arranged assemblies to ensure that important information is shared, this includes the adding of all information to their year group TEAM. S6 pupils have PSE as part of their timetable and have access to their PSL as always to support with their next steps.
- The school recognises the need for pupils, parents and carers to have information about important assessments as soon as possible and acknowledge that the delay in issuing the prelim timetable has caused some concern. Senior leaders will ensure that all pupils have their exam timetable for the final exam diet in May well ahead of the Easter break.
- All communal areas are as open and accessible as possible across both campuses to support pupils to have a space at break and lunchtime. Senior leaders are currently reviewing the time it takes for pupils to travel between the sites and are looking to

support this where pupils are attending extra-curricular on a different site to which they are located on any given day.

- Pupil Support Leaders consider each case on an individual basis and will work to support pupils and families as quickly as is possible. They aim to have a three day turnaround in terms of initial communications and look to have planning meetings in place withing two to three weeks. Where there is an urgent case this is expedited.

I hope that the information provided helps to alleviate the concerns raised and reassures you and the parents of James Gillespie's that school and authority staff are working together to provide the best possible provision for their young people.

Lynne

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