



JAMES GILLESPIE'S HIGH SCHOOL

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Staffing

Departing

Science	Mr Ken Shaw
Wellbeing Hub	Mr Stewart Plenderleith

New Starts

Development Officer	Mr James Gunn
History	Mr Euan Gallagher

SQA Exam diet

SQA timetabling of Higher English and Psychology we have contacted the SQA to express concern in respect of impact on candidates (particularly those with extra time) and our capacity for rooms, invigilators and readers/scribes. We have an overlap of approx. 85 candidates, and there will be logistical aspects to consider regarding the additional arrangements for students who receive this. Mr Cotter has also raised this at an SQA co-ordinators meeting with our SQA School Liaison Manager and the CEC manager.

S5/6 Prelims

These have now concluded, and the pupils have been exemplary with positive feedback from the invigilation team. Feedback will follow to pupil, parents and carers in due course.

English Texts

Introduction:

The English Department at JGHS is committed to fostering a love of reading among our students. After receiving the kind offer from the parent council to fundraise to buy more books, we put together this proposal to implement an innovative project aimed at engaging students through genre-based reading packs. This initiative will provide students with access to themed sets of books accompanied by discussion questions, activities, and related materials. We will also link in with the library for a follow-up, where pupils will select a book from their stock in order to complete a book comparison task.

Objective:

To enhance student engagement and promote a deeper appreciation for literature through themed reading packs that cater to diverse interests and reading levels.

To encourage and motivate pupils to read through forming 'reading circles': groups of 4-5 pupils all reading and discussing the same text.

Project Overview: The funding will be used to purchase 5 copies of various books across multiple genres and multiple reading abilities. Each genre pack will include:

- The books
- Discussion questions to facilitate critical thinking and comprehension
- Activities related to the themes and content of the books
- Additional materials such as author interviews, thematic articles, and creative prompts

Implementation:

1. **Selection of Books:** We will choose books that are both age-appropriate and engaging, covering a range of genres including mystery, science fiction, fantasy, historical fiction, and more. Pupils will be asked to select a genre to focus on during personal reading periods.
2. **Grouping Students:** Pupils will be grouped with peers of similar reading levels who have selected the same genre. This will ensure that students are both challenged and supported in their reading.
3. **Reading Sessions:** During personal reading lessons, students will read their chosen book and participate in guided discussions and activities.
4. **Interactive Engagement:** Pupils will also be encouraged to engage in activities such as role-playing scenes from the book, creating artwork related to the story, or writing their own alternate endings.
5. **Link to the library:** The final activity will be to read a book of the same genre from one of the library packs. Pupils will then be asked to complete a comparison task.

Benefits:

- **Enhanced Engagement:** By allowing students to choose their preferred genres, we can increase their motivation to read. Putting them in groups to all read the same book will motivate them to stay on task and will develop understanding as they will be able to support each other with tasks and discussion questions.
- **Critical Thinking:** Discussion questions and activities will help develop pupils' critical thinking and analytical skills. Working on these together offers support and, hopefully, more depth in their learning.
- **Collaboration:** Working in groups will foster collaboration and communication among pupils.
- **Love for Reading:** This project aims to cultivate a lifelong love for reading by making it a more enjoyable and interactive experience. Having books available for a range of reading abilities will help to challenge and motivate all readers, and having the group support will encourage them to finish the books together. They will be able to do a mixture of quiet reading and reading out loud to each other which will help develop both of these skills.

Conclusion: We believe that the genre-based reading packs will significantly enhance our pupils' personal reading experiences and promote a deeper love for literature.

S1 Residential

Due to raising numbers (which would exceed Lockerbie Manor's capacity), raising costs, and the lead for 3 years (Mrs Shearer) standing down due to personal commitments, we are not able to offer an S1 residential this year. When Mrs Shearer informed us that she would be stepping back from leading this, we did invite staff to take on this leadership opportunity, but unfortunately, we had no takers. This is an all-year-round project and we would have had assemblies and parent/carer information session in September, with a timeline of the October break to pay deposits. However, due to the contextual

factors, we have not been able to do this. Even if we were able to make this timeline, we would still have needed to change the format due to numbers, and without a successor, again this has not been possible to plan for.

It is anticipated there will be an alternative timetable for S1 and we will communicate further information about this as soon as is possible.

Pupil bulletin

We have now created a link on the school website and will be adding an edited pupil bulletin to the website on a weekly basis. This is located in the parents' section of the website.

Double periods in the timetable.

To allow more flexibility with timetabling classes between two sites, due to accommodation pressures and rooming capacity. There must be several double period subjects for each 2 period 'block' to allow Darroch to be used. Some practical subjects also require 'doubles' (e.g. Cookery) to complete outcomes effectively.

Extent to which English and maths are streamed

Maths classes are 'streamed' according to SNSA and Maths assessment data into appropriate pathways, leading to N4 or N5 Maths, and now N5 Application of Maths. However, an increase in school roll has led to larger class sizes in Maths and English for S1, which allows less flexibility to 'stream' classes, as classes are mostly full. A more supported set for 1st and early 2nd level pupils has been created with support from our transition teacher.

English classes are not 'streamed' as such into N4/5 pathways from S1, but the sets are re-arranged where possible to allow one less full and more-supported class for pupils at level 1 or early level 2. This is also supported by PSAs when available.

Capacity Engagement

We have been working with officers from the council to review the capacity aspects and provision of practical subjects learning spaces. This is being taken forward with a view to reviewing, scoping and implementing for August 2025.

Reporting

A new system was introduced across the whole authority. This was shared with staff in May and introductory training provided to lead depute head teachers. The system then went live in August and was available for the school to take forward.

There were some initial issues with access and utilising the system and these have been resolved. We sent out 3500 invitations to sign up, it seems many emails with login in details were not received despite it appearing that they had been sent.

The system has the potential to really improve the quality and range of data available to teachers. The platform appears to be quite flexible, we would hope to start to customise it over time as we become more familiar with it. This should speed up writing reports. The comment bank system is quite clever and over time we would hope to build quality comment banks that support personalised feedback. We are pro-actively asking users to check they can access the system before a report is issued so that we can fix issues in advance. We have introduced a form for reporting issues which is making it easier to collate and keep track of issues

Almost all issues reported have been fixed apart from a very small number that are proving tenacious, but we are seeking to resolve as quickly as is possible. Reviewing the information sent out with reports in response to feedback and will continue to do so.

SLWG

These are in progress, and I have asked the staff leading these to link in with the parents and carers that put themselves forward. The Communication group is being led by Ms Ashling Dolan (Curriculum Leader

for Mathematics), Homework led by Mrs Laura Stewart (Depute Head Teacher) and the Mobile Phone Policy is being led by Mr Neil McCallum (Headteacher) We would hope to conclude these groups by the end of the academic year in June.

Homework – looking at concerns raised so far with staff last term via SLWG and redrafting policy with staff to then share and get feedback from parents – date for parental meeting TBC

Phones – parental input on in-service day was postponed – plan for this information to go out to staff, students and parents as soon as appropriate. Advice over social media use to go out to parents via Friday update in the near future.

Presentations

March – HWB and MHWB updates

News / Updates

Deasbad Nàiseanta / National Gaelic Debate

Moladh mòr don sgioba bho Àrdsgoil Sheumais Ghilleasbuig a ghabh pàirt anns an Iar-Chuairt Dheireannach den Deasbad Nàiseanta oidhche Chiadain. Bha Mànus McLeòid agus Eloise McNay (S6) uabhasach math air an oidhche fhèin, is mhol na brìtheamhan iad son cho siubhlach is susbainteach is a bha na h-argamaidean aca. Chaill iad a-mach, air èiginn, don sgioba bho Àrdsgoil Phortrigh a bhuannaich a' cho-fharpais air fad oidhche Ardaoin.

Nach math a rinn sibh!

Huge congratulations to the team from James Gillespie's who took part in the semi-final of the National Gaelic Debate on Wednesday evening. Mànus McLeod and Eloise McNay (S6) performed superbly on the night and were both highly commended for their debating skills. The team lost out, very narrowly, to the side from Portree High School who went on to win the competition on Thursday evening.

Nach math a rinn sibh!

Religious and Moral Education

The R.M.E department were delighted to be able to present a HUGE pile of 360 Christmas Cards to the Vintage Vibes Christmas charity campaign. We were touched with how much effort many pupils put into their Christmas Cards which will be delivered to many isolated elderly people around Edinburgh. Pupils receive a profile of an elderly person and aim to make a connection with them through a brief message and personal artwork. This was mainly S1 pupils with some S2 and S3s also taking part.

Rugby Success

Congratulations to Lexie Johnston, S4, who has been successful at the east region assessment day and has been selected to represent Scotland east region rugby girls u16s. A great achievement and we wish Lexie every success in the upcoming games.