

JGHS Parent Council
James Gillespie's High School
120 Warrender Park Road
Edinburgh
EH9 1DD

Comments from JGHS Parent Council to Headteacher in preparation for HMEI Inspection

17 February 2025

Office bearers of the JGHS Parent Council met to discuss issues raised by Neil McCallum and HMEI.

Present: Tiziana Basciani (co-chair), Padraic Kinsella (secretary), Kirstin Leighton (Treasurer), Liz Hilton (co-vice-chair), and Sam Ross (co-vice-chair), Hilary Snaith (co-chair)

- 1. Does the school promote an ethos and culture of positive engagement and participation with its pupils and parents?**
 - a. Overall yes – it is felt that parents have the contacts needed at JGHS, but in some cases the response not as good as it could/should be
 - b. Specifically
 - i. It is felt that when parents contact teachers and Pupil Support Leaders with specific questions or concerns that they receive timely and appropriate feedback, esp with Maths and GME
 - ii. However there are curriculum areas where this is less consistent e.g. modern languages
 - iii. Messaging over language allocations for incoming S1 not always clear/received by P7
 - iv. Parents report positive experiences with Pupils Support Leads
 - v. Communication with parents is sometimes patchy, with information being received with little notice e.g. S3 language trips
 - vi. Although SLWG were set up to discuss homework, phones and communication, engagement with parent volunteers has been somewhat slow and patchy, which has been a source of frustration for some.
 - vii. Sharing the pupil bulletin with parents would help the information flow between the school and home.
- 2. How effectively do we involve learners and parents in planning and evaluating learning?**
 - a. Felt that on general parents do not expect to tell teachers how to plan and evaluate, although this will differ in particular cases
 - b. The difference was noted in the approach to the evaluation in science for S1/2 in EME and GME – having a more consistent approach across EME and GME would be appreciated
 - c. It would be helpful to have a clearer overall understanding/summary of the curriculum structure for each subject in each year, esp. for Nat5 and above, including timetable of



assessments, assignments and other deadlines – although it was noted that parent should expect to research on the SQA website for details of what pupils will be required to study

- d. Reporting is a source of frustration – rollout of the new tracking system appears to be inconsistent and parents are unclear what to expect and when - not facilitated to run smoothly as it might
 - i. It would be helpful to put 1-page summary on website for parents to access - also include in Friday newsletter
 - ii. Would providing training to teachers on using new system be useful?
- e. Parents' evenings remain a source of frustration for some – booking information is not always received in a timely way; consultation times are short; and there are often insufficient slots to meet demand – e.g. even for S5 pupils taking Highers, parents are only allocated meetings for 4 out of 5 subjects taken
 - i. Although the PC recognises that teachers have limited time assigned to non-teaching activities, can this key aspect of teacher-parent engagement be reviewed? Is there scope to increase teacher time for this?
- f. The current timetable with 6 periods per day enforces some rigidity in structure – is there any scope to reduce period length to increase flexibility, e.g. like Queensferry HS.

3. Are there examples of how parents and carers work with the school to support children's/young people's learning?

- a. In general parents are not involved in classroom activities
- b. Some parents are involved in coordination of sports clubs, but these are pockets of activity, and are not commonplace
- c. Parents are invited to join SLWG – however these groups meet sporadically, and communication about the groups is not routine
- d. Felt that parents would be willing to give careers/work experience talks to pupils
 - i. Could the school have a directory of parents who would be willing to talk about their jobs/roles?
 - ii. Could the directory be coordinated by PC?
- e. PC/parents worked with school to lobby for CEC to address concerns about impact of rising rolls and capacity on delivery of teaching (Dec 2024)
- f. PC/parents effectively lobbied SQA and others to request review of the scheduling of Higher English and Psychology – arguments augmented those already surfaced by school (Jan 2025)

Issues that Neil raised, but which were not explicitly addressed:

4. How do we ensure that relationships with parents, carers and families, the local community and partners are characterised by trust and respect?

- a. In general group felt that communication with the HT and the SLT in general, is very positive, open, respectful and responsive



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5. How well do we recognise and value the personal achievements of all learners?
- a. HS: Achievements newsletter well received...