

James Gillespie's
High School
Parent Council



*James Gillespie's High School
120 Warrender Park Road
Edinburgh
EH9 1DD*

**Deputation to the meeting of the Education, Children and Families Committee
City of Edinburgh Council, Tuesday 25 March 2025**

20 March 2025

Dear members of the Education, Children and Families Committee,

The Parent Council at James Gillespie's High School would like to express its **grave concern about the capacity review at the school**, which is scheduled for discussion by the Education, Children and Families Committee of the City of Edinburgh Council on Tuesday 25 March 2025.

Capacity and suitable space

In our communication with Councillors dated 20 December 2024, we highlighted the impact of increasing enrolment at JGHS on the availability of suitable space. We specifically noted the adverse effects on students, particularly in practical subjects, and on the overall school experience, with those requiring additional support being disproportionately affected.

We emphasised that while the crowded conditions affect all students, they pose significant challenges for neurodiverse pupils or those with additional support needs. Open-plan classrooms can be distracting, and this is especially true for neurodiverse students. Given that nearly 50% of students in the City of Edinburgh Council schools have identified ASN (suggesting that around 700 at JGHS are impacted), it is crucial to consider how the school environment impacts these students' experiences.

Lack of recognition of impact on pupils

However, the report presented to the ECF committee lacks recognition of the implications that rising pupil numbers will have on neurodiverse students or those with additional support needs. We are deeply concerned that the difficulty of objectively assessing space suitability is being used to exclude these critical considerations from capacity assessments. While rigorous metrics are important, omitting key aspects due to complexity is unacceptable. Consequently, the real challenges faced by pupils and staff, many of which are qualitative, have not been adequately incorporated into the school's capacity evaluation.

Significant rises in school roll

The Parent Council notes that the committee report indicates the current roll at JGHS is 1765, with a projected capacity of 1855. This capacity will be surpassed by 2025/26 (1868 pupils), continuing to rise to 1910 pupils by 2027/28. Numbers will not fall below the stated capacity until 2030. Thus, for all pupils currently in the school



space will be insufficient for their entire career at high school, significantly hindering their ability to thrive and achieve their full potentials – surely this is insupportable.

Insufficient new space made available for pupils numbers

The report mentions that "James Gillespie's High School is projected to exceed its new Planning Capacity of 1855 in August 2025, peaking in 2027/28, before declining as primary school rolls fall. Efforts are ongoing to repurpose spaces and utilize the annexe at James Gillespie's Primary School". However, given that maximum class sizes are 30 pupils, the additional space is inadequate for the projected 145 extra pupils. It is unclear if these spaces are suitable for practical subjects where existing pressures are significant, or if additional measures are envisaged that address pressures on delivery of these subjects.

Further, although additional classrooms may alleviate some pressure on teaching space, they do not address broader issues such as lack of study areas, overcrowded social and dining facilities, the appropriate support for pupils with ASN, or the significant logistical challenges posed by the two-campus system.

Key questions remain about teaching space at JGHS:

- When will new classrooms be available?
- What other options for additional space have been considered?
- How will the broader need for social, study and dining spaces be addressed?
- What recognition has been made of the wider impact of unsuitable teaching space on pupils attainment?

In conclusion, the JGHS Parent Council calls upon the Education, Children and Families Committee to urgently press for the suitability of the teaching estate to be considered when determining pupil capacity at JGHS, before any decision on capacity is agreed. Further, the Parent Council requests that for the City of Edinburgh Council explores further options for creating temporary space for the school, and that progress is reported on this issue is reported back to the committee as soon as possible.

Yours most sincerely, on behalf of the JGHS Parent Council

Tiziana Basciani, Co-Chair
Liz Hilton, Co-Vice-Chair
Kirstin Leighton, Treasurer
Kate Pinault, Communications officer
Samantha Ross, Co-Vice-Chair
Hilary Snaith, Co-Chair