
Correspondence between JGHS Parent Council and Cllr Marie Clair Munro

March and April 2025

Sent by JGHS PC 3 April 2025

Dear Cllr Munro,

Thank you for your email dated 28/03/25 in prompt response to the JGHS PC email of 20/03/25. We appreciate your engagement and support with the issues we outlined, namely current and imminently predicted capacity issues caused by rising rolls at JGHS.

The current and future capacity issues affect all JGHS pupils currently attending the school and, as we outlined in our email, they are likely to have the most significant impact on pupils with ASN. We feel it is vital that measures to reduce the impact of capacity issues are identified and implemented with sufficient urgency so that the impacts on all children are mitigated and that children with ASN are not further disadvantaged.

You mentioned the potential for a conversation about a catchment review and a discussion about out-of-catchment places. As you will be aware a change to a school catchment would require a statutory consultation which would likely take a number of years. Such a process could potentially take longer than the particularly high roll numbers we are immediately concerned about are forecast to last. Similarly, out-of-catchment places are allocated on the basis of a city-wide admissions policy, which is unlikely to be changed in the short term.

Your enquiries around Gaelic Medium Education (GME) at JGHS indicate an interest in this area and we thought it might be useful to provide some information about how GME operates at JGHS. GME is a fully integrated aspect of JGHS, and GME pupils and their families are well represented in all aspects of school life. Parent Council members with experience of GME would be happy to meet with you to answer any questions you may have. In the meantime, there is good information contained in the following webpages:

- <https://jamesgillespies.co.uk/gaidhlig-gme/>
- <https://jamesgillespies.co.uk/darroch-annexe/>

The growth of GME at JGHS is a success story and the school works hard to maintain this momentum. It is fortunate that GME has long enjoyed cross-party support, reflecting its cultural and educational value. It is worth noting that the refurbishment of the Darroch Annexe (part funded by Scottish Government, specifically for the development of GME in Edinburgh) has staved off even more significant and urgent capacity issues than those currently faced at JGHS.

James Gillespie's
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Given the above, we are keen to focus our attention on possible measures that might help alleviate the immediate pressures of our rising roll (e.g. increasing the space available for teaching and learning), and that is where we seek your support. We would be delighted to meet with you to discuss such measures and, if you are agreeable, we look forward to hearing from you to arrange this. Cllr Burgess (copied here) has also offered to meet with the Parent Council, and I wonder whether it would be appropriate work with him here.

All best wishes,

Hilary Snaith, on behalf of the JGHS Parent Council

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[JGHS Parent Council website](https://jghsparentcouncil.org/) | [Email the Parent Council](mailto:jghscouncilcomms@gmail.com)

James Gillespie's
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From: Marie-Clair Munro <Cllr.Marie-Clair.Munro@edinburgh.gov.uk>
Date: Friday, 28 March 2025 at 11:06
To: jghscouncilcomms@gmail.com<jghscouncilcomms@gmail.com>
Subject: Deputation on capacity concerns at James Gillespie's High School

Dear Hilary and Tiziana,

My apologies for not responding sooner. Thank you for your detailed email and for sharing the concerns of the James Gillespie's High School Parent Council regarding the ongoing capacity issues at the school. I completely acknowledge and agree with your points about the significant challenges posed by rising rolls, the strain on teaching spaces, and the particular difficulties faced by pupils with additional support needs.

Coming from a teaching family myself, I fully understand the complexities and sensitivities around ASN pupils. The current situation risks failing all children as the one-size-fits-all approach to pupil support is clearly not working. Parents' concerns about the delays in receiving appropriate assessments and the subsequent development of support plans are entirely justified. Providing more timely and effective support for pupils with additional support needs is essential to ensure an equitable learning environment where all students can thrive.

Moreover, I am deeply concerned about the increasing pressures on teachers, who are now managing behaviour issues on a daily basis, including instances of verbal and physical abuse. Many dedicated professionals are leaving the sector due to burnout, with the feeling that they are no longer able to focus on teaching but are instead managing the complex needs of young people. This is unsustainable and further exacerbates the challenges schools like JGHS are facing.

It is also alarming that only 63% of children entering P1 in Scotland are considered school-ready, with many struggling with basic skills such as holding a pencil, using the toilet independently, and eating without assistance. These early gaps in development place additional strain on schools and teachers.

It is deeply concerning that the situation at JGHS is unlikely to improve anytime soon, especially given the projections for continued high pupil numbers. The lack of adequate teaching facilities and the impact this has on both the school experience and pupil attainment is unacceptable, and it is clear that further discussions are urgently needed.

Maybe a wider conversation may be necessary at the Education, Children and Families Committee regarding the school's catchment area. It is evident that the current pressures cannot simply be absorbed by the school indefinitely. Additionally, an honest discussion about the role of out-of-catchment placements may also be required to ensure a fair and sustainable approach moving forward.

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On a related note, I would be very interested to hear your thoughts on the Gaelic school within James Gillespie's High School. What are your thoughts on the amount of space this takes up within the school. Do you believe if the Gaelic school was moved to a different site this could help alleviate some of the space pressures? I understand this would be a sensitive and complex issue, but I would greatly value your insights on whether this might provide some relief for the current overcrowding.

Furthermore, I would be keen to hear your perspective on whether there is a perception that some families enrol their children in the Gaelic school primarily as a means of gaining a place at James Gillespie's, with the intention of transitioning to the main school in later years. I fully appreciate that this is a delicate subject, and I raise it purely out of a desire to understand your views on how this may be impacting capacity. It may of course not be.

Please be assured of my continued support for the young people and families of JGHS.

Thank you once again for your commitment to the school community.

Kind regards

Cllr Marie-Clair Munro

Scottish Conservative Councillor for Morningside Ward 10