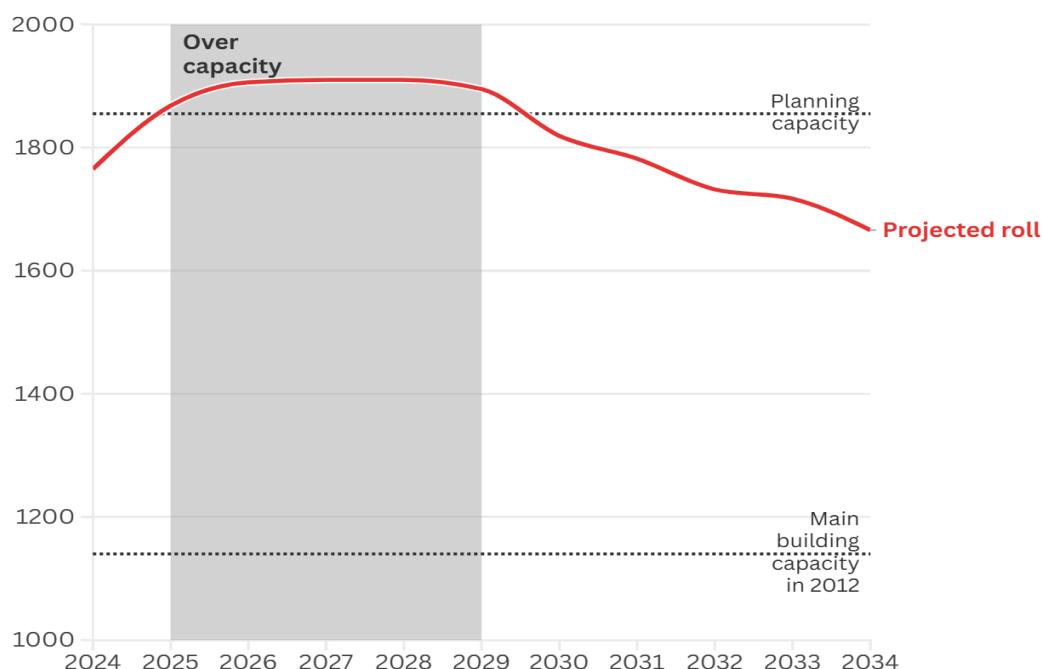


Increasing pupil numbers at JGHS

JGHS's population has been steadily rising for more than a decade, reflecting wider demographic changes which mean the number of high school pupils in Edinburgh is at its highest point since the 1980s. The current JGHS planning capacity of 1855 pupils is estimated to be surpassed by 2025/26 (1868 pupils), continuing to rise to 1910 pupils by 2027/28. Numbers will not fall below the current capacity until 2030 and then they slowly drop in the following years. 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 potential.

JGHS pupil roll projections 2025 - 2034



Source: City of Edinburgh Council's 2024 based School Roll Projections and Secondary School Capacity Review • The Y axis does not start at zero.

How overcrowded is JGHS and how does this compare to other schools?

The building capacity of each school represents the maximum number of learners it can accommodate. However, this is a theoretical figure that can never be achieved in practice as not all teaching spaces in a school can be fully utilised at all times.

Instead, the council uses a model to work out the practical usage of school spaces known as the Frequency of Use (FOU). Across the city, the council has adopted a FOU of 70%, meaning, at any one time, 30% of the teaching space in a school may not be in use.

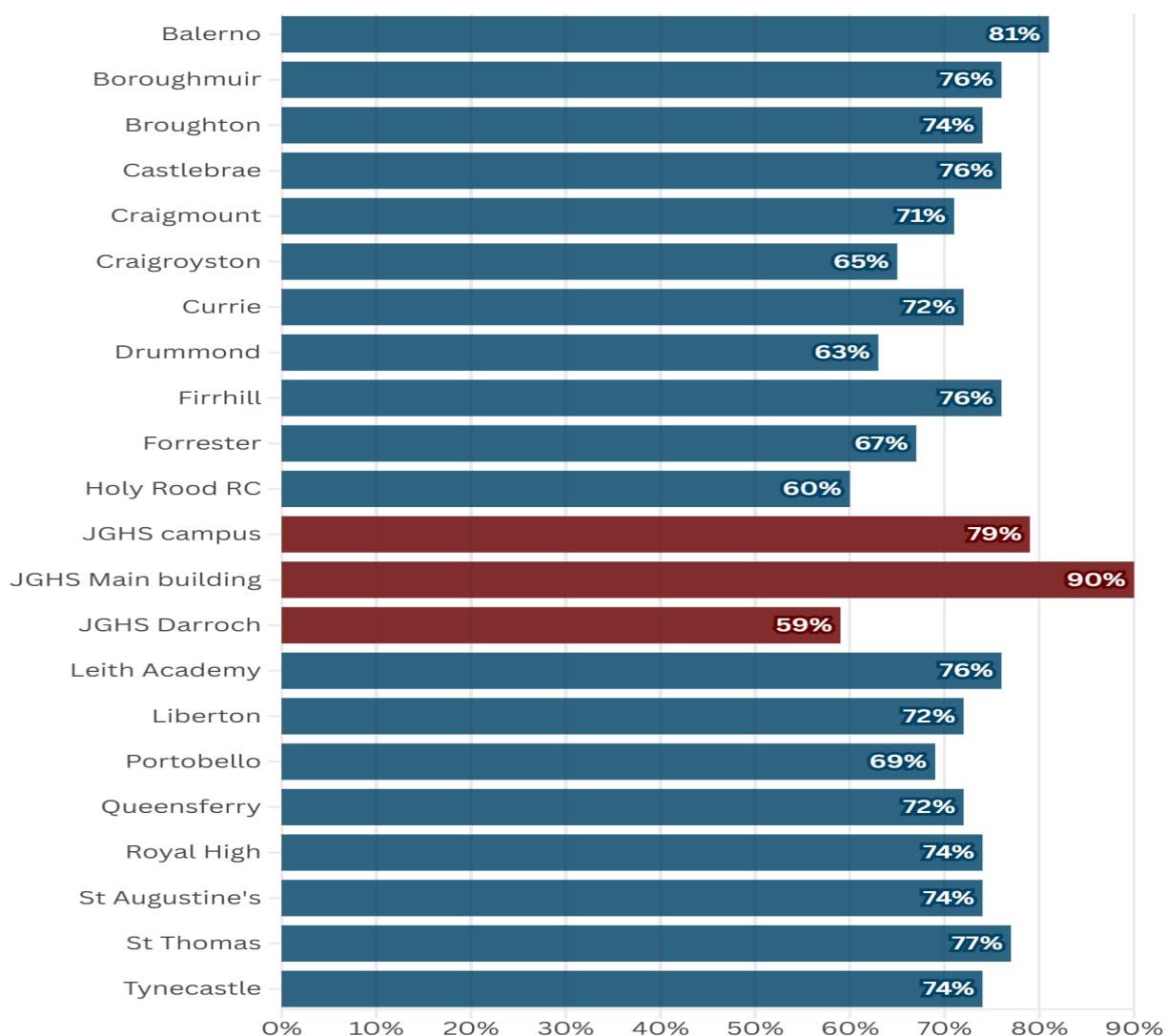
The council does not include 'suitability' issues, such as sufficient student dining and social space, in its capacity calculations. In 2024 it stated this is because they "cannot be easily quantified" and that these spaces also "have a subjective aspect, and can vary from school to school, mean[ing] they cannot form part of an objective and consistent capacity assessment". Applying the council's target 70% FOU rate to a school's building capacity is how the final planning capacity figure is reached, which for JGHS is currently 1855.

The planning capacity figures for Edinburgh's high schools have been shared publicly before but not the FOU rates. Information released under freedom of information laws shows that the JGHS campus FOU rate for 25/26 was 74% - so above the 70% target rate.

But, crucially, a breakdown of this campus-wide rate reveals Darroch's (a secondary campus approximately a 10 minute walk from the main campus) FOU is at 59% and the JGHS main building's FOU is at 90%. The main building at JGHS represents nearly 80% of the school's total capacity, it is where the vast majority of pupils and staff are based.

A breakdown of the main building's FOU rate by each floor (<https://edinburgh.axlr8.uk/disclose/discloseFile.php?key=39800>) shows that 72% of the teaching spaces in JGHS are used 90% or more of the time. The sports facilities are at 100% FOU, as are seven out of the ten science labs. As the table below shows, the FOU rate for the main building at JGHS is well ahead of the rate at other high schools in the city.

Frequency of use rate for teaching spaces in Edinburgh's high schools



Source: City of Edinburgh Council, Jan 2026. • Wester Hailes and Trinity omitted as both schools are being rebuilt. Insufficient data to include Gracemount.

What is the impact of overcrowding on pupils and staff?

- Not enough study and social space for senior pupils.

Spaces in JGHS that were designed as flexible learning spaces for private study are now used as temporary classrooms. There are not enough spaces for senior pupils to study.

- Suitability of reconfigured spaces

Many of the internal spaces in the main building which have been converted to teaching spaces lack any meaningful form of separation from neighbouring corridors. They are noisy and cramped spaces which are not the best environment for learning.

- Additional Support Needs (ASN) provision

In 2024, 45% of young people at JGHS were recorded as having ASN, with the majority facing neurodiversity challenges. Although the crowded nature of JGHS affects all its pupils, a busy and noisy environment is particularly challenging for many pupils who have ASN.

- Dining and social space

The dining space available for the pupils is wholly inadequate for the number of pupils in the school (it remains broadly the same as it was when the school re-opened to serve around 1,200 pupils). Pupils have very few indoor places they can gather in the break time.

- Pupils missing out on practical lessons

JGHS has only two classrooms available for Food and Health Technology – for pupils in the current S1 this means they are only able to undertake practical classes once per term (Other schools, such as Portobello, have S1 pupils cooking once a week). Space constraints have also limited delivery of practical classes in Art and Design, and there are significant impacts on science labs, with only 10 labs available for teaching (the amount of purpose-built practical space as when the school re-opened to serve around 1,200 pupils).

- Streaming of classes

Pupils have been streamed for Maths in S1 in previous years but this has now been stopped with the school's capacity being one of the factors behind this.

- Timetabling exams

Scheduling of prelims and exams at both Darroch and the main building is a huge headache for the school given how tight the space is. The prelim timetable for S4 pupils was only available a few days before the exams were due to start and the schedule for the January prelim diet for S5/6 was only available immediately before the holiday break.

- Split campus issues

The two-campus estate places additional pressure on teachers and pupils commuting between them, reducing break times and adding stress.

Possible solutions

Some possible solutions to create extra temporary space for JGHS:

- Utilise the neighbouring primary school's buildings or playground for erecting more temporary buildings.
- Erect temporary buildings in the JGHS main building's car parks or grounds
- Enquire if space is available to rent in the five churches within walking distance of JGHS
- Enquire if space is available to rent in local private offices
- Enquire if the recently vacated Royal Mail Sorting Office in Marchmont could be rented <https://www.all sop.co.uk/lot-overview/lot/c260211-028>

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The data in this report is correct as of February, 2026 but updates on the current and projected school roll, as well as frequency of use rates, are expected in the coming months.

If you think you can help the parent council's rising rolls sub-group, either with your professional skills or just your good ideas and support, then do get in touch. Contact Andy on andrewpicken@yahoo.co.uk

Also, you can raise the issues in this report with your local councillor via this link <https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1> or anyone on the council's education committee via this link - <https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=143>