

James Gillespie's High School Council

Annual Report: December 2007 – November 2008

Officers

Officers as agreed at the 2007 AGM:

Chair: Nigel Goddard

Communications Officer: Ann Henderson

Vice Chairs: Alpana Mair and Vivienne Swan

Events Group Liaison: Sheena Purdom

Treasurer: Tom Macintyre

This has been a year of transition, adjusting to new arrangements for representation and discussion. The former PTA and the former School Board successfully came together, and the School Council has been able to work on many different topics. There has also been the opportunity for us to discuss issues with the Head Teacher and with other staff members regularly. Much has been achieved in the school community in the past year, and we look forward to working together to resolve any issues raised by parents or by the School.

Meetings

Topics covered at our open meetings have included:

- Health policies and 'Health Promoting Schools'
- Active Schools programme
- Presentation on the School Partnership Link with Zwelibanzi High
- Home Study Policy
- Dress code

External Activities

We have been represented at a number of meetings with the local authority.

- The cuts in the school budget have brought additional pressures this year. We have lobbied the City and have been successful in having the energy budget fully covered by the City. This has helped reduce the negative impact of the cuts, which nevertheless are significant. We anticipate needing to counter pressure for further cuts in the 2009/10 budget.
- The parents from the 'Wave 3' Schools (including JGHS) continue to meet together to campaign for funding for infrastructure improvements (buildings renewal). The City of Edinburgh Council, although indicating it does not have the funding to do the all the work necessary, has carried out a feasibility study looking at options for Gillespie's. A Wave 3 advisory

group, at which we have a seat, meets regularly with City officials to review progress.

- We have a seat on the Consultative Committee with Parents (CCWP - the City's officially constituted body for consulting parents). Most of the recent focus has been on budget issues. There has also been discussion of additional support for learning (specifically the new Act). CCWP agendas and minutes are accessible from our website.
- The City and Scottish Government are promoting parental involvement. We have been represented at meetings and maintain links on our website to resources provided for parental involvement.

Recently Parent Councils in Edinburgh have formed the Edinburgh Parent Council Network (EPCN), of which we are members. Since formation the major focus of the EPCN has been how best to resist the ongoing pressure for school budget cuts.

Sub-Groups

The School Council Communications Group and Events Group have each met regularly throughout the year, both involving a wider number of parents, with various projects undertaken.

Communications Group

The School produces a regular newsletter, to which we contribute, but it was also felt to be important that the School Council produced its own Bulletin. Three editions were produced last year, and distributed via schoolbags, website, and, for non-resident parents, by post.

Our School Council website is regularly updated, and we are linked to the School's own website.

A number of the problems raised by parents can be resolved by improving school communication with parents, and we have made it a priority to work constructively with the school on this. We contributed to the Primary 7/S1 parent information evening, and arranged network meetings for S1 and S2 parents.

The School Council distributed a Health Questionnaire to parents with our 2007 AGM mailing as part of the investigations into priorities for the Health Promoting Schools Initiative. The returns have been analysed and a summary is on our website. We remain involved in the Health Promoting School Working Group.

The decision by the School to save money by reducing the paper communication with parents at the beginning of term did cause us some concern, and we will be monitoring this.

City of Edinburgh Council has been drafting a 'Parent Contact Policy' for non resident parents, in line with the requirements of the new legislation, to ensure that all parents/carers have equal access to school reports and communication.

We have been actively supporting this work over the year as the draft progresses towards completion.

The Communications Group is always looking for new ideas and suggestions, so please do get in touch in the coming year.

Events Group

This session the Events Group has organised and supported a wide variety of events within the school. Teas, coffees and soft drinks have been sold to parents, carers and students and also served to teachers at all Parents' Meetings. Refreshments were sold at various school events: Rock Night, Sports Celebration Evening, Spring Fling and Diversecity. At the Christmas Carol Concerts hot mulled wine and mince pies were served outside as people arrived.

Our main event this year was the Burns' Supper and Ceilidh which was held in the school at the end of January. This was well attended by staff, parents and S6 pupils and was a most enjoyable evening. In the summer term, we organised a parent forum on Internet Safety led by Anne Darling from CEC. This was both interesting and informative. As a result of many of these events, sufficient money was raised to fund projects proposed by various departments in the school (see table below).

Altogether, this was a busy and successful session and thanks go to all who supported our efforts.

Zwelibanzi (PTA carried forward)	£300
SFL Dept (Real Game for PSE- Sandra Evans)	£295
SFL Dept (Craft items for lunchtime club - Vicky Hunter)	£150
Mod Lang (Software subscription - Ryan Irvine)	£240
Design Tech (Display + Prof Sub - S Corson)	£295
Sports Coord. (Hockey equipment - Graeme Newall)	£250
Contribution to Blinds for Eng (Crosbie) & Food Tech (Briggs)	£500
Zwelibanzi Sponsorship (Events)	£300
Computing (Headphones - Kathryn Brown)	£198
Contribution to Homestudy initiatives (John Swinburne/Tom Rae)	£250
Design Tech (Software for Quizmaker - S Corson)	£200
Total disbursements	£2,978

Home Study – Working Group

This group was convened by Deputy Head Teacher Tom Rae and provided an opportunity for parents and teachers to work together to increase awareness of the issues relating to the School's policy on home study. The main outcome was the development of a new Home Study Policy, also clearer guidance and a re-structured S1 Parents Induction evening to communicate the new approach to parents.

School Trust

We have two representatives on the School Trust. This year they were:

Su Clark
Chris McKinnell

Chris is stepping down so we need someone interested in the work of the Trust to step forward at the AGM. If you would like to find out more, email the address above to be put in touch with Su and Chris.

This has been a year of achievement and change for the Trust. The Oral History project begun by Development Officer Frances Benton is now almost completed. The archive will be a lasting legacy. Miss Laidlaw's Garden also came about as a result of this project. The Garden was officially opened on June 20th and will be a living legacy within the school. Frances has now left her post but continues her input on a voluntary basis until next spring. She is planning a major art event in the city for spring 2009 which will further benefit the Trust and therefore the School.

During this year the Trust has provided funding to support the involvement of a pupil in a major musical production in Edinburgh. The Trust is now planning further projects which it is hoped will channel extra funding to the school and also support further development work.

A Trust Newsletter will soon be launched which will keep both alumni and current school community informed about Trust activities.

Stay informed!

Finally, a reminder that the School Council maintains an electronic distribution list and we welcome your details to help keep you updated.

Treasurer's Report

A statement of the accounts is attached.

In summary, the City of Edinburgh provided set up costs for the Council as well as a per capita allowance that should have reflected the anticipated operational costs incurred, primarily addressing communication costs to inform the parent body about meetings and activities throughout the year as well as preparing papers for the AGM. Non-operational income (in italics in the accounts) was generated through the Events Group, and was subsequently disbursed in support of the pupils and the school; details of the Small Sums Fund and how it was managed are reported separately by the Events Group.

As anticipated, the bulk of the School Council's expenditure went on communications. This accounted for reprographics & paper costs, postage of newsletters and 'bag-drop' intimation of meetings, text messaging for one of the Council's themed meetings and costs incurred for the first AGM in November 2007 that included printing of the Constitution. From the balance sheet you can see that those costs exceeded the City of Edinburgh's allocation by just under £100. Unfortunately, due to the way these expenses were accumulated in the school office before being requested, it was only after the event that we appreciated the overspends in this area. The Council is now in a more knowledgeable position regarding likely communication costs for this session and has in place a projected budget to take account of the communications required throughout the year.

The School Council has projected costs on the basis of receiving £836.00 from the City of Edinburgh Council for session 2008/09. While this is only a £8.40 increase over last year's allocation of £827.60, it should cover planned expenditure as this year we will not incur the initial setup costs.

For AGM reporting purposes it was felt that a record of accounts up to 1 August would be preferable to running the financial year through to 31 March, but if the AGM has a preference to revert to a financial year of 1 April -31 March as opposed to the school calendar year, the necessary accounts can be produced.

Accounts up to 1 August 2008 are shown on the next page. The balance sheet shows a deficit of £101.57 at the end of July (second line). At that point in time the majority of cheques handed to the school under the Small Sums Fund had not been lodged (£1780.00) so the bank balance was still in credit to the value of £1678.43.

Non-operational funds. The amounts raised during the financial year for non-operational activities total £2970.93 (in italics in the accounts). The amounts committed to non-operational activities (Zwelibanzi and the Small Sums Funds) total £2978 (in italics). The shortfall of £7.07 is carried forward to 2008/09 and included in the overall £101.57 deficit carried forward.

JGHS Council Accounts 2007-2008: Income & Expenditure 1 August 2007-31 July 2008; Balance Sheet

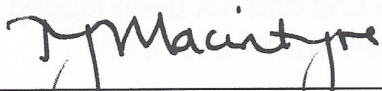
Income	2007-2008 (£)
City of Edinburgh (set up costs)	548.00
City of Edinburgh (per capita)	279.60
Former PTA	750.00
City of Edinburgh (fellowship events)	75.00
Events Group	2145.93
Interest to 31 Jul (Clydesdale Bank plc)	0.94
SUB TOTAL	3799.47
Deficit – transfer to balance sheet	101.57
TOTAL	3901.04

Expenditure	2007-2008 (£)
Communications (Printing & Postage)	923.04
Zwelibanzi (PTA commitment)	300.00
Zwelibanzi (School Council gift)	300.00
Small Sums Fund (Various school benefits)	2378.00
SUB TOTAL	3901.04
Surplus	
TOTAL	3901.04

Balance Sheet

	JGHS Council Funds Clydesdale Bank plc Business Account (Opened 7 Nov 2007)
Cash balance at 31 July 2007	0.00
Surplus (Deficit) 2007-2008	(£101.57)
Liabilities carried forward to 2008-2009 ¹	£1780.00
Cash balance at 31 Jul 2007	£1678.43

I certify that the above accounts have been suitably prepared and that they accurately reflect the transactions of the School Council (JGHS) during the financial year and of the state of affairs at 31 July 2008. I also certify that the records have been properly kept and payments duly authorised by signatories during the year to 31 July 2008.

Signed:  Position: Treasurer
 Date: 26 October 2008

¹ Cheques carried forward to next financial statement, in the accounts but yet to be presented to the bank: small sums fund applications