

# James Gillespie's High School Parent Council



## Parent Council Meeting

Wednesday 1 February 2023

### Draft minutes

#### Present:

Sarah Scott – SS (Chair), Ros Ingle – RI (Treasurer), Kirstin Leighton (Secretary), Neil McCallum – NM (HT), Ian Porter – IP (DHT), Nigel Cotter (DHT), Craig Watt – CW (English teacher), Christopher Cham – CC (English teacher), Grace Dempsey – GD (Intercultural Scotland), Zaki El-Salahi – ZH, Eliot Ambrose – EA (Active Schools Co-ordinator), Cllr Tim Pogson, Rachel Davidson, Fiona Dow, Penny Tarsia, Bridgeen McCloskey, Barbara Mole, Aileen Nimmo, Christiane Kerlen, Tiziana Basciani, Kathryn Pak, Gael Cochrane, Hilary Snaith, Padraic Kinsella, Barbie Lyon, Orla Hobson

#### Apologies:

Rob Dunbar, Ailsa Macintosh, Cllr Simita Kumar, Cllr Joanna Mowat, Cllr Pauline Flannery, Cllr Finlay McFarlane

#### 1. Welcome

SS welcomed everyone to the meeting and acknowledged that it was Mr McCallum's first in person meeting since he was appointed Headteacher. It was also the first meeting for Nigel Cotter DHT who had been appointed recently. Mr Cotter has met with some parents already and looks forward to working with everyone more in the future.

#### 2. Active Schools

EA introduced himself and thanked the PC for the opportunity to present. He wanted to explain to parents a bit about the booking system used by Active Schools.

Bookings are done annually, which is not perfect but the best we can do at the moment. The main reason for annual bookings is that High School sports have selected teams so need consistency over the year. There are also SQA reasons to allow those children studying PE to supplement their curriculum time with extra curricular activities. Annual booking also allows EA to support pupil priority places, working with the school this allows any child who the school believes would benefit more than the average pupil to attend clubs. EA relies on parents to inform him when a child has signed up to a club but has changed their mind and stopped going. This allows more children on the waiting list. Active Schools costs several thousand pounds a year to run and relies on parents making donations so if parents are in a position to please consider making an additional donation via parent pay. EA has produced a list of FAQs which the Parent Council will publish on our website.

### **3. Anti Racism**

IP advised that each DHT has responsibility for different areas of the quality indicators under How Good Is Our School (HGIOS) 4 which is the self evaluation toolkit for schools. IP has responsibility for wellbeing, equality and inclusion, this includes the P7 transition, wellbeing and inclusion across the school and anti racism.

The school has done a lot of work with the staff over the last couple of years having a closer look at the curriculum, diversifying and equalising but still quite a lot of work today. Working with partners such as Intercultural Youth Scotland who will share some of their main aims. There is a gap with parents and carers however but the school is excited to be working with ZE from A+ who can give some insight from the parents and carers perspective. IP spoke about the team within JGHS.

CW last spoke to the PC 5 years ago when they were first setting up the equalities group. Then the focus was more on economic equalities.

Now the areas the staff were looking at were, firstly anti bullying, ensuring that all pupils have a positive experience in the school especially those with protected characteristics. Decolonising and diversifying the curriculum which is too big an area to discuss in the meeting but looks at the way in which subjects are taught in and seeing which voices are included and excluded and how to fix that.

Legacy issues that the school has are related to James Gillespie (who the school is named after) who was a very successful tobacco merchant in Edinburgh which means the money that he raised to found the original version of the school was earned in large part due to slavery. This has been in the media a lot recently which discusses whether education and society reflects this part of its history sufficiently. Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy review asked a lot of questions about how Edinburgh should respond to its past, the ways in which it has benefited from transatlantic slave trade and what changes should be made going forward. The school managed to gather a big response for the review from S1-3s both in groups and individuals which accounted for 20% of the whole school responses to the review. The findings were unanimously accepted by the council. Most relevant to JGHS are "Statues, Monuments, Buildings and Street Names associated with slavery and colonialism are retained and

represented in accordance with the new dedicated interpretation strategy which explains the nature and consequences of that involvement” and “An independent legacy and stakeholder group is established, supported by the council to ensure approved recommendations are actioned, resourced and monitored and progress is reported annually.” What this means is this is the way we should proceed and how the school needs to act. As a stop gap measure the anti-racist group has added cards and further information to the bust of James Gillespie. Going forward the whole story needs to be told. Mr Watt has contacted the council about what the situation will be going forward but it is likely to include similar solutions.

CC informed the PC that the Anti Racist group meets every Wednesday lunchtime and works towards the inclusion of all cultures within our school. It discusses topical areas and tries to celebrate as many cultural events as it can. This year they hosted a Dreidel Tournament and Lunar New Year. The club’s aims are to work closely with Intercultural Youth Scotland as well as engaging more with parents and they would welcome any input.

GD works for Intercultural Youth Scotland. This organisation aims to give space, guidance and support to young people who identify as Black or people of colour. Her role as Anti Racist programme Education Practitioner involves going to various schools and spending a day a week in the school carrying out four main functions: offering pupil support on any thing to do with race; teacher support, if teachers are struggling with confidence in how to deal with racist situations, how to teach sensitive information etc; helping with the anti racist groups; and finally curricular support: what does decolonising the curriculum look like? It will take years but it is important that we are working on it.

#### A+ Group

ZE introduced himself and advised that he was here to talk about the A+ group which has been recently set up.

The group is for Parents & Carers of young people who are from the African and Asian diaspora, and go to JGHS. It is also open to Parents & Carers with ‘Ethnic Minority’ status, who want to listen, learn from, & support Black and Asian families at JGHS. They will make specific parts of our meetings welcome to White/’Ethnic Majority’ Parents & Carers – to listen, learn and provide support. There is more about the group and its aims on the link below:

<https://jghsparentcouncil.org/2023/02/22/parent-council-meeting-on-1-february/>

SS thanked all the speakers for their inspiring and thought provoking talks.

#### **4. Minutes of previous Parent Council meeting**

Matters arising from previous meeting:

Headteacher recruitment:

As had been discussed earlier, Neil McCallum had been appointed to the post of headteacher. SS thanked the two parents who sat on the recruitment panel.

#### Capacity Issues/Rising Roles

There had been discussion in the October meeting about how to deal with the above issues. A letter had been sent to the Council (1 February) to ask for clarification and information about what the plan was going forward.

#### Refreshments

These are back up and running again which is great for the school both from a financial point of view as it raises money but also from a social perspective, it is so lovely to have parents back in the school. Thank you to Aileen Nimmo and her team.

#### Donald J. McDonald Award

After Donald retired the Parent Council raised a sum of money to go towards a yearly award. A sum of £2000 was raised which will go towards a Kindness Award - four awards of £100 each for 5 years. Nominations will come from school staff. The award will be given out at the end of each calendar year with the exception of this year when the first award will be presented at the end of this school year.

### **5. Chair's Report (Sarah Scott)**

#### Council meetings

SS reported that the Council now have the full set of normal parental engagement meetings up and running again, which are Locality meetings for Parent Council representatives and Council officers, feeding into the CCwP (Consultative Committee with Parents) where parent representatives are sent from the Locality meeting to meet with Council Officers and councillors. There are also two parental representatives - one for primary and one for secondary - on the Education, Children and Families Committee.

At the most recent CCwP meeting, the main issue discussed was vaping in schools, which is causing concern across Edinburgh. The presentation made is on the PC website along with the link to the complete webcast of the meeting.

### **6. Finance Report (Ros Ingle)**

RI reported that the Parent Council had received the following for the Course choice evening and Christmas Concert: £416.14 cash and £72.43 on the card reader.

The card reader is meant to be a stand-alone device and run off Wi-fi but due to the Council regulations we cannot use the school Wi-fi. It also has a sim card however this is limited by the signal which is

practically non-existent within the school. It is hoped that events in Darroch or outside will work but the main message is for parents to bring cash to school events.

The Parent Council bank account is with Virgin who have recently announced that they will be charging our account once we have more than 10 transactions a month. This is unlikely to affect us but RI will monitor the situation. The current account balance is £3,688.74 of which £2,109.86 is the Donald J Macdonald Fund with the plan being that £2,000 will be transferred to the school to administer the award. The balance of this will go towards certificates and a token gift for the recipients. The remaining balance is £1,576 and £420 unbanked cash which will be banked after the next event.

## **7. Headteacher's Report (Neil McCallum)**

NM reported on staffing including the appointment of PSAs in Support for Learning.

Industrial Action was ongoing, with new dates for strikes on 28 February and 1 March. The S5/6 prelims had been held at the Darroch building because of lack of space at the main campus. This had worked well and the splitting up for S4 prelims and S5/6 after Christmas had meant less disruption.

NM confirmed that the School App was being re-launched and that there was going to be a short-life working group looking at school communications, which parents would be invited to be involved with. A working group on homework was also being set up to look at the school's policy which was last reviewed in 2017.

The school was also looking at vaping, which is a rising concern. The school is a smoke-free area, and work is being done to raise awareness about vaping and its dangers.

The report can also be found at: [https://jghspsc.files.wordpress.com/2023/02/230201\\_jghs-parent-council\\_ht.pdf](https://jghspsc.files.wordpress.com/2023/02/230201_jghs-parent-council_ht.pdf)

NM also commented on school toilets following a request from a parent. The school was looking at all aspects of how the school toilet system work along with pupil representatives. The discussion at the meeting brought up a number of concerns about the toilets, including safety, privacy, cleanliness and compliance with statutory requirements. It was agreed that it would be useful for the school also to have parents involved in a working group so that all issues surrounding this important issue could be discussed properly.

## **8. Dates of next meetings:**

21 March 2023 (online) and 31 May 2023 (in person)