



## JAMES GILLESPIE'S HIGH SCHOOL

Interim Head teacher / Ceannard: Neil McCallum B.Ed (Hons), SQH

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Address: 120 Warrender Park Road, Edinburgh EH9 1DD  
e-mail: [admin@jamesgillespies.edin.sch.uk](mailto:admin@jamesgillespies.edin.sch.uk)  
Website: [jamesgillespies.co.uk](http://jamesgillespies.co.uk)  
Telephone 0131 447 1900

### JGHS Parent council 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024

#### **Staffing**

##### **Incoming**

Ms Yanthe Harper Art

##### **Outgoing**

Ms Gemma Grant Art (maternity leave)

#### **Homework**

The working group is continuing to review the policy and link with faculties for the approach on homework. We are working on resources to support parents and carers to have a clearer understanding on how they can support their young people with homework. We will share the updated policy with parents and carers as soon as we can.

#### **Communication**

The communications group have been working on several aspects. These include – Letters to parent's and carers being updated, school app being utilised to share news, messages and the school calendar, the website continues to be progressed and a part of this process we are reviewing the purpose of the website, where information can be found. As these are progressed, we will update all parents and carers.

#### **Parents Evening.**

We will be consulting parents and carers across all year groups in relation to the format of these, for academic session 2024-25. These will then be included in the school calendar, which will be issued to parents and carers in August, as well as being accessible on the school website and app.

#### **Parent / Carer Survey**

As shared at the last parent council meeting, we will be reintroducing the parent and carer survey. We are currently updating this and I propose to share this with the parent council at the meeting at the end of March. This will allow an opportunity for feedback before it is sent out in the summer term. This will provide feedback to be linked into the School Improvement plan for academic session 2024-25.

#### **School Policies**

We are working on a section of the school website, to be able to share all appropriate policies that parents and carers would require access to. We hope to have this in place as soon as is possible. We will then update with new or revised policies as appropriate. As discussed previously we will be seeking feedback from parents and carers in relation to new or revised policies going forward.

### ***Excursions***

There are now a number of excursions taking place and it has been pleasing to see the pupils being afforded these opportunities.

We are planning to create an excursions booklet that could be issued / shared with all parents and carers in June for the following academic year. This will allow all parents and carers to have an overview of the opportunities that will be available over the pupils' time in the school. This will also support planning and budgeting to support access to the opportunities that are made available.

The CEC excursion policy is now being implemented and this will be reviewed, and information shared with officers at the centre to be able to reflect the experiences of schools.

### ***RSHP***

We have had requests for the lesson plans and information used in the lessons. This will be added to the school website and will allow parents and carers of pupils in S1,2,3,4 to be able to see the lessons that are delivered in PSE over a ten-week period. Please see the additional document for further information in relation to the lessons and the content covered.

### ***School Dinning Centre***

The school dinning centre is a cashless catering provision, where pupils can access lunch and snacks. There is a varied provision, with snacks, including hot pastries being available at breaktime. At Lunchtime there are a variety of hot meals, sandwiches, pizza, cold drinks and fruit. Pupils can pay at the till using their ParentPay number.

I am currently in discussion with the managers of the dinning centre to have more visible signage for pupils to be aware of the cost of all items that are offered. I am also seeking information to share with parents and carers through the school website and school app, the meals that will be available each week and on any particular day.

### ***Rights Respecting Schools***

I am delighted to let you know that as a school we have achieved RRSA Silver. The assessors were extremely impressed with the vast amount of work both staff and pupils have put into becoming a rights aware school.

Some key points from the assessors:

- Our young people are confident in discussing their rights and understand the role of responsible adults.
- Rights are not only promoted across the building, but they are embedded in our ethos and values.
- Our school offers a vast selection of diverse and meaningful clubs and societies.
- JGHS is a huge school and we are working extremely hard to achieve consistency across campuses and departments.

We will receive a report from UNICEF in the coming weeks.

### ***SCOTTISH SCHOOLS' CROSS-COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS***

Congratulations to all the pupils who participated in the Scottish Schools' Cross-Country Championships, held on Wed 6<sup>th</sup> March at Hopetoun House Estate.

A special mention to the school's best finisher Jessica Taylor, who came 7<sup>th</sup> in the Under 17 women category as well as the 2 teams who came home with medals – Under 15 boys (Josh Daunt, Finlay Glass, Andrew Leighton and Jack Zinkus-Sutton) who won bronze and the under 17 women (Sofia Bautista-Flecha, Bethan Kitchin, Freya Mowbray and Jessica Taylor) who won silver.

### ***European Youth Parliament Success***

Our EYP team competed at the recent tournament in Edinburgh. The team did an incredible job. They improved throughout the day and delivered speeches with unswerving aplomb. They go through to the

National Finals in Liverpool in September along with Mary Erskine's school. We are all really proud of their achievement. The pupils involved were:

Alba Tenesa Navarro; Aleeza Walayat Chaudhary; Casey McMahon; Anna Sophia Goerke; Hajar Risha; Murdo Pope; Tilda Carmichael; Ella McGuire; Thomas Benedict Schmoll

### ***F1 in Schools National Finals***

Two teams went to compete at the UK National Finals of F1 in Schools in Sheffield this week. The students have worked independently and tirelessly, upholding the spirit of innovation and excellence the competition demands. They have faced many challenges along the way, but their incredible engineering and development were clearly showcased and reflected in their achievements, and the awards they won.

Sterna (Charlie Henderson, Noah Gray, Andrew McKendrick, Freya Mowbray, and Oliver Norrie) came 2nd overall in the UK for development class, an incredible achievement for their first year competing. They also won the UK awards for Fastest Reaction Time (0.042s from Freya) and Pit Display.

Ventura (Jess Taylor, Anna Cruden, Bella Nicholson, Louis Renwick, Pauline Schnauffer, and Patrick Snowden) won the Scottish Champion title in professional class and will be going on to represent JGHS and Scotland at the World Finals of F1 in Schools! They were also nominated for Research and Development Award.

Many thanks to those of you have supported the teams this far, and if you would like to support Ventura in their journey to World Finals, please get in touch with them at [venturaracing21@gmail.com](mailto:venturaracing21@gmail.com), check out their website [ventruaracing.org.uk](http://ventruaracing.org.uk), and look out for a Sponsorship night coming next term.

### ***Pipe Band Success***

Sunday 10th March saw our High School Pipe Band enter the Scottish Schools Pipe Band Championships. The event, held in Kilmarnock, featured more than seventy-five bands from all over Scotland. Delighted with their performance the band were awarded 4th place in their section.

Later in the day they took to the stage in the freestyle section. Accompanied by musicians from the school on guitars and kit drum they performed a lively rendition of Mark Knopfler's Going Home: Theme of The Local Hero and were met with very favourable comments from judges and members of the audience. A wonderful experience and wonderful day out for all pupils who took part.

### ***Guitar Ensemble Success***

Thursday 7th March saw the guitar section of the Edinburgh Festival Competition and our guitarists were successful in both open sections.

Our JGHS Senior Guitar Ensemble won the Rita Quinney medal in the open ensemble competition and have been invited to perform in the prestigious winner's concert on Sunday evening in St. Cuthbert's Church. The ensemble rehearses every Thursday morning from 8am - 8.30, a huge commitment.

In the open solo section, Isak Ohberg, S4, won the Norma Quinney medal for an outstanding 15-minute solo recital receiving glowing comments from the judge. He has been invited to perform solo in St. Giles on 21st April. Dylan Daunt S5 was awarded a "Highly Commended" in the under 18 category (essentially 2nd place). As you can imagine, we are immensely proud of all of them.

### ***Chess Success***

On Saturday 2nd March, the Gillespie's Chess (A)Team entered the Lothian Secondary Chess competition and came home victorious, having secured first place and a large trophy to boot!

The students, led by Tomas Hunt, are as follows:

'A' Team: Oshi Hunt; Angharad Hunt; Kyriakos McKenzie; Daniel Earnshaw and Yau Yau.

'B' Team: James Richardson; James Lee; Tomas Hunt; Hugo Verity-Povoas and Porter Cruikshank.

A fantastic achievement and we are all enormously proud of them all.

### ***Basketball Success***

We entered six teams into the Scottish Cup Schools Basketball Competition, S1, U15 and Open in both boys and girl's categories. The teams have all played incredibly well and in the S1 division, both teams managed to become East of Scotland Champions by winning all group games and have progressed to the Scottish Cup Final 4s competition where the top four teams in the country play off to become Scottish Schools Champions. Both S1 teams have played unbelievable basketball and will have a wonderful experience at Final 4s.

Our U15 Boys went through to the East of Scotland Regional Semi Finals after winning all group games but came up against an incredibly strong Queensferry HS team and unfortunately lost narrowly to miss the regional final. Our U15 Girls went through the group stages unbeaten also and after a 3-point semi-final win against Mary Erskine, played Broughton HS in the regional final. An amazing performance saw the girls crowned East of Scotland Champions after a 59-48 win. Our U15 girls now travel to Dundee for the Scottish Cup Final 4s which is an amazing achievement.

In the Opens division, S4-S6 girls have played some incredible basketball and defied the odds by beating Heriot's with only five players. An incredible feat considering the speed and relentless nature of Opens Basketball. The girls reached the semi-final but due to scheduling issues received a forfeit win to progress into the East of Scotland regional final to play Portobello HS. Unfortunately, this game is unable to be played and Portobello progress into the Final 4s. The Open Boys have had a busy campaign and despite a loss to Tynecastle HS, finished second in the group and progressed to the quarter finals. A good win against Queensferry HS set up a Semi Final and a repeat fixture against Tynecastle HS. What an incredible performance for our team, going ten points down towards the end of the first half did not diminish the belief and with seconds to go until the final whistle, there was a chance. Sadly, the final score ended 75 – 79 with Tynecastle progressing into the Regional Final but it was an incredible performance and the best school's basketball performance from both teams.

Best of luck to our S1 girls & boys and U15 girls in the Final 4s in Dundee in the last week of term and well done to all teams for a brilliant campaign this season.

### ***British Brain Bee Neuroscience Competition***

Congratulations to Tomos Hunt, S5, who won the British Brain Bee Neuroscience Competition last weekend in London. Tomos will now represent Britain at the International Brain Bee Neuroscience competition. We wish him every success.

### ***Robotics UK Final***

Over the weekend the VEX IQ Robotics Team, Pulse Robotics (Jonathan Brickley, Noah Grey, Andrew McKendric, Reuben Murdoch, Leander Patterson and Ian Tong) took part in the UK National Championship event in Telford after being one of only 60 teams from across the UK to qualify for the UK Nationals. Over the two days the team took part in skill challenges (3 driver-controlled attempts and 3 autonomous coding attempts) with only their robots as well as a taking part in the teamwork tournament where they were randomly matched with other teams to work together to score as many points as possible in this year's game. During the weekend, the team further refined their robot design, autonomous code and during their practice runs managed to, on average, increase their points to an impressively elevated level. Unfortunately, due to some bad luck with how some of the blocks landed/hit off each other, they were not able to replicate their high score during the official skill matches. Still, they achieved an impressive 13<sup>th</sup> place in the skills challenges due to their combined driving and programming skills. For the teamwork matches they were one of 16 teams that managed to qualify for the finals. The teams were paired up with each other and had to score the highest number of points they could. Pulse Robotics and their teammate were able to score an impressive 85 points and ended the Championship in 5<sup>th</sup> place overall. While it wasn't quite enough to qualify for the world event in Texas, it is a very impressive result for the team's/school's first attempt and for only having 3 months to design, build, refine and code their robot (when other teams have had since last May!). Hopefully, we will see more of Pulse Robotics next year as we hope to take part in the High School VEX Robotics

competition where they will design and build a robot using metal structures and much more advanced electrical components for next year's game!

### ***Dates***

#### ***March***

26 Spring Fling  
27 Spring Fling  
28 End of term (15.40)

#### ***April***

16 All resume.  
29 SQA Study leave begins (S4-5-6)

#### ***May***

06 Holiday  
07 In-Service  
08 Pupils Return  
20 Holiday  
21 All Return