

James Gillespie's High School Council

Minutes of Meeting

20th November 2012

1. ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

Donald MacDonald (Head Teacher), Hazel Kinnear (Deputy Head), Audrey Gilmour (co-Chair), Cath Downie (co-Chair), Hazel Gough (Treasurer), Alison Macleod (Secretary), Lucy Norris, Pam Billina, James Carter, Daniel Robertson, G. Crawford, Norman Brown, Jane Cudby, Anne Steele, Fiona Giles, Amelia Beattie, Karen Finlayson, Janet Stevenson, Julie-Ann Sime.

Audrey Gilmour welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Minutes of previous meeting were deemed acceptable. No matters arising.

3. REPORT ON DECANT AND NEW BUILDING PROJECT

DMD proposed that a structured meeting (with feedback from Janice Croll and information and specific details about Darroch) be scheduled as part of February's council meeting. This would need to be advertised well in advance and parents encouraged to attend. Discussion took place as to whether this meeting would be better as a separate meeting from the council meeting. It was decided that the updated information would be discussed at the February council meeting and then a second meeting would be set up to which P7 parents and all current parents would be invited. Discussion took place about sharing information about this. DMD informed the meeting that a letter would be going to P7 parents about the decant.

DMD pointed out that there were currently workmen on site working on Bruntsfield House. Some initial problems had been quickly and effectively dealt with, and the school were pleased that this had been well handled by the site manager.

4. SCHOOL COUNCIL ACTIVITIES FOR 2012 – 13

(a)) There are various groups in operation locally and within the city which welcome representatives from the school council :

South Edinburgh Neighbourhood Group – this is a forum for consultation between school councils, and has representatives from primary, secondary and nursery schools in a cluster group.

Consultative Committee with Parents (CCwP) – the next meeting of this group is 15th January. A parent from this group will be elected to sit on the City of Edinburgh Education committee.

Vision for schools group – this group would welcome parental input as it looks at future policy and plans for education.

(b) Curriculum for Excellence - Parents meetings

1. CEC are running a course for parents on Saturday 24th November from 9.30 – 12.30pm at Tynecastle High School. There are 6 parent places for anyone interested in attending.
2. JGHS Curriculum for Excellence meeting - Tuesday 11th December

This meeting will be specifically run by staff at JGHS and aims to explain what is happening at JGHS with respect to Curriculum for Excellence. Following a previous meeting which did not achieve its purpose, it is hoped that this meeting will address remaining issues and answer any questions parents may still have regarding CfE.

(c) Events group

The events group have had two successful evenings serving teas and coffees at parents evenings. There was a well-attended and very enjoyable wine tasting event in November. Further events are planned.

(d) Communications

There was discussion about communication to the Gillespies community. It is hoped that the Parent council website will be updated. E mail and texts were still considered the best methods of communication.

It was agreed that it would be helpful to have someone from the parent council advertising the council, and encouraging others to get involved, by speaking for a few minutes at school meetings which were expected to have a big turnout. The next of these meetings is likely to be 11th December CfE meeting and following that, subject choice evenings in February. AM to speak on behalf of council on 11/12 and others to be decided at February meeting.

5. HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

DMD welcomed parental questions and suggested that if there was a specific area parents wished to discuss that they should give him notice of this and he would be happy to address these areas at the next meeting.

Classroom observations : helping to identify 'best practice'. Currently taking place for S1 and S2 classes in November. Staff have requested November and February for classroom observations.

School Values : input has been from staff, pupils and parents but more feedback will be sought from parents in the next newsletter. 'Equality', 'respect' and 'inclusion' have been the three strongest values, followed by 'high aspirations / expectations', 'honesty' and 'integrity'.

S4 Prelims : following discussions with S4 class reps, it was decided that S4 pupils should have one week of exam leave and should then be back in class for the second week of prelims.

JGHS Attainment report : this was prepared for CEC Education committee but DMD felt it was worth sharing this with Parent Council. This was discussed at length with regard to key strengths and

successes, academic attainment and areas to be considered going forward. This was an interesting and encouraging document and parents thanked DMD for sharing it with them.

Staffing : Ms Pringle (current curriculum leader) will be moving to take up post as QIO at CEC. Interviews for her post will be taking place this week. Parents expressed a strong desire to see continuity in the excellent calibre of teaching which currently takes place within the Physics Department. Ms Pica has now left on maternity leave and her replacement, who comes with good experience, has been appointed and will be joining the school shortly.

Trips: it is hoped to start some exchange trips between JGHS and schools in Spain (Tenerife) and China. There will be more information on this at a later date.

Curriculum for Excellence : DMD discussed the pressure currently coming from CEC to extend the broad general education of S1 and S2 into S3. Doing this would decrease the number of subjects in S4 to five / six. DMD could see no benefit of this whatsoever and felt that the new model would not serve the majority of Gillespies pupils well. The pupil council had also been consulted and wished to stay with the current situation of eight subjects in S3. DMD assured parents that Gillespies will be sticking to the current arrangement of 8 subjects in S3 and subject choices in February of S2. Parents strongly supported DMD in maintaining the current situation with pupils being able to choose 8 subjects to study in S3 and 4, and could see no educational value in moving to fewer subjects in S4. There was discussion about formal mechanisms for commenting on this. DMD suggested a Q & A section on the school website for parental reassurance.

6. AOCB

(a) Parents evening booking system :

This was discussed and the possibility of online booking by parents was debated. It was felt that while this would suit many parents it would not suit all and that there should be slots held over for those pupils who needed to book appointments in the normal way.

(b) Pupils at parents evenings :

DMD canvassed opinion about bringing pupils to Parents evenings and engaging them in the discussions. He encouraged parents to do so.

(c) Curriculum resources and choice of course (N4 / N5) for S3 pupils :

This was discussed and parental concern was raised about the lack of textbooks for various subjects. It was suggested that there should be more information on the school website from each department giving suggestions and information about good resources. Parents enquired about when decisions were being taken as to whether pupils were sitting N4 or N5. DMD said that Maths was the only subject where this decision had been taken. DMD said that this issue would be covered at the CfE meeting on 11th December.

(d) Meeting dates :

The need for another meeting in March / April was discussed and it was agreed that this should happen given the approaching building project and decant. Two dates were suggested – 19th March

or 23rd April. This will be decided at the next meeting. Other finalised meeting dates are : 5th February and 28th May 2013.