

JAMES GILLESPIE'S SCHOOL COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT OCTOBER 2010

All School Council meetings are open to everyone in the School community, and include student and staff participation. Regular reports from the Head Teacher allow parents the chance to learn more about what is going on in school. Councillors representing the wards in our catchment area are also invited. Since our last AGM in October 2009, we have held discussions on a number of different topics. These have included a presentation from Ruth Evans from Changeworks on supporting environmental improvements; outline design report on the new JGHS Building; Curriculum for Excellence and what it means for JGHS; input to the consultation on the decant during the building project; and City Council Budget proposals in early 2010. We were also very pleased to support an evening event reporting back from the S6 South Africa visit.

In February 2010 an HMIE inspection took place in James Gillespie's. From the School Council perspective, we ensured attendance at the relevant meetings with the Inspectorate; parents participated in the focus groups and in submitting written comment; and we were represented at the final meeting with the city council. Arising from our experience of the HMIE inspection, comments are being submitted to the HMIE on the current inspection regime.

New legislation also requires HMIE involvement when schools are closing or being rebuilt, so parent representation was required at a recent meeting in School, on the decant to Darroch proposal. We also attended the community public meeting held by the City Council, on the decant proposals.

Our School Council email distribution list is now quite extensive, reaching over 600 families, and more frequent news updates have been possible to the parent body. A number of hard copy newsletters were also issued by the School Council during the year. Non-resident parents receive these too, and discussions are ongoing with School about ensuring good communication with all parents and carers. A number of our suggestions have been taken on board, and we have also been able to share information with parents at the School's request i.e. student timekeeping; school text books and library service; and changes to S1 and S2 lunchbreak arrangements.

The School Council has been invited to attend a number of meetings over the year, with regard to the City Council Budgets. In late 2009, and early 2010, we also ensured that we met with Head Teachers and Parent Council reps from our catchment area Primary Schools, and with local authority councillors. This year, the City Council has started its community consultations on the Budget much earlier, and we have been represented at all the meetings to date. There have been a number of concerns raised about the process, and about the priorities in some of the reports from council officers, but this is an ongoing discussion, and further School Council meetings will be arranged to seek parents' views.

The City Council provides other opportunities too for Parent Council involvement, and parents from JGHS had the opportunity to attend a Learning Festival event in May. A Consultative Committee With Parents (CCWP) meets in the City Chambers several times a year, where it is possible to hear more of the work of the Children and Families Department, and Parent Council feedback is sought on various matters. The most recent meeting (Sept 28) heard a report on Early Years work, and also on 16plus choices. (Papers issued at these meetings will be made available on our website)

This year we ran a successful Booksale in School, and we hope to continue with this. It allows parents and students to buy and sell textbooks and past papers at reasonable prices, and raises a little money for other projects.

SUB GROUPS

These can be on any topic and can meet as necessary. In 2009-10, we brought together some Year Groups, which was very helpful in identifying areas for improvements to communications in school; buildings sub group; events sub group.

JGHS SCHOOL COUNCIL EVENTS GROUP 2009 - 2010

Over the session, the Events Group has again organised and supported a variety of school activities.

Refreshments were sold at the Sports Celebration Evening, Christmas Carol Concert, Spring Fling and Diversecity. Teas and coffees have been served at most Parents' Evenings – unfortunately not all due to lack of helpers. Our annual Burns' supper and ceilidh, held in January, was again a success, although adult numbers were lower than in previous years - thanks to those staff and parents who attended, participated and helped on the night.

All of these activities do raise money and, following applications, funds will be distributed to various projects within school. Details will be published shortly and will be available at the AGM.

This year will follow a similar pattern and we always welcome any parents or carers who would like to help at any of these events. Please see the School calendar or our website for dates of our meetings – they are very informal – we would love you to come along.

Sheena Purdom and Jo Clayton 6th October 2010