

James Gillespie's High School



Newsletter

Message from the Head Teacher

February 2005

As you will read in the article below we are about to introduce a new system to combat absenteeism and lateness. The majority of our students are committed to attending school and arriving on time. However a substantial number of young people have a rather too relaxed attitude and we are concerned that this has a knock-on effect in terms of motivation and achievement. We hope the introduction of this absence management tool will support students in improving in these areas.

Our next major event is Diversity which takes place on the 4th & 5th of March and is the most important public statement of our com-

mitment to equality and diversity as our core values. Once more we intend to bring teachers and students from Zwelibanzi to participate in this event and our South African Committee who are currently engaged in fund-raising for this will also have a high profile on the night. Staff and S6 students from JGHS will be visiting Zwelibanzi during the Easter break.

The distressing events surrounding the Tsunami disaster have reminded us all of our global responsibilities. Our commitment to our South African school as well as our contribution to the Tsunami Appeal demonstrate our desire to produce global citizens. The BBC

Newsnight coverage of Pax Warrior also highlighted our reputation as a school where young people and staff are devoted to the education of the whole person.



Mr. A. Wallace

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Changes to Absence Management

Tuesday, 22nd February will see us start a trial period with an Absence Management tool called Truancy Call.

This is an automated parent notification system that will telephone parents to inform them that their children are not at school. It will request a reason for the pupil's absence. Parents have the option of responding immediately with the reason for absence or of calling back when it is more convenient. Calls will continue throughout the day until the school is informed of the reason for absence.

With this system we will be

able to meet our obligations to our parents to keep them informed if their children do not turn up for school. It also allows us to meet our obligations to the local authority in terms of taking action to reduce truancy.

While the Truancy Call system will keep parents informed of pupils' absence our real objective is to change from a system where absence notification is after the fact, to a proactive system where parents call the school in advance to inform us of absence. This will allow us to understand better the needs of our students.

A dedicated Voice-Mailbox will be set up to receive all calls from parents concerning their child's absence. You will be asked to dial extension 300 after reaching the switchboard. You should leave a message stating who you are, your relationship to the pupil, the pupil's name, registration class, reason for absence and expected length of absence.

Parents were requested last year to inform the school of any telephone numbers we have on record to which you would not like us to call. If you think we hold such a number you should let us know now.

Special points of interest:

- *School closes at 15:45hr on Thursday, 10th February for Mid-Term Holiday.*
- ***Pupils resume at 08:30hr on Tuesday, 22nd February.***
- *Get your tickets for the loudest night of the year—Rock Night—23rd March. Details on page 2.*
- *Join our choirs, bands and orchestras and have a ball. Details on pages 3 & 4.*
- *Check out other diary dates on page 4.*

Music Department News



1st Place for Jazz Trumpeter

Massive congratulations go to our jazz trumpeter, first year student Liam Heath (front row, right) who won the Instrumentalist 1st prize at the Rotary Club of Braids Young Musician of the Year 2005 Competition held at Merchiston Castle School on Thursday, 27th January. He was competing against 15 other instrumentalists, all of them older than him and many in S5 and S6. His placing was the unanimous decision of the panel of 3 judges and his playing of the piece, "Stella by Starlight" was quite simply inspired!

Liam will now represent this club in the semi-finals - we wish him the very best of luck.

Usher Hall Carol Concert

Congratulations and thanks to all staff and students who helped make this such a success.

Once again, it was an evening of festive celebration with items from senior and junior wind bands, string orchestra, guitar and clarsach ensembles, percussion ensemble, and flute ensemble. The choirs included items from P7/S1 combined choir, S2/3 choir, senior choir and senior vocal group.

A total of 550 students were involved, which is, in itself, a fantastic achievement and a reflection of the commitment from students.

Our next concert will be a 'Summer Celebration' on Wed. 22nd June, and some of the above groups are already starting to rehearse for this!

Rock Night—23rd March

This event promises to be fantastic due to the many rock bands flourishing in the school!

The evening kicks off at 7.00pm in the Assembly Hall, and gives the opportunity for all bands to work with professional sound engineers and lighting.

Tickets will be priced at £5, with £1 from each ticket going towards the school Tsunami Disaster Appeal.

Please support, not only the students involved on the night, but this worthwhile charity.

Interested bands will be called to a meeting after the holiday week. Details will follow in the weekly school pupil bulletin.

Choirs for the Summer Concert

All students, regardless of musical experience, are encouraged to participate in any of the choirs the music department run. We will be rehearsing choirs for the summer concert - please keep an eye on weekly notices for when these resume.

This year's concert will be a Founder's Day concert commemorating the setting up of Gillespie's. We hope this will be an annual event.

News Roundup

Decision-making for Peace

James Gillespie's High School is the first in Britain to pilot a new media educational tool that has its roots in the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Sixteen year old pupils are testing a computer simulation called "Pax Warrior" that puts them in the role of a United Nations military commander trying to stop the carnage.

Pax Warrior is designed to give senior students the opportunity to make real life decisions which then affect the outcome of the genocide. They see film footage, recordings from important people who were involved and deal with recreated scenarios from Rwanda.

The purpose is to confront young people with difficult decisions involving moral judgements etc. The aim of this is to improve the students decision making skills as well as developing empathy and awareness of moral issues.

So far the school's involvement has been featured in The Times Education Supplement, the Edinburgh Evening News, BBC Newsnight and a crew from American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) have filmed footage at the school. For further information surf to;

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/41727>



Nach math a rinn iad!

(Didn't they do well!)

Congratulations to Angus MacLeod, Ramsay MacMahon and Seamus MacLeod in S5 who reached the finals of , "1,2, Strì", currently showing on STV at lunchtime on Saturdays. This inter-school Gaelic quiz show tested teams on their general knowledge. Questions covered mental arithmetic, history, geography, science and an anagram round. The boys were pipped at the post by the Benbecula team, but thoroughly enjoyed the experience (and their prizes) !

HOST FAMILIES WANTED

The French Exchange group arrives from Luçon on Tuesday 8 March. There are still 5 French boys for whom I have not found accommodation, and I would be delighted to hear from any family that would be prepared to put a French boy up from 8 - 17 March. This is Year 25 of the Exchange, and it would be nice to be able to host all the French pupils that want to come to Edinburgh.

If you can help please get in touch with me as soon as possible, either through your child or by e-mail to;

Duncan.Macleod@jamesgillespies.edin.sch.uk



SCHOOL BANDS/ORCHESTRAS

These will resume this term as follows:

Senior Wind Band	Monday 17th Jan.	3.45pm - 4.45pm	Hall
Senior Jazz Band	Monday 17th Jan	Lunchtime	Room B3
Flute Ensemble	Tuesday 18th Jan	3.45pm - 4.30pm	Room B3 (every 2nd Tuesday)
'Cello Ensemble	To be arranged		
String Orchestra	Friday 21st Jan	12.15pm - 2.00pm	Hall
Percussion Ensemble	Wednesdays	3.05pm - 4.00pm	Bridge Room
Guitar Ensemble	Start Wed. 23rd Feb	3.05pm	Room B3
Junior Wind Band	Start on Wed. 23rd Feb	3.05pm	Hall

A reminder that it is a requirement of receiving lessons within school that students **must attend an instrumental group** when they have reached the required standard. Their instrumental teacher will advise as to when the required standard is attained.

Please note that the 'cello ensemble is a new group starting this term, and is open to students who receive 'cello tuition in school, and also to those who receive private lessons. Students who receive lessons outwith school are very welcome to join any of these groups. Please see Mrs O'Brien for details.

James Gillespie's High School

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JGHS Diary

Thursday, 10-Feb-05
Monday, 21-Feb-05
Tuesday, 22-Feb-05
Thursday, 24-Feb-05
Tuesday, 01-Mar-05
Wednesday, 02-Mar-05
Wednesday, 02-Mar-05
Thursday, 03-Mar-05
Friday, 04-Mar-05
Saturday, 05-Mar-05
Thursday, 10-Mar-05
Tuesday, 15-Mar-05
Wednesday, 23-Mar-05
Thursday, 24-Mar-05
Monday, 11-Apr-05

Mid Term Holiday starts at end of day
Staff resume
Pupils resume, 08:30 hr.
S4 Alternative to Staying On evening
S2/S3 Course Choice Meeting
S4/S5 Course Choice Meeting
S5/S6 Course Choice Meeting
Higher Music Performance Evening
Diversecity
Diversecity
S2 Parents' Evening (practical subjects)
S2 Parents' Evening (non-practical subjects)
Rock Night
School Closes for Easter at end of day
Staff and pupils resume, 08:30 hr.



JGHS and the Environment

A major focus for James Gillespie's work on Citizenship is a whole school programme entitled "Friends of the Neighbourhood". This has involved JGHS working closely with the City of Edinburgh Environmental Task Force in neighbourhood clean-ups.



Once a week a class from the school goes into the local community to do a targeted clean. The students have been fully kitted out with high-visibility jackets, gloves and

litter pickers, so they are fully protected and the operation is as hygienic as possible. This has been very well received by local residents and shows the school's commitment to developing social responsibility.

As our "Friends of the Neighbourhood" project has developed it has grown to include an environmental awareness within JGHS grounds.



Part of this project is our "Sticking Together" sculpture. The sculpture was made by prisoners at Saughton Prison as part of their community rehabilitation programme and they have named the piece "Sticking Together". It is a 6ft metal piece in the shape of an adult with a child on their shoulders. The idea is that students will deposit their chewing gum on the sculpture instead of



on the ground. When covered in chewing gum the sculpture will be spray painted in a bright colour and the non-biodegradable chewing gum will have transmogrified into a work of art. The unveiling of the sculpture by Cllr. MacLaren was featured on television news.