

James Gillespie's High School



Newsletter

Message from the Head Teacher

November 2005

As we head towards winter our thoughts (or at least the students' thoughts) should turn towards study. There can be no better antidote to winter blues than purposeful home-based learning! As the family gathers for the evening discussion on current affairs, a review of the day's lessons or the nightly tussle with the Maths problem from S3, the house glows with an aura of dialogue and interactive learning. Cele-

bratory shouts can be heard half way down the street.

No, I haven't lost my marbles (at least not all of them). I include this romanticised imagery because I wish you the parents to work with your young people in purposeful learning. The 4th year prelims start soon, the 5th and 6th years' come in February. Be a good critical friend when learning together. Avoid phrases like, "...in my

day...", "...you're grounded for a month..." etc., but be vigilant (in a relaxed way, naturellement).



Mr. A. Wallace

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Staff Development in JGHS

The staff were recently involved in two out of school sessions devoted to school improvement. This involved a residential at Cardrona Hotel in Peebles and an evening session in Edinburgh. The main thrust of the work we did was the development of "Appreciative Learning" in our school. This is a positive approach, solution oriented rather than problem-solving and involves the creation of an ethos where people are valued for what they do and where the objective is to further develop what works well rather than to focus on what is wrong. In this way change occurs in an agreed and purposeful manner. Collating the staff returns on a exercise devoted to identifying the critical features of school culture. The following descriptor is the result of the collated re-

sponses.

James Gillespie's is led in a consultative manner. It is a school where people cooperate and collaborate with friendly adult—student relationships. The school is open to innovation, seeking new ideas but also being selective to protect staff from fatigue. The school has a balanced set of aims where social, cultural and academic activities are valued. In terms of equality the school is open, with opportunities available to all and our attitude to multicultural differences is celebratory. We approach our work in partnership with parents.

I hope you agree. Let us know.

Parental Involvement

The Scottish Executive are proposing a revised parental involvement bill following consultation. 1,025 responses were received to the public consultations. 69% favoured making changes to the present arrangements.

Full details of the Bill's proposals and changes from the first draft can be obtained at:

www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk/pib.asp

The school has a limited number of leaflets describing the proposed parent councils, available on request.

Special points of interest:

- Prelim examinations for S4 students start on Monday, 14th November 2005 and run until the end of the month. All students must attend school when they do not have prelim exams.
- S5/S6 Parents' Night on Thursday, 24th November is an opportunity for parents to discuss the progress of their child with our staff.
- Our School Librarian, Anne Inglis, featured in an article in the Times Educational Supplement of 21st October 2005. Read excerpts from this article on page 2.
- Remember to buy your tickets for the Carol Concert taking place in the Usher Hall on Monday, 19th December 2005. Details on page 3.

Senior Enterprise in Education Class

Most of the projects being run by the senior students in this group are progressing very well.

The five-a-side football tournament for First Year classes run by two of the Fifth Year boys in the class proved to be very popular and was completed by the October break.

Another group who had been making South African jewellery sold some of their creations at the Senior School Ceilidh a few weeks ago and hope to sell more at future events such as Divercity in March.

A group of senior students have set up the Saffron Café to provide staff with value added coffees (Americanos, Cappuccini, Latés, etc.) during the morning break. They have also undertaken to provide a basic tea and coffee service two days per week.

The main products on sale at the moment are the inter-locked Silicon Wristbands - bright blue with "Fidelis et Fortis" on one and bright yellow with "Live,



Love and Learn" on the other. These are sold as an interlocked pair for £3 - all profits will go to the South Africa Fund. They are available at breaks and lunch-times in the main foyer and we hope to have them for sale at all evening events coming up between now and Christmas.

The school Christmas Card, featuring our beautiful new stained-glass window, is also now available and will be on sale next week. It is printed on high quality card and will have an insert in it with a seasonal greeting in most of the languages spoken by families at James Gillespie's. The cards will be packaged with envelopes and sold at 5 for £4. Again, these will be sold during the school day and at evening events.

A number of other creative ideas are presently in the pipeline and more information about them will be mentioned in the next newsletter.

Books! Books! Books!

Recommended Reading List

A booklet of recommended reading for S1/2 pupils will soon be distributed to every pupil in these years. The list of titles enclosed has been selected by a Working group of librarians from Edinburgh secondary schools and might partially solve the dilemma for parents in knowing what books to buy for their child's personal reading.

There is a section at the back of the leaflet asking for feedback from pupils about their favourite titles which might be included in subsequent list.

This publication complements the very successful Teen Titles magazine which allows pupils throughout the city to share their views on the books they have been reading. Ask at the School Library for the latest issue of Teen Titles.

Our Librarian

The recent Times Educational Supplement (21st October 2005) featured an article on the

changed role of a school librarian.

"The staid image of schools' librarian has no relevance to today's role in learning" reads the byline.

The article features our own school librarian, Anne Inglis who explains the changes in her role within the school over the past 15 years. Those of you who expect a totally silent and studious atmosphere or a librarian who only stamps books, would be disappointed. The role of the modern school librarian (and there is one in every Edinburgh secondary school) is very much tied up with information literacy.

"Pupils have to be taught how to evaluate information on a website" and software like Accelerated Reader allows librarian and English Teacher to analyse and evaluate a pupil's reading'.

For those of you have not visited our School Library Resource Centre, alongside a stock of over 10,000 books there are 25 computers in constant use throughout the school day. These are particularly in demand for the S1 Challenge and to support the S1 PSE pro-

gramme. and bookable at lunchtimes and after school

Changed days from the stereotypical image of a hushed room where pupils were dared to touch resources!

A modern school library is far more welcoming and more importantly, more relevant to your child's information needs.

Second Year Editors

Well done to our three editing consultants in second year, who successfully acted as consultants for Barrington Stokes publishers. Shannen Neeves Chris Mengham and Rachael Boon spent many hours working on the manuscript of an excellent, although rather chilling short novel on behalf of the publishers. The book is called "Snapshot" by Robert Swindells and can be bought through Barrington Stokes. Our three young consultants are all mentioned in the book for their contributions. Could this just be the beginning for these budding editors.

Music Department News

Carol Concert Rehearsals

Rehearsals for all bands and orchestras are as follows:

Senior Wind Band	Mondays	3.35 - 4.45pm	Hall
Senior Jazz Band	Wednesdays	lunchtimes	B3
Flute Ensemble	Every 2nd Tuesday	3.35 - 4.30pm	B1
Junior Wind Band	Wednesdays	3.35 - 4.30pm	Hall
Guitar Ensemble	Wednesdays	3.35 - 4.30pm	B3
Clarsach Ensemble	Wednesdays	3.35 - 4.30pm	B17
String Orchestra	Fridays	12.00 - 1.15pm	Hall
Percussion Ensemble		Lunchtimes weekly	Bridge Rm
Pipe band	One weekly rehearsal outside school (see Mrs. O'Brien for more details)		

Students who receive lessons in school are obliged, as part of their instrumental contract, to participate in an instrumental group once they reach the appropriate standard of playing.

Students who have learned an instrument out of school are very welcome to join a group and therefore take part in the Carol Concert - new S1 students are especially welcome.

Please see Mrs O'Brien who will advise whether an appropriate standard of playing to join a group has been achieved.

Remember: performing as part of a large group in a concert is a great experience!



Carol Concert
Usher Hall 19th December

Tickets have now gone on sale through the box office at the Usher Hall.

You can buy these directly from JGHS school's website found at www.jamesgillespies.edin.sch.uk (where you can also see photographs and information from last year's concert) or please contact the box office on 0131 228 1155 or book through their website: www.usherhall.co.uk

Choirs

Absolutely everyone can join any of our choirs!

No previous singing or musical experience is necessary - come along and join us for the Carol Concert in the Usher Hall.

Senior Vocal Group	Mondays	lunchtimes	B2
(for S4 - S6 students who specialise or particularly enjoy singing!)			
S1 Choir	Mondays	lunchtime	Hall
S2/3 Choir	Tuesdays	3.35 - 4.30pm	B2
Senior Choir	Thursdays	3.35 - 4.30pm	Hall

(open to all S4 - S6, regardless of singing experience)

Additional Choir Rehearsals

The following rehearsals are open only to those students who cannot, under any circumstances, make the main rehearsals listed above.

Wednesday Lunchtimes	S2/3 Choir (part 1)	B3
Thursday Lunchtimes	S2/3 Choir (parts 2 and 3)	B3
Wednesday Lunchtimes	Senior Choir	B1

Instrumental Instruction System

Congratulations to all S1 students who were successful in their auditions for learning an instrument within school.

We are extremely fortunate to have such a full and varied complement of instrumental staff, and they are a very valuable resource in the department.

A reminder to the parents of **all** students receiving lessons of the instruction policy:

Students must give at least 3 days' notice to their class teacher of their instrumental lesson by receiving a signature in their instrumental diary which permits them out of class to attend.

This allows for the class teacher to issue any homework and to inform the student of any work that will be missed during their class.

IMPORTANT If a student cannot locate their class teacher, another member of staff in the department is permitted to sign the instrumental diary on their behalf.

Rotary Club of Braids Young Musician of the Year 2006

This competition will take place on 26 January 2006 at Merchiston Castle School, and is open to all Secondary School pupils. Cash prizes will be awarded to 1st, 2nd and 3rd place in both the voice and instrument categories. It was won by a JGHS pupil last year, so you have a lot to live up to! For information and application forms please see Mrs. O'Brien.

World AIDS Day 2005

The Senior Jazz Band and a group of Clarsach players will be performing in a special World AIDS day church service at St John's on Princes Street on Thursday 01 December at 6.30pm. We wish them luck with their performances, and thank them for representing the school yet again.

Pipe Band

We are always on the lookout for enthusiastic students eager to learn the bagpipes or pipe-drumming!

Any students interested in joining up, please see Mrs. O'Brien at the earliest opportunity.

James Gillespie's High School

James Gillespie's High School
Lauderdale Street,
Edinburgh, EH9 1DD.



Telephone: 0131-447-1900
Facsimile: 0131-466-7035

Email:
Admin@jamesgillespies.edin.sch.uk

Website:
www.jamesgillespies.edin.sch.uk

JGHS Diary

Tuesday, 1st November 2005
Monday, 7th November 2005
Tuesday, 8th November 2005
Thursday, 10th November 2005
Monday, 14th November 2005
Friday, 18th November 2005
Thursday, 24th November 2005
Thursday, 24th November 2005
Monday, 28th November 2005
Friday, 2nd December 2005
Tuesday, 6th December 2005
Friday, 9th December 2005
Monday, 19th December 2005
Tuesday, 20th December 2005
Thursday, 22nd December 2005
Thursday, 23rd December 2004

School Board and PTA Meetings
S4 Consultation Evening
Senior school mathematics challenge
S1 Challenge (1M3)
S1 Challenge (1R1)
S5/6 Interim Reports issued
S1 Challenge (1R2)
S5/S6 Parents' Consultation Evening
S1 Challenge (1R3)
S3 Interim reports issued
School Board and PTA Meetings
S6 Drama Performance
End of Year Concert, Usher Hall, 19:30 hr
S1 & S2 Parties
School Closes 12:00hr
Start of Christmas Holidays

University Success

The following former students of James Gillespies graduated from the University of St. Andrews in 2005:

Peyma Barekat	Ancient History
Samuel Jamie Krauss Cuthbert	International Relations AND Modern History
Sally Janet Ferguson	French WITH Linguistics
Joanna Ruth Sinclair	English AND Modern History

Break-dancing

Many of you will have seen our S4 break-dancers at Diversity and are aware of their talent. However, many of you will be unaware of how well they are doing outside school. In particular, Mark Bleakley and Harry Wycherley. They, along with one pupil from St Thomas', one from Drummond and two from Queensferry form a crew called Psycho Styles. In the last few months they have been going from strength to strength and receiving rave reviews.

Since July they have:

- Competed in The Sprite Urban Games, London.
- Performed in Inverness, Glasgow and The Ross Bandstand Edinburgh for the Coca-Cola

REV! Street Dance Roadshow.

- Performed at a Sunsol Corporate Event at The Royal Museum.
- Performed at the Coca-Cola B-Boy Championships, Edinburgh.
- Performed at Forth Valley College Open Day.
- They are performing by invitation at The Battle of Britain in London in November.
- They are filming for Children's BBC programme, Exchange in November.

As you can see they are very busy! This is due to the commitment and dedication they have shown over the past couple of years.

Peter Maniam (Instructor)

Astronauts?

Congratulations to Peter Ellis (S5) who has been selected to attend the NASA Space Camp at the Johnson Space School in Houston, Texas next year and to Gordon Bruce (S5) who has been selected to attend the Careers Scotland Space School in Glasgow next summer. This is an exciting opportunity and a result of their hard work over the summer and their performance at a selection workshop. Well done.

