



JAMES GILLESPIE'S HIGH SCHOOL

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December 2011

Dear Parent

I am pleased to be able to take advantage of this end of term newsletter to pay tribute to all of the good work that has gone on here at JGHS since August. The school's SQA exam results were once again very encouraging and generally above the performance of comparator schools. Areas for attention, generally relating to General and Foundation passes at Standard Grade in S4, and which were touched on at the first Parent Council meeting of the session, are being addressed through a whole-school mentoring approach with identified pupils working with volunteer staff.

Beyond the classroom there has been a positive plethora of opportunities for pupils, many of whom have made the most of these. We've seen JGHS pupils win a variety of awards: the Scottish Book Trust Young Writer's Award (Chloe Paton S3); the East of Scotland Stock Market Challenge (Daniel Gibbons, Finlay Cunniffe, Calum Bober, Simon MacDonald, Stefan Robertson S3); a commendation at the annual John Byrne Awards (Zak Corney, Amil Mair, Emily Parsons-Trucco, Mengye Li, Morag Williamson S6); multiple awards at the National Mod in Stornoway for the clarsach ensemble; the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (Yusuf Miah, Mohamed Rahman, Saad Nazir S6) where £3000 was secured for the Multi-Cultural Families Base.

In addition, pupils have gained recognition beyond school for their endeavours: in chess Sam Gregory S5 was selected to play for Scotland in October, and Jamie Underwood S1 also represented his country at the international junior chess championships in Bulgaria in September; Eunjin Moon and Lars Fisher S3 represented the school at the national finals of the Enterprising Maths competition in Glasgow.

I was also privileged to be in the audience at the City of Edinburgh Council's Fanfare Concert at St Paul's & St George's Church on 18 November where there was an impressive display of commitment and talent from the various city music ensembles with a good representation of JGHS pupils across several, including the aforementioned clarsach group. I also attended the S6 drama production of the farce, *Black Comedy*, on 2 December and was very impressed by the acting skills and dramatic timing (essential in a farce) of the entire cast, aided by the technical expertise of the backstage crew. The annual Christmas Concert on 15 December was a particular highlight in celebrating the season and in displaying the various talents that our pupils have, nurtured and encouraged by staff.

The Student Council co-ordinated the school's activities to mark St Andrew's Day, albeit on 24 November, and their efforts were rewarded in a well-run and highly enjoyable opportunity for most of the school to take part in tug-o'-war, ceilidh dancing and a longer than average Strip the Willow. Money was raised through this activity and contributed to the excellent work of BENE this term in fundraising (and awareness raising) for Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland (in memory of Mr Ian Caddell) and Cystic Fibrosis. You will have come across BENE's bucket-shaking at school events this term.

The Authority Review of the school on 14-15 December, a follow-up to the HMIe inspection of 2010, confirmed the very good work of the school across a range of areas and I am grateful to staff, pupils and parents who met with the reviewers. Work will be ongoing to fully address any further recommendations made.

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It has been both a privilege and a pleasure to have been seconded as headteacher at JGHS this term. As I said in my recent letter to parents confirming the appointment of Mr Donald Macdonald as substantive headteacher, the staff have been hugely supportive of me in my task and have shown, in spite of the many challenges that face the school at this time, their commitment to giving of their best to, and encouraging the best in, our pupils, your children.

I offer all of them and all of you my very best wishes. I am certain that the new permanent senior management team will take the school forward and that Mr Macdonald, as incoming headteacher, will have the support of parents in the tasks that lie ahead.

Merry Christmas and may you have a prosperous, positive and productive 2012.

Acting Headteacher