



THE JAMES GILLESPIE'S HIGH SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

March 2014



Headteacher's Message



As always, this has been a very busy and productive term at school. Staff have worked hard towards preparing lessons for pupils and despite being on a split site the school continues as normal. Additionally, many teachers give their time freely after school, to offer extra classes to pupils. Pupils sitting exams this year are especially busy as they prepare fully for the demands that lie in store. Thank you, in particular, to parents of pupils who are taking exams this year. Your support and encouragement in ensuring that pupils are working hard at home and have a positive attitude to studying will help ensure they all do as well as they can in these exams.

Exam leave for **pupils** begins on **Monday 28 April 2014** until **Friday 30 May 2014** – both days included. Our new timetable begins on **Monday 2 June 2014**. Please note that during exam leave pupils are encouraged to work in school with their teachers if that is more suitable than working at home. All pupils should now be aware of what exams they are sitting and when these take place. Parents are asked to contact their child's guidance teacher if they have any queries about their child's progress.

The rebuilding of our new school is progressing on time and we look forward to moving into the main teaching block in one year's time – Easter 2015.

After a further 15 months the remaining buildings (Sports Building and Performing Arts) will be completed and the new school will be in full operation from August 2016.

Thank you to everyone who responded to the online survey about the services we provide at James Gillespie's High School. I am pleased that 110 parents took the opportunity to share their views with us. The responses from you were collated by colleagues at Educational HQ and sent to me for analysis and response. Along with my senior team I will be analysing the feedback you gave us and we will use this, along with feedback from pupils and staff to identify the priorities in our School Improvement Plan for session 14/15. At the next Parent Council meeting (Tuesday 13 May) I will share the specifics of how we intend to respond to the feedback we received.

Areas of strength highlighted by parents included:

1. The school enjoys a great reputation and the children gain in confidence from the example set by the older pupils.
2. I congratulate the staff on their hard work to maintain their high standards through this difficult time. The rebuilding of the school presents a significant challenge to the teaching staff. It is to their credit that, as a parent, I have seen no apparent negative impact of the building works on my child's experience of secondary school.
3. The key strength of JGHS is its commitment to

the young people who attend. In general staff know my child well and some of the teaching has been superb. When there have been problems there has generally been an effort to resolve the issue - personal or educational. I realise that the situation at present is not ideal with a split campus and I would like to say that I think management and staff are working hard to deal with the challenge.

4. Generally happy with the school and also how it is coping with being a bit of a building site.

5. The school has a strong ethos of achievement.

6. I've found the Learning Support team to be fantastic.

7. I am generally happy with JGHS, and my children enjoy the school environment.

8. The school is well led, particularly at this difficult time of rebuild and decant.

9. Many opportunities for travel abroad and also for non- academic activities like Music.

10. The overall ethos of the school is good, and I think they are doing well in the situation of a rebuild.

11. There is a strong sense of cohesiveness from senior management and I have experienced excellent communication with them, which I deeply appreciate.

12. The school has an excellent ethos and encourages each child to be an individual.

13. Our daughter loves school. Gillespie's with its

calm, purposeful and progressive atmosphere really suits her and allows her to thrive. Well done to the staff for continuing to providing such an exceptional experience despite going through a rebuilding programme.

14. I believe the school encourages individuality, self reliance and responsibility. It exposes my child to a diverse and wide ranging view of the world. Both my child and I like that there is no uniform and as this is the only school in Edinburgh that has held on to this ethos, I feel it has a special place in the city.

15. Overall, I think JGHS is a very good school, and I'm very pleased that my child goes there. It has a unique and very positive ethos. Its emphasis on inclusion and diversity is especially appreciated. The school offers a fantastic range of opportunities to the students (both regular activities/clubs, and one-off trips), and I particularly like the way in which staff encourage and support students in setting up and running their own activities so that they are genuinely student-led, but with adult support when needed. I'm always agreeably impressed by the students' politeness and quiet confidence - they do the school proud. This is a testament to the teaching staff.

16. The atmosphere of mutual respect between staff and students is very noticeable.

17. One of my children received a postcard at home from the English Department, saying "well done" on a particular piece of work - that was unexpected and a great piece of immediate feedback.

18. Our daughter loves school. Gillespie's with its calm, purposeful and progressive atmosphere really suits her and allows her to thrive. Well done to the staff for continuing to provide such an exceptional experience despite going through a rebuilding programme.

Parents also highlighted **areas that we need to improve on** as a school. These included:

1. Communication with parents. (This was the most frequently aired concern)
2. Reports on children's progress. (This was the second biggest concern).
3. School discipline is not strict enough.
4. I and many other parents are very concerned about the outcome of this first round of CforE assessments.
5. I strongly feel that my child is not being pushed to maximise his potential or challenged to stretch his intellect.
6. If the school could restore the policy for the students to wear uniforms, then the school's ethos will be more healthy and lively. In my opinion, no uniform is the most serious defect of this school. (Several commented on their preference for the introduction of a uniform. A few also commented on the advantages of not having a uniform).
7. More opportunities for wider achievement built into curriculum time, not opt in for Dof E, but possibly curricular choice.
8. The system for parents' night in S1/S2 has been shambolic, with children expected to book in advance 5 min "appointments" with teachers.
9. The decision to have half the school at a decant site has reduced morale.
10. The changeover to Curriculum for excellence has been under supported in some subjects, and access to course materials seems to have been difficult.

11. The schools trips are great but also very costly.

12. There also needs to be less pressure and fewer tests because children are exhausted.

13. My main concern relates to potential budget cuts which will affect teaching staff.

14. My child is not adequately stretched in the subjects he is good at, and there is very little opportunity to discuss attainment with them.

15. Limited information provided by school early in year about building project and no communication that works were going to take much longer than initially told.

16. Stupidly expensive school trips, hundreds of pounds each year for trips all over the world, why not discover the UK?

17. The website is not well managed to tell me what is on, when, what opportunities my child can make the most of.

18. My daughter states that the register teacher does not update the class about what is happening or pass on the information as and when is needed.

During the Easter Holiday we will be running several extra classes for pupils in S4, 5 and 6. Details of these are on the front page of our website. Please encourage your child to take advantage of these extra opportunities for support. I hope that all of our pupils perform to their potential in the final exams and I wish them every success.

As many will know Mr Carruthers (PE and Gaelic) is leaving us on the 4 April and returning home to the island of Eriskay after spending the last three and a half years with us at Gillespie's.

Mr Carruthers will be missed by all who had the pleasure of working with him and we wish him every success and happiness for the future.

And finally, I take this opportunity of wishing everyone a most enjoyable Easter holiday.

Donald J Macdonald

(Headteacher)

Tenerife Exchange

James Gillespie's Modern Foreign Languages department hosted another very successful exchange programme from 7th – 14th March. Our partners from Tenerife had the opportunity to join classes in school to gain experience of a different education system which they thoroughly enjoyed. The Spanish Children also visited the National Museum, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh and Stirling Castles and Calton Hill. On top of that they were given a Scottish food sampling by Mrs Briggs, a lesson on the geometry of El Teide by Mr Finnemore and learned some Scottish country dancing with the P.E. department.



Sincere thanks to all staff, parents and pupils who made this success possible. The return trip leaves on April 30th – Tenerife here we come.

P. O'Connor

DESIGN COMPETITION

ATTENTION ALL BUDDING ARTISTS AT JAMES GILLESPIE'S HIGH SCHOOL

YOUR CREATIVITY IS REQUIRED

THERE MAY BE A £20 ITUNES VOUCHER WITH YOUR NAME ON IT

How do you draw values?

We are looking for your ideas as to how the values of James Gillespie's High School can be displayed around the school.

DRAWINGS / PAINTINGS / PHOTOGRAPHY / GRAPHIC DESIGN – ANY FORM ACCEPTABLE!

Your design could be a winner!

HIGH ASPIRATIONS / EQUALITY / INCLUSION / HONESTY / RESPECT

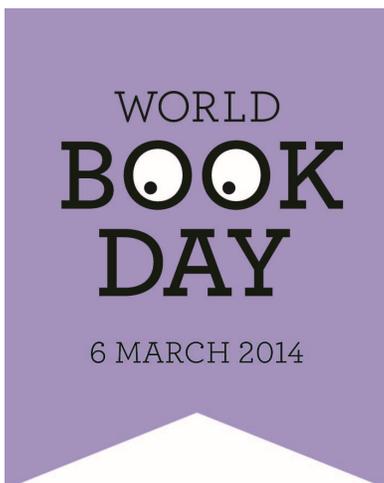
Please return all entries to your guidance teacher, or the school office no later than

Friday 4th of April 2014.

Winners will be announced when we return to school after Easter.

R. Irvine

WORLD BOOK DAY 2014



During the first week of March, a range of fun-filled activities took place across the school to celebrate World Book Day 2014 (6th March).

Ms Kirkwood and Mr Roskilly created a video with a variety of staff discussing their favourite reads - this was shown at registration, and is available via the new school literacy blog - <http://jghsliteracy.blogspot.co.uk/>

In the Library, there was a special World Book Day lesson for each S1 class, designed to stretch their knowledge of books and authors. There was also a book swap, distribution of free World Book Day tokens and various competitions.

We hope that everyone put their token to good use and found the perfect book to read!

S. Brown

Sporting Success from Active Schools, Physical Education and the Health and Well Being Faculty

Active Schools Sporting Celebration

Please keep Thursday 5th June free in your diaries for our annual Sporting Celebration. Come along and hear how all our Sports Teams and Clubs have performed throughout the year before we award our Junior and Senior Boy and Girl Sports Personalities, Young Leader of the Year and Special Contribution to Sport Awards. You may even get another chance to beat Mr. McDonald at Table Tennis again this year!

A Short Round up of All Things Sport @ Gillespie's

Basketball

Yet more phenomenal success for James Gillespie's High Basketball!

Superbly, both our Under 15 and Open Boys teams triumphed in their respective finals of the Scottish Schools Basketball Cup yesterday.

The younger of our squads dominated a Dumfries Academy team while the seniors edged a tight game from North Inch Community Campus.



This means back to back success for the Under 15 age group and a fourth year in a row the boys involved with the senior squad have won the trophy. Many of this year's S6 have never lost a school basketball match, an unbelievably achievement for an excellent group.

Girls Rugby

Congratulations to our **S3/S4 Girls Rugby Team**, our first girls team for a number of years, who competed in their first full contact match against Boroughmuir this past month. Superbly, victory fell on our side at Meggetland after a hard fought match. Congratulations again and here's to more games in the future!

Swimming

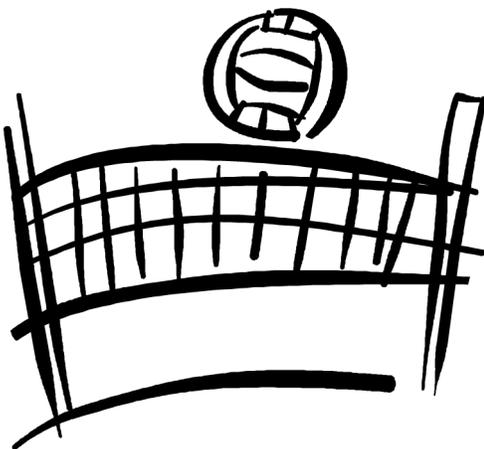
Congratulations again to **Taylor Finlayson** on yet more Swimming accolades! Taylor has qualified for the 200m Butterfly at The Commonwealth Games Trials in Glasgow next month. This is a massive swimming achievement and fantastic opportunity for Taylor to swim with some of the best swimmers in Scotland. Well done!

Congratulations to **George Clough** on representing the Scottish Swim Team at the Annual Celtic Nations Meet in Bangor, Northern Ireland. George competed in 4 individual events, registering the fastest times in each and therefore contributing maximum points to the Scottish team's 195 – 137 victory!

A great performance was given by **Taylor Finlayson, Hana Duheric, Cara Elliott, Jeremy Scott and George Clough** at the recent Brodies Scottish Schools Swimming Baths at the Dollan Baths, East Kilbride. Congratulations to all, another great meet for our school's many swimmers!

Girls Football

Our recently reinvigorated **S1 – S3 Girls Football Team** triumphed in back to back weeks, at Holyrood High and Meggetland, in the Edinburgh Schools Girls 7-a-side League. Well done to all the girls involved and thank you to Miss. Crosbie and Mr. Carstairs for their help on both Fridays.



Volleyball

Hats off to our senior Boys Volleyball Team for reaching the semi final of this year's Scottish Cup. Unfortunately the boys lost a close fought game with Stonelaw High School but for their first year in the competition this has been a cracking run at the title, well done!

Cricket

The recent sunshine brings the reminder our school **Cricket** season is about to kick into gear!

If you are a Boy or Girl in S1 – S6 please come along to our weekly training session at Carlton Cricket Club from Thursday 24th April onwards at 4pm – 5pm.

Each session will be coached by experienced Carlton coaches and all players attending training will have the opportunity to compete for James Gillespie's High School in this year's Local and National hardball and softball competitions.



Gymnastics

A huge congratulations to **Olive Walker, Amy Chambers, Amy Heron and Caitlin Hayes** for representing Scotland at this month's British Schools Milano Team Trio Championships in Stoke-on-Trent. The girls won **Bronze** as the Edinburgh Schools elect, a fabulous achievement to not only represent your country but especially to medal! Thanks to all parents and Miss. Murphy for the support of the trip.

Cross Country

Well done to **Octavie Touffut, Mara Drysdale, Isla Barrault, Morag Morrison, Paul Tiplady, Hector Friend and Eyvindur Bjarnason** for competing in the Edinburgh Schools Cross Country at Inverleith Park. A special mention to Paul and Hector who finished 5th and 6th respectively!

Waterpolo

Eva Sigurdardottir has recently achieved selection to the Scotland National Waterpolo Squad at Under 15 Level. A great achievement for an excellent student, well done!

J. Wallace

Hand in Hand for Syria

The following letter (dated 4th March) was received from Dr Manhal Alnasser on behalf of *Hand in Hand for Syria* in response to the recent S6 appeal for donations of baby milk for babies in Syria.

“Dear Pupils and Staff of James Gillespie’s,

Thank you very much for your generous gift of baby milk for starving babies inside Syria. As you may have seen from recent news footage, the situation inside Syria has become desperate. For some time now hospitals and schools have been a target for bombing; now even pregnant women are being deliberately shot. Innocent people are suffering under intolerable conditions. It is hardly surprising that in this situation tiny babies are being left orphaned or with mothers too ill to feed them. There is no better way to nourish young babies than with breast milk. It does more than any other food to keep them strong and healthy. It is sad then that there are so many infants inside Syria who cannot be fed this way. The only way to keep them alive is infant formula.

It is really wonderful to think that you have done so much to save the lives of those babies by donating so many cartons of infant formula milk. A consignment of goods will be transported next week and your donations will be among them. All of us in *Hand in Hand for Syria* would like to offer you our heartfelt thanks for your kindness and generosity on behalf of all the babies whose lives you are helping to save.”

In brief . . .

Easter Revision Classes



A revision programme is being offered to senior pupils sitting National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher who would like extra support over the holidays. The timetable is [available from the school website](#).

Up and Coming Politician

Very well done to Laurie Donaldson (S6) for winning the award for 'Up and Coming Young Politician' at the Scottish Variety Awards in Glasgow.

Spring Fling Concert



Congratulations to everyone involved in the recent 'Spring Fling' concert, held at Marchmont St. Giles. The programme featured performances from a range of ensembles, choirs, chamber groups and soloists.

MUN Group

The Senior MUN group excelled at this year's model United Nations conference and look forward to their next one.