



## City of Edinburgh Council Plans for Rising Rolls in the Primary Sector and Impact on James Gillespie's Primary School

Paper for the Education, Children and Families Committee, Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013

### Background

- In the last full inspection of James Gillespie's Primary School (June 2004), the inspection report noted that "*limitations in the nature and quality of the accommodation impacted upon pupils' learning experiences. Most classrooms were relatively small and offered limited scope for providing a range of active learning opportunities. Some areas of the school had poor ventilation. There was very limited storage space. At times, noise from open areas impacted upon learning and teaching in classrooms.*"
- The follow-up report (October 2006), noted that "*the education authority had agreed to the installation of two temporary classroom units in August 2006, to relieve pressure on accommodation... However, overall, conditions in which pupils were learning had not yet improved significantly. The impact of noise on some teaching areas and the quality of ventilation had not been effectively addressed.*" The implementation of the temporary classrooms in 2006 provided the school with sufficient space to create an adequate teaching and learning environment for the 14 classes in the school. Noise and other related issues have remained.
- During the consultation for the James Gillespie's campus rebuild in 2011-12, JGPS parents were consulted on rebuild plans. This included provision of two additional classrooms within the existing building to replace the temporary classrooms positioned next to the school.
- The revised plans were proposed based on the premise that, whilst the new high school would take over part of the existing playground, this loss would be compensated by a new playground area to be built in the space vacated by the temporary classrooms. The school involved the children in designing the new garden and play areas that would be created in this space.
- The City of Edinburgh Council informed the parent body in Summer 2012 that it now intends to retain the temporary classrooms at JGPS to accommodate the projected rise in school rolls in South Edinburgh, despite the creation of two new classrooms as part of the current James Gillespie's campus rebuild.
- The City Council's Forum on Children and Families Estate Evaluation (August-October 2012) reported the potential impact of the rise in school rolls and identified three main routes to address this: provision of new schools or permanent capacity in existing schools, changing catchment areas and provision of temporary classrooms.

- This matter was discussed at the January and February meetings of the JGPS Council. Parents are concerned that the education provision at the school could suffer if JGPS is forced to accommodate additional classes at the school without full consideration of the facilities required.
- A public meeting was held on 27th February 2013 hosted by the Marchmont & Sciennes Community Council and attended by over 120 parents from the school. At this meeting, Cllr Paul Godzik and Lindsay Glasgow outlined the projected rise in P1 intake and the proposed retention of the temporary units to accommodate two additional classes. The introduction of composite classes was also discussed.

## Points for the Committee

### 1. Communication

- JGPS parents have been concerned in the past about a lack of significant communication between the City Council and the parent body regarding plans for the school, including perceived lack of transparency and reversal of decisions. We believe that this does not represent the best example of partnership working, and we are committed to engage with the Council to ensure that decisions are made which protect and enhance the education of our children.
- JGPS parents cannot understand why the issue of rising school roles was not considered in the redevelopment of the James Gillespie's campus. We recognise that there is little that can now be done about this.
- The JGPS Council welcomes the City Council's attendance at the recent public meeting and the offer of continued meetings with Cllr Godzik and Lindsay Glasgow. We consider this dialogue an essential ongoing activity to ensure that informed decisions are made, and are encouraged by the City Council's response.
- The 'Strategic Management of School Places: P1 and S1 Intakes for August 2013' report paragraphs 2.26-2.31 (agenda item 7.1) does not identify JGPS as a specific primary school increasing its capacity in 2013 to address the rise in P1 intake.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Committee is asked to include James Gillespie's Primary School within the <i>Strategic Management of School Places: P1 and S1 Intakes for August 2013</i> report (Agenda item 7.1), increasing the visibility of our school's needs.</li> <li>• The Committee is asked to ensure that consultation and planning activities are conducted in a timely fashion so that a range of options for addressing the increase of pupil numbers can be considered before decisions are made, avoiding any sense of a <i>fait accompli</i>. We are keen to support regular meetings between City Council representatives and the JGPS Council to ensure this is achieved.</li> </ul> |
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### 2. Short Term Solution

- The JGPS Council recognises the City Council's need to increase the intake of P1 children due to the rise in the likely population of in-catchment children.
- The JGPS Council also recognises that prediction of the numbers of P1 enrolments in advance is an inexact science due to a number of factors (deferment, movement in/out of catchment, private sector education, new housing etc). However, it seems clear that the roll at JGPS is likely to rise for the next 5 years, and after that period is unlikely to fall to its 2010 level.

- The current temporary classrooms are in a poor state of repair, as confirmed by the recent condition survey, with Health and Safety risks which need to be addressed. It is not clear if repair of these units is cost-effective.
- The specific nature of the school buildings at JGPS is should not be forgotten. The school is an open-plan building, with a tight internal footprint. Noise between classrooms is a continual feature and the staff work hard to minimise the impact of activities across different classes.
- At last week's public meeting, Cllr Godzik and Lindsay Glasgow confirmed that there are no plans to develop JGPS into a three-stream school and that the number of classes will not exceed 16. JGPS is unlikely to accept any further out-of-catchment admissions, and the temporary units will be refurbished to become fit for purpose, or will be replaced. The tight nature of the existing school estate was acknowledged and it was confirmed that none of the current general purpose space in JGPS is suitable to be used as additional classrooms. The JGPS parents welcomed these assurances.
- Parents are nonetheless concerned that the addition of two classes of children may have a detrimental effect on their children's education at the school, particularly given the open-plan nature of the school and the absence of any planned increase in GP space. They wish to be reassured that there are detailed plans in place to mitigate these concerns.

- The Committee is asked to conduct an impact assessment of the proposed introduction of additional classes to the school, to be completed by May 2013 with recommendations to be implemented by August 2013. The terms of reference of this assessment would include consideration of the JGPS open-plan environment, impact on GP space, size of school hall and dining areas, playground space, education resources and the impact of composite classes. Consideration should be given to multiple different P1 intake scenarios within these plans.
- The Committee is asked to confirm the minimum standard for classroom accommodation, and the cost/benefit case for refurbishing or replacing the existing JGPS units.

### 3. Long Term Solution

- Given that there is a projected rise in P1 intake in South Edinburgh, and that many of the existing schools are close to or exceeding their capacity (Sciennes 101%, JGPS 97%, Bruntsfield 97%, Preston St 110%, Liberton 93% with prioritised placement requests out of the school), there would seem to be a strong case for increasing the capacity of primary education in South Edinburgh.
- Three options are described in the Forum on Children and Families Estate Evaluation papers:
  - We consider temporary accommodation an unsatisfactory long-term response
  - Changing catchment areas requires extensive consultation and may provide (only) a partial solution to the problem for JGPS
  - The time required to scope, fund, consult, design and build a new school is understood to be extensive (3-4 years) and there seems no reason to delay an initial study.

- The Committee is asked to conduct an immediate study on the options and plans for establishing a new school within South Edinburgh, working in partnership with parents in affected schools