

From: Christopher Cowdy
Sent: 03 March 2014 10:19
To: Morris Smith
Cc: John Beattie PCChair
Subject: Education, Children & Families Committee, Tuesday 4th March 2014

Morris,

Further to our various conversations I ask that the Committee hear a deputation from James Gillespie's Primary School Parent Council in relation to Agenda point 7.5 - *Primary School Capacity Pressure in South Edinburgh*.

I attach a paper that we would like to present and be circulated to committee members.

The deputation will consist of John Beattie (Parent Council Chair) & Christopher Cowdy (Parent Council Member).

As mentioned, we will be working under considerable time pressures on the day and I would be grateful for any indication of likely timings.

Please can you acknowledge receipt of this email and confirm the time at which we should present ourselves to the Committee.

Regards

Christopher Cowdy

**City of Edinburgh Council Plans for Primary School Capacity
Pressure in South Edinburgh**

**Paper for the Education, Children and Families Committee, Tuesday
5th March 2013**



James Gillespie's Primary School Council

BACKGROUND

Following concerns about rising rolls and the lack of a planning and consultation by City of Edinburgh Council, Councillor Paul Godzik gave reassurances at a meeting of parents in February 2013 that:

- CoEC would be making long term plans to deal with issues of rising rolls at JGPS
- There are no plans to make JGPS a 3 stream school
- The number of classrooms at JGPS will not exceed 16

A paper outlining the concerns of the parents of JGPS was presented to Education, Children and Families Committee on Tuesday 5th March 2013 (copy attached).

Several meetings took place between School Council members, Lindsay Glasgow and Cllr Paul Godzik to discuss the impact of rising rolls on our school. The CEC provided a report on Class Organisation Projections for JGPS which outlined how different roll scenarios would be accommodated.

- This report suggested a **“most likely” scenario of 70-75 P1 pupils each year** over the next 5 years, with a maximum conceivable figure of 90.
- **There are currently 99 children** registered to join P1 in August 2014, which may reduce to around 86 if deferrals are accommodated.
- Given ongoing housing development and migration into the catchment area, the School Council anticipates that P1 intake for 2015 and beyond is **likely to exceed 90 on a sustained basis**, significantly above earlier projections.

Despite a previous consultation with parents about its removal, a temporary classroom unit was retained at the school in 2013 to accommodate the rising rolls in the short term. The current classroom accommodation is now 14 permanent classrooms and 2 temporary units.

POINTS FOR THE COMMITTEE

1. **We acknowledge the recent effort made by Paul Godzik and Crawford McGhie to provide early information of the report “Primary School Capacity Pressure in South Edinburgh** in a meeting with South Morningside Parent Council & Bruntsfield Parent Council. We hope this is the start of a period of significant consultation and open engagement and look forward to effective and productive discussions.
2. The School Council **welcomes and supports the principle of a new primary school in South Edinburgh** to help combat pressures on Primary School capacities in the long-term, and proposes consult with the parent body on their views of the proposals.
3. We **remain concerned that the interim and alternative options must be considered carefully**, and the full impact on teaching and learning on the school assessed. We encourage CEC officers to engage fully with parents, and avoid any sense of *fait accompli*.
4. We would ask the Council to **consider how it can use the spare capacity at Tollcross Primary School (50%)**, potentially through change of Council policy or through promotion of the space available at the school to parents in neighbouring catchments. We would also like to **understand the plans for Sciennes Primary School**, recognising that this could have a potential impact on numbers at James Gillespie’s Primary and High Schools.
5. We are **especially concerned that the particular characteristics of James Gillespie’s Primary School are not emphasised in the paper before you today**. Our school is a small, open plan building constructed at a time of budget constraint, and suffers from significant issues of noise and lack of General Purpose space. The whole school will be affected by rising rolls, not just the P1 intake, and the impact on teaching and learning across the whole school must be considered:
 - In the last full inspection of JGPS (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 “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 School Premises Regulations 1967 set out the required minimum site area for Nursery schools of 40 pupils or less at Quarter Acre and Primary Schools of >451 pupils at 3 acres. Total required site for JGPS = 3.25 acres. Actual site = 2.4 Acres approx.
 - CEC seek to apply recommendations of Association of Directors of Education Scotland that sets a minimum classroom floor area of 1.75 sq.m. per pupil. CoEC also applies rules that Classrooms less than 54.25 Sq.m. are restricted to 30 pupils. Rooms of less than 45 sq m are not classified as classrooms. 6 classrooms have already been established as requiring a cap of 30 and 8 requiring a cap of 33 thereby restricting class organisations throughout all year groups.
 - General Purpose space guidelines recommend 4 rooms for working capacities of over 420 pupils. JGPS currently has a roll of 424 and will exceed this figure with increased P1 intake, but only 3 GP spaces. Library, Music Room & ITC Suite. There will be particular timetabling pressure on the dining hall and gym hall, and the proposals do not mention how this will be managed if P1 intake rises.
 - The acoustic impact of the Open plan nature of the school is regularly raised by teachers and there are increased concerns that this would rise with additional pupils. As guidance, the DfES Building Bulletin 93 (Acoustic Design of Schools) sets out upper limits of indoor ambient noise levels of 35

dB for Primary School Classrooms. Recent tests record readings of 40-50 dB in several classrooms.

ACTIONS

We ask the Committee to note the above points when assessing the future requirements of JGPS and that:

- **Consultation and engagement with both the School and School Council is carried out effectively and in an open manner.** Past consultation has been typically at the instigation of the School Council and agreements made during these discussions have in some cases been overturned, such as the removal of the existing temporary units and limiting the number of classrooms to not more than 16. Unfortunately, whilst recognising that circumstances can change, this only serves to raise concerns amongst parents about the consistency of management and support provided to their school by the CEC.
- **A letter is immediately sent to both Headteacher and Chair of the School Council setting out a formal timetable for consultation,** potentially including a meeting with the parent forum. The School Council will be meeting again on Monday 10th March and we would like a clear timetable by then of what engagement and consultation will be made, so that we can report back to your committee on 20 May 2014.
- Before the initial consultation with the school or School Council, the **CEC familiarise themselves with the restricting characteristics of the school** set out above and are in a position to discuss remedies that can be taken into account for both interim and long term accommodation options.

ATTACHMENT

Paper presented to Children and Families Committee, March 2013.



JGPS Council Deputation 5
March 2013.do