



JAMES GILLESPIE'S HIGH SCHOOL

Help! My child's going to 'Big School'!

Moving from Primary to Secondary school is a big change – and not just for the children. For parents and guardians, the experience of your child starting Secondary school can be quite a surprise. So some parents of students who are at James Gillespie's High School have put together these thoughts about *'things I'd wish I'd known when my child started in S1'* – we hope they're useful!

Contact with the school

You may feel much less 'in touch' with what your child is doing at school. At Primary, you might well have been able to drop them off at the school door, chat with other parents, and perhaps see their teacher quickly at the beginning of the day. Secondary school is very different, and it can feel quite strange to move from the intimate involvement of Primary years to a more distant relationship in Secondary school.

This is partly because the school is so much bigger, and your child will have many teachers rather than just one or two. But it also reflects how children themselves often want a bit more independence as they start Secondary school: it's an important stage in growing up.

Of course, this doesn't mean that James Gillespie's High School is any less interested in your child, or that you cannot communicate with the school and your child's teachers. On Thursday 27 August 2015, at 7 Pm, the school will be running an S1 Parents' Social Evening for; among other things, a chance to meet the school's Senior Leadership Team and your Child's Support for Pupils' Teacher.

In October (issue date, 28 October 2015) you will get a progress report about how your child is getting on. This will be followed by two Parent Consultation Evenings (Monday, 9 November for practical subjects and Wednesday, 11 November for non-practical subjects), where you can talk to your child's subject teachers. This event is a good place to talk about any issues around how your child is 'settling in', such as homework or their attitude to school. A second tracking report will be issued in January (issue date, 18 January 2016) and full, final report in May (issue date, 9 May 2016).

If at any time you feel you need to talk to someone about how your child is getting on, you can always get in touch with staff through your child's Support for Pupils' teacher (formerly known as guidance teacher), by email or by phoning the school.

What about exams?

It can be difficult to find information on the work programme that Secondary school pupils follow. The Scottish Qualifications Authority, which runs the system of National and Higher Grades and is developing the new 'Curriculum for Excellence', has a website at www.sqa.org.uk, but it does not offer a clear, simple guide to what happens when, nor is it easy to find a straightforward explanation of the structure of secondary level qualifications. Here's an outline of what you can expect, based on what we've learned:

In **S1 and S2**, your child will still be follow the Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes, building on the 5-14 curriculum that they began in Primary school.



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Their school day will now be divided into lessons in different subjects, but they do not need to make any choices about what to study. There are no exams to think about, and work in S1 and S2 does not form part of any continuous assessment for external exams and qualifications.

In the **second term of S2**, students choose the subjects they want to study in years 3 and 4. The school will give them clear information about how to do this at the time, and there will be a series of parent consultation evenings at which you can discuss with your child's teachers what choices would be best. Your child will also probably have some strong ideas of their own!

In the **third term of S2**, just for the last month, children start on their new curriculum that they will follow throughout S3 and S4. Exams come at the end of S4.

If you'd like more information about the various qualifications students can take at the school, there's a summary on the Parent Council's website at <http://jghscouncil.btck.co.uk> - look in the 'Links' section.

Workload

The type and amount of homework that students get will probably also seem very different from Primary school. This again reflects the fact that they are studying many different subjects, with many different teachers. They are likely to have much more varied tasks than might have been the case in Primary.

More information

If you'd like more information about any aspect of starting Secondary school, the school or members of the School Council are happy to help.

You can contact your child's teacher in the Support for Pupils Department for any advice during this transition stage:

Kyi Community	Ms. Glass (K1 & K2) or Ms. McQuade/Ms. Kerr (K3 & K4)
Maxwell Community	Mr. Warden (M1 & M2) or Mr. Shankland (M3 & M4)
Raeburn Community	Ms. Pearce (R1 & R2) or Ms. Graham/Ms. Kavanagh (R3 & R4)

Contact the school by telephone: call 0131 447 1900 and ask for a message to be left for your Support for Pupils contact, or email: admin@jamesgillespies.edin.sch.uk, putting the name of the Support for Pupils teacher for whom the message is intended in the subject line.

The School Council represents the parents and guardians of all pupils, and aims to improve the school by supporting teachers, supporting parents, organising events, and discussing any issues that concern the life of the school. It meets on the first Tuesday of every month, and meetings are open to every member of the school community. Find out more details on the School Parent Council's website at <http://jghscouncil.btck.co.uk> or leave a message for the School Council with the School Office.

If you want to just have an informal chat with other parents, including over the summer holidays, do get in touch. An S1 network group can be brought together if there is an interest.