



# Pupil Wider Achievement, Spring 2025

*Welcome to the spring edition of our newsletter, celebrating and recognising the wider achievements of our pupils since January.*

*Congratulations to all the pupils for these achievements, as we greatly appreciate the amount of work, effort and commitment that has gone into these.*

*Please let us know of any achievements for our summer newsletter - a Form will be shared during May to capture these.*

*We look forward to hearing of forthcoming achievements over this term!*

*Deirdre S O'Brien*

*Depute Head Teacher*

## Competitions

**FIRST LEGO League challenge**

Oscar Cawthorn (1R4), Angus Airlie (1R4) and Joaquin Fontana Valdano (1R5) took part in the FIRST LEGO League challenge - a global robotics programme, with this year's theme being innovation for healthier oceans. They were part of two teams from the Edinburgh Prewired group and spent several months researching, problem-solving, coding, and engineering - building and programming a LEGO robot to navigate the missions of a robot game. For the final event on 5th February they competed against teams from across Edinburgh. One of their teams (Plastic Pollution Solution) won the innovation award for their presentation on a robot designed to remove plastic from the oceans. Great work boys!

### **VEX V5 Robotics Competition**

At the end of February, Thistle Robotics (Sam U, Oliver N, Reuben M, Johnny B, Ian T and Leander P) attended the UK National Championship in Telford for the High School VEX V5 Robotics Competition. Over 40 qualifying High School teams from across the UK gathered to compete to become UK tournament champions or to win a judged award (the tournament champions and some judged awards qualify the team for the World Championship in Texas). The team quickly found that other teams, who have been competing for years, all make use of much more equipment (specifically using 4 or 6 motors for their wheels where we could only use 2). This meant that any strategy the team had was countered by much faster moving robots disrupting their plans. This unfortunately meant we did not do very well in the tournament, however, during the two days of the event teams of judges come round to each team to speak with them about their robot, their design and their engineering process. The judges were very impressed by the team's knowledge, engineering notebook (which details their build process) and the design of the robot while only using the basic robot kit. They were especially impressed with the robot that was created in such a limited time (1 month compared to the usual 9 months most other teams had!) and limited budget. This led to the team being awarded the Judges Award which is given to a team that demonstrates exceptional effort, perseverance, and a special accomplishment.

The team always expected this year to be a practice run to get to know the V5 competition and have learned a lot in a short amount of time! They will be competing next year with an aim to qualify for the World Championship and feel confident that this is achievable with more time and some fundraising to purchase some additional equipment! Congratulations to the team for their achievement this year and good luck for next year!



1 - Thistle Robotics team

### **Minecraft Build League Results**

Following on from their success in the first challenge, the Foodie Jet Powered Minecraft Lamas (Matthias H, Owen W, Poppy P and Brielle Y) have achieved 1st place in the second build challenge in which pupils from across the council were asked to research, design and build a fireworks display. They were able to design redstone circuits and time them so that they were in time to a song they had chosen. They also had shown a great level of research into the manufacturing of fireworks.

The council also ran an additional fun Christmas challenge where pupils were asked to design a Christmas Market. Pupils were encouraged to research existing markets, real-world spaces, include interactive elements and consider the accessibility of their build. The Foodie Jet Powered Minecraft Lamas were successful once again and achieved 2nd place for their build.

### **UK Bebras Challenge 2025 - Results**

At the start of November, pupils in S1 and S2 all took part in the UK Bebras Challenge in their Computing Science class. As part of this challenge, they developed their computational thinking skills which are the highest order of problem-solving skills they can develop. The competition involved each pupil answering up to 18 questions of various difficulties to gain points. In general, our pupils did really well this year and on average achieved a higher score than other pupils across the City and the UK! We also had two pupils achieve full marks!

Well done to the following pupils who achieved the best score in their year group!

- S1: Beth Davidson and Luka Shin-Guma who both achieved a score of 220 (full marks!).
- S2: Matthew Cox who achieve a score of 214.

The top 10% of pupils across the UK were invited to take part in The Bebras Coding Challenge (which replaces The Oxford University Computing Challenge) in March. This year we had 93 pupils who achieved a high enough score to be invited (an increase over last year's 68 pupils!).

All pupils who took part received an email with a digital certificate in December. Well done to everyone who took part!

### **MasterChef S2 Cookery Competition**

The S2 have been competing in their classes for MasterChef, and each class winner has gone to the final which was held on the afternoon of Friday 28th March.

The finalists made a dessert, which showcased their culinary skills, and the winners are:

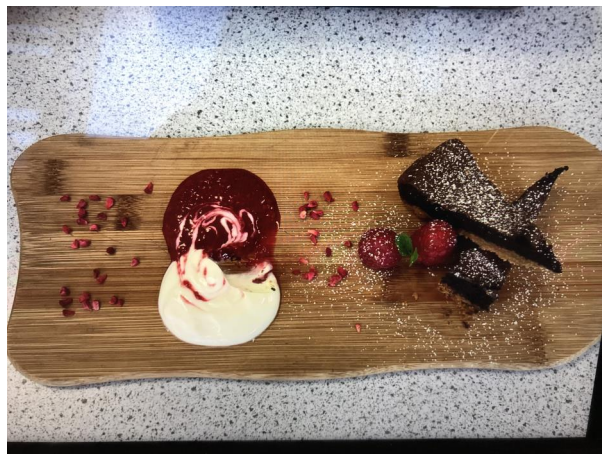
*Emaan Kashif* - Shaki Tukna, a Pakistan dish of bread, milk, sugar and nuts - a well-deserved overall winner

*Liliana Duncan* - Tiramisu

*Willow McMillan* - Chocolate Cheesecake

Congratulations to all the S2 for taking part in the competition, all the entries were really impressive.





YPI Final

Well done to our S4 pupils who took part in this year's fantastic YPI final event through RME. All pupils were a credit to our school and the charities they represented. The pupils showcased their creativity skills in a bid to win £3000 for their chosen charities. We had dancing, music, game shows, cakes and a hip-hop rap just to name a few examples! A huge congratulations to the winning charity 'Vintage Vibes' who were represented by Rosie Stein and Zosia Jajdelska.



## European Youth Parliament

- On Wednesday 19th February, pupils from JGHS took on seven teams from six schools in a debate and public speaking competition held by the European Youth Parliament (EYP). The event was held at The Mary Erskine School and after 8 rounds of debates our team of Murdo Pope, Ella McGuire, Tilda Carmichael Tom Scholl, Susanna Clark, Mairi Glazier, Carla Lohse and Callum Macaulay were the strongest team on the day and an absolute credit to the school. The judging panel were only able to complement their performance and could offer no tips for improvement. They will now go through to the EYP national weekend of debates in

the autumn along with the other top teams from across the UK for the second year running.

- The following young people have been selected to attend a European Youth Parliament International Forum in Istanbul in June 2025 following their commanding performance at the recent two-day regional event in Glasgow. It is unusual for a whole team of delegates to be selected, which underlines how impressed the judges were by their contribution to the debates and committee work. Congratulations to Alba Navarro, Aleeza Chaudhary, Anna Goerke, Casey McMahon, Ella McGuire, Tilda Carmichael, Murdo Pope and Tom Schmoll.

## Events

### Saroj Lal Awards Ceremony

The Saroj Lal Award was established in 2022 to recognise the important equalities work of Saroj Lal, the first Asian woman to teach in a Scottish primary school. Each year, schools are invited to submit pupil work linked to the themes of equality, inclusion and diversity. The following pupils who were shortlisted for the award and attended the award recent awards ceremony. A huge congratulations to them!

Owen Wilkinson

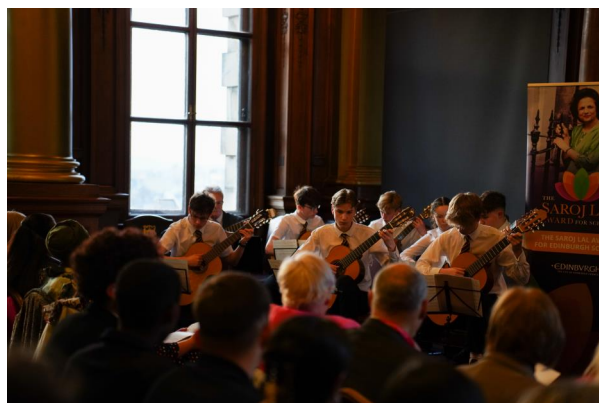
Eshal Ahmed

Emily Jobson

Georgia Zante

Beya Ben Smida

Congratulations also to Mrs Laura Jane Inglis who was the recipient of the staff award.



2 - JGHS Guitar Ensemble



## **Biology Success**

The Biology department are delighted to share that 4 of our pupils have been successful in the selection process to attend the week-long RZSS Science Summer School at Edinburgh Zoo, with another securing a place at the Highland Wildlife Park.

The programme for 16–18-year-olds introduces the role of a modern zoo, focusing on practical activities including enclosure design, animal behaviour observations, collection planning and zoo veterinary practices. Throughout the week, the pupils will engage with a variety of specialists from the RZSS family. The week culminates in a group presentation. Well done to Arden C, Emili H, Amy L, Jessie K and Bethan K.

## **Exhibitions**

### **Bike Parts Faces Exhibition**

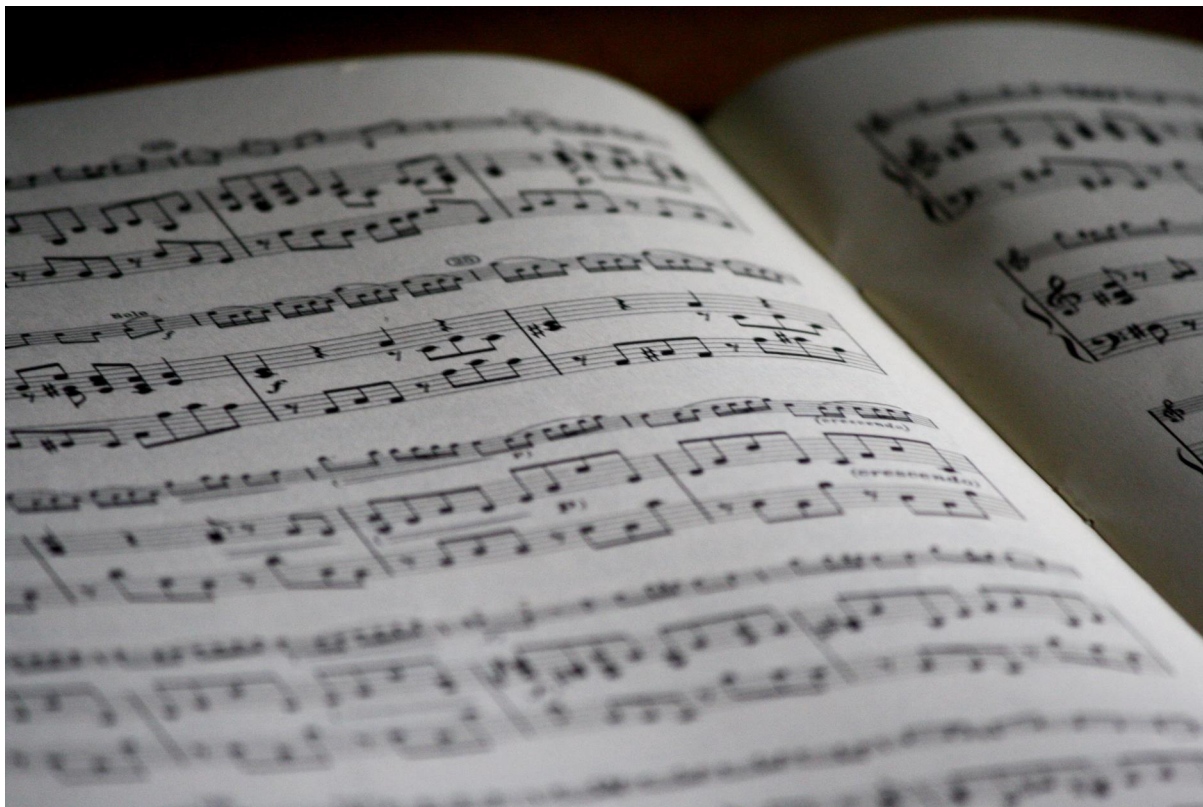
There is currently an exhibition in the Bruntsfield Edinburgh Bicycle Cooperative store, consisting of artwork created by S2 & S3 pupils. The students have put together a display and the store have kindly presented this in their windows and in-store. The students were asked to create faces using donated bike parts. Their work is impressive, and it is fantastic to see what they have created from materials that otherwise would have been disposed of. It is a great partnership that has worked well for the school with resources and for the store to be able to have the parts upcycled! There are some examples below.







## Performing Arts



Congratulations to the following pupils for their success in performing arts.

- Having studied the harp for just over a year, Ming Choi achieved a Merit in the ABRSM Grade 4 Pedal Harp exam in January 2025, and was awarded second place in the recital class at the Bristol Festival of Music, Speech and Drama in March 2025.



- Carla Brunelli Bonet is joining the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland program this year, with spring and summer concerts in Scotland, England and Berlin.
- Zorka Mitrovic passed grade 5 on the clarsach with merit.
- Anagh Valurri was invited to perform the sitar on 26th January as part of Indian Republic Day Celebrations at the Consulate General of India.



Anjalie Khan was accepted as a violinist to the Edinburgh Youth Orchestra via a competitive audition and will be performing at the Fringe Festival in August as part of the symphony orchestra.

Additionally, Anjalie played the piano for the City of Edinburgh Council Piano Festival at Broughton High School (22nd February) and violin at the Edinburgh Music Festival at Stockbridge Parish Church(Mar 5th)

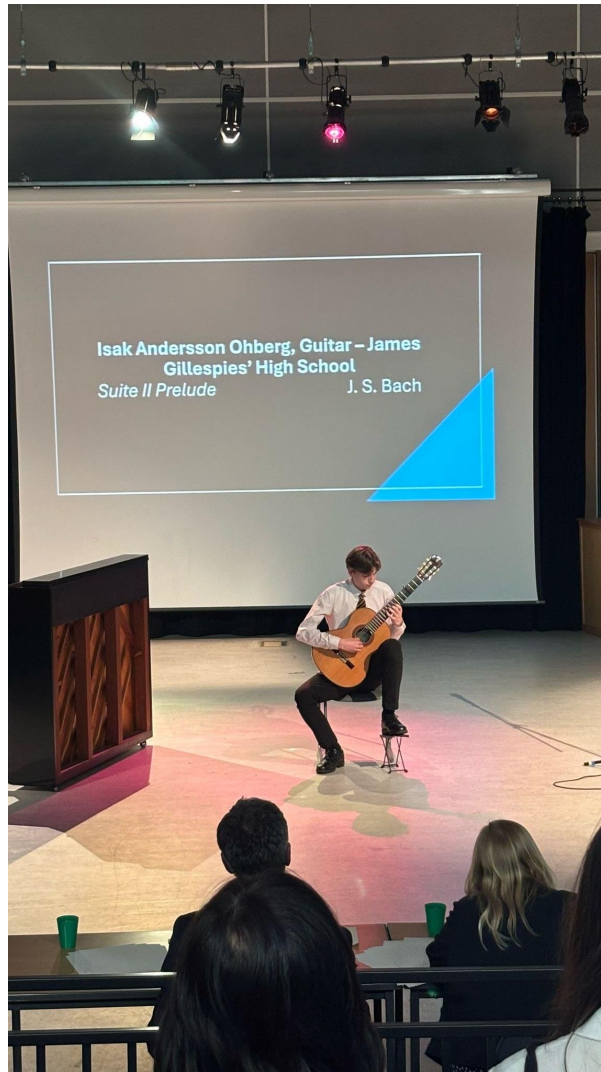






### **Young Musician of the Year 2025**

The Young Musician of the Year Local Authority final was held at St. Augustine's High School on the evening of Monday 31st March. Eleven of the city's finest musicians performed for adjudicators Mae Murray (Scottish Young Musicians) and Robert Baxter (St. Mary's Music School). Isak Andersson Ohberg took part in the event and played to an exceptional standard. We are all very proud of him.



Congratulations also to all pupils who took place in the school final held earlier this year.

### **Guitar Ensemble Success**

On Friday 14th March, our Senior Guitar Ensemble competed in the open section of the Edinburgh Music Competition Festival. They were awarded 1st prize and received the Rita Quinney Medal. This is the second year in a row they have entered since forming in 2023 and have won on both occasions. The pupils who participated are; William Warlow, Isak Ohberg, Hannah Chow, Dylan Daunt, Iris Robertson, Ted Garland, Josh Daunt, Flynn Conroy, Ciara Houghton and Conor MacKenzie.

An incredible achievement and we are so proud of them all.

### **Instrumental Music Service Concert**

Congratulations to all pupils who took part in the City of Edinburgh Council Instrumental Music Service Concert in the Usher Hall on Monday 24th March. The

night was an outstanding celebration of the talent in our city, and it was great to see so many James Gillespie's pupils represented and performing at such a high level. Special mention to S6 pupils Hannah Chow and William Warlow who directed the James Gillespie's High School Chamber Choir at this event.

### **Spring Fling**

On Tuesday 2nd April, we had the Spring Fling, with two concerts taking place during the evening. The concerts were well attended with the second one sold out. The performances from our young people were outstanding and the variety of styles made for a very enjoyable evening. Thank you to all involved.



## [Reading Activities](#)

### **Teen Titles Magazine**

The following pupils recently contributed to *Teen Titles* magazine. They each read one or more recently published books and wrote reviews for the magazine. The enthusiasm and commitment of these young pupils helps ensure that our school continues to play an involved role in the magazine!

Rosie Briggs - S3

Koen Chan - S3

Aissa Hasbi - S2

Rosa Mellanby - S4

Chloe O'Conaire - S3

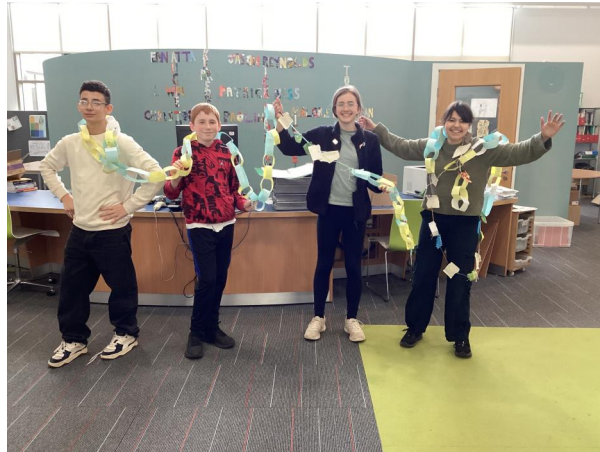


David Wan - S3

Kaishin Yao - S6

### **Paperchains to Protect Our Future**

Members of the Thursday Readaxation group took time out over 2 Thursdays to participate in the 'Paperchains to Protect Our Future'. They made a paperchain from mostly recycled material. This has been sent along to be joined to paperchains from other Edinburgh schools.



### **Sporting Success**



This term has seen some fantastic sporting achievements:

#### **American Football**



After a successful season playing American Football for Scotland, Jonny Taylor was recently selected to play for Team GB - the GB Lions - in his position as Quarterback. This will open up some exciting opportunities for him in the game he is passionate about.



## **Athletics**

Congratulations to Emi Daunt (S1) for her many sporting successes:

- Emi came 2nd in the East District cross country championships at the end of last year and because of this achievement, she was selected to represent East Scotland in the Inter district cross country championships that took place on a snowy 11th January in Glasgow. The race was part of the UK Cross challenge including runners from different districts across the UK. Emi finished 11th overall and was the 6th Scottish athlete to finish.
- She achieved 5th place in the U13 girls race in the Scottish National Cross Country Championships that took place at Callander Park, Falkirk on 22nd February marking the end of the club cross country season. Her team Edinburgh Athletics Club, won the gold medal.
- Emi won the bronze medal in the U13 girls 2.5km race at the Scottish Athletics Young Athletes Road Race at the East Fortune Race Circuit, North Berwick on Saturday 15 March, with a time of 08:57.
- She also came 2nd in the tristar 3 female category at the Kirkintilloch Aquathlon on Sunday 16th March, after swimming 400m followed by a 2.5km run.



3 - Achieving bronze at East Fortune



### **S1 Badminton Success**

Emily Jobson in S1 represented Team Scotland in Badminton while attending the Multi-Alarm U13/15 Youth International Competition, in Hungary, in March. Emily was playing above her age group in U15 in girls singles, doubles and mixed. This competition took 11 of Scotland's best players to compete across a 3-day event.

### **Basketball Success**

All 6 of our basketball teams made it to the Scottish Cup Semi Finals in March, an unbelievable achievement which was not matched by any other schools in the country.

Our S1 boys team came up against a strong Larbert HS team and in a game that could have gone either way, Larbert's rebounding skills proved to be the difference and despite a

fantastic performance, the final score was JGHS 35 – 40 Larbert HS. For the S1 boys to only have 1 loss throughout the season is an amazing achievement and the future of JGHS Basketball is looking very bright. In the U15 boy's competition we travelled to Graeme HS in Falkirk. In a super tough encounter, the game was hanging in the balance and our team put all their skills to the test and played a great brand of basketball. In the final few minutes of the 4th quarter, Graeme HS got hot from 3pt range and managed to pull away. It's been a great campaign with this being the only loss on the season. Final Score JGHS 48 – 61 Graham HS.

The final game for the boys was our Open Boys team who travelled to Falkirk HS. In what's been an incredible season, the boys came up against a very well drilled Falkirk team and although we played some incredible basketball, Falkirk managed to get a commanding lead in the first half. Despite a huge 4th quarter, there was just too much to do to turn the score around. As is with the other boy's teams, only 1 loss in a very demanding season is a great achievement. Final score JGHS 78 – 97 Falkirk HS.

Our S1 Girls, U15 Girls and Open Girls all played brilliant Semi Finals, winning them all to be invited to the "Big Dance", the Scottish Schools Cup Finals Day at Easterhouse Sports Centre in Glasgow on Wednesday 19th March. Finals day was an early start with a 7:45am meet in the PE department and planned departure of 8am. 41 excited (and a little sleepy) female basketballers were all ready to go and we were delighted to be joined by Eoghann from Blaze Basketball Club to help coach our U15 and Open Girls teams. Our S1 Girls coaches, S5 Libby Harrison and Abby Harbisher had a very busy day as they were also captain and vice-captain of the Open Girls team who were playing in the opening final.

The opening game of the day was Open Girls vs Braes HS from Falkirk. Both teams were littered with National League and International players which was clear to see from the quality of the game. Our team came out the blocks firing and were completely in sync with incredible vision and execution to take the upper hand in the opening quarter. Hard defense and clinical offense throughout the game ensured we extended the lead and the strength in depth for this young Open team makes for an exciting future of Open Girls basketball. The final score was JGHS 82 – 55 Braes HS and the first Scottish Schools title for a JGHS Girls basketball team in the school's history.

The second game was our super talented S1 Girls. An unbeaten season up to this point and a re-match vs Broughton HS from our Regional Group game which saw us come out on top on that occasion. It was a cagey opening 2 minutes from both teams with no one quite finding their range but as soon as the first basket dropped, the girls settled in and demonstrated why they have been so dominant throughout this season. The teamwork and desire to protect our basket was clear to see and this huge defensive effort was the stepping stone to launch our offense. For the S1 Girls to replicate the Open Girls by winning the school's first national title in S1 Girls age group is an unbelievable achievement. The final score was JGHS 44 – 26 Broughton HS.

The third and final game of the day was an absolute cracker with both schools undefeated up to this point. Our opponents were Culloden Academy from Inverness who had a number of international players, so we knew the task ahead would be tough. We managed a fast start getting a couple of early baskets but despite some scintillating offense from our players, the Culloden team were strong in defense and super accurate when shooting. They built a lead in the first quarter and despite a huge effort and great attitude, we never managed to reel them back in. The final score was JGHS 40 – 83 Culloden. 2nd best in Scotland still has a great ring to it! It was an amazing day with all players demonstrating the attitude, behaviour and sportsmanship that we have come to expect from Gillespie's pupils. It's been a pleasure to be a part of the basketball programme this year.







Additionally, Seth Burgess (S3), a regular member of the JGHS and Blaze U16 basketball teams, has been selected for the Scotland U15 Basketball Squad and will be taking part in



the national training camp at the Caledonia Gladiators arena in April, ahead of the U15 Home Nations Tournament in Manchester this Summer. Seth played for Scotland in the U14 Tri-Nations tournament in Manchester last year and is hoping Scotland can go one better and beat England as well as Wales this year!

### **Boxing**

Sofia Barreira achieved silver medal at the Boxing Scotland School Junior and Youth Golden Gloves Championship. The Championship took place on the 23rd of February at Ravenscraig Sports Centre.



### **Climbing**

Congratulations to Calum Wignall (S3) for being one of only 13 people, age between 13 and 20, to be selected for the 2025 Scotland National Youth Climbing Squad. To qualify, Calum took part in a number of competitions in 2024, including reaching the semi-finals of the Junior British Bouldering Championships (U16) and achieving 8th place in the British Lead Climbing Championships (U16).



### JGHS Cheerleaders

On Wednesday 26th February a group of 30 pupils from S1-6 travelled to East Kilbride to compete in the Scottish Schools Cheerleading Competition. They were entered into two categories - Performance Pom and Cheer Dance, with 15 pupils in each team. The event was a fantastic performance opportunity for all involved and had almost 2000 pupils involved across the whole country. Our Cheer Dance team placed 4th and got to take a trophy home, which they were delighted with. Their routines can be viewed on the PE Instagram account - @jghspe.





### **S5 Activity Dance Leaders**

The S5 Activities group which opted into a Dance Leaders class this year, have been successful at running dance sessions for James Gillespie's Primacy School this term. We offered this opportunity to primary 7s and had 23 pupils sign up, who have been coming over to our school to be taught by the class. The Dance Leaders have been fantastic at leading warm-ups, stretches, choreographing and teaching a jazz/commercial dance routine to the primary pupils. The primary have been great and pupils are thoroughly enjoying their dance sessions. Congratulations to Eva S, Breagha, Chloe, Ellie, Kieran, Pola and Eva W.

### **Diving**

Jamie Lamplugh won gold in the 1 meter diving board at the Armada Cup diving competition in Plymouth .



### **Fencing**

Dominic So won bronze in the Stirling Sword 2025 foil team competition, and another bronze in the Stirling Sword 2025 foil individual competition.

### **Rowing**

Catie McKendrick was selected for the Scottish Rowing Junior Academy for the 2024-25 season. She was also chosen for the Scottish Argonauts crew to race at the Women's Head of the River Race in London (08/03/25), where they were the 15th fastest junior women's crew in a race of over 300 boats. As one of the top 20 female scullers of her age group in the UK, she has been selected for a GB Rowing Team J16 training camp in Nottingham on 5th-7th April.

### **Rugby**

Congratulations to Lexie Johnston (S4) who has been selected to represent Scotland east region rugby girls U16s. A fantastic achievement and we wish her every success for the coming season.

### **Scuba Diving**

Congratulations to:

- Atticus Neill who achieved his Scuba Schools International (SSI) Level 1 Certificate.
- Zorka Mitrovic who became a Padi Open Water certified scuba diver.



4 - Atticus Neill

### **Swimming**

Amira Sanii won gold medals in both Breast Stroke and Back Stroke swimming competitions held at Leith Victoria on 12th March 2025. As a result, she has qualified for the main event at the Royal Commonwealth Pool later this year!





Additionally, congratulations to Grace Picken (S3) who was awarded 8th place in the 200 metres backstroke at the recent Scottish swimming championships.

### **Table Tennis**

Congratulations to Angus Halliday, S3, who achieved success in the Edinburgh Table Tennis Open over the Christmas break. Not only did Angus lift the Band 2 singles, he also won the under-23 singles and was runner- up in the under-15 singles. Further information is available at the following link.

<https://theedinburghreporter.co.uk/2025/01/angus-stars-in-edinburgh-table-tennis-open/>

### **Water Polo**

In January 2025, Emily Lake, with her Warrender teammates, won the 2025 U15 Scottish Water Polo Championships, with a 7-4 win over Menzieshill Whitehall in the final. This meant that they retained the title they won in 2024. Emily received a trophy for Most Valuable Player in the tournament. Also, in January 2025 Emily successfully trialled for the Scotland U18s water polo squad.

***Many more sporting achievements can be viewed using the accompanying QR code which links to the PE department's Instagram profile.***



*The next issue of the newsletter will be shared during the week beginning 23rd June 2025.*