

Education & Cultural Services

Policy: Developing a Pupil Voice

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1. Introduction

West Lothian Council Education Services Group Plan states:

"We will develop initiatives to enable people to participate in Council decision making."

It is therefore evident that we must continue to develop pupil participation in decision making in class, in school and in the Council.

The concept of pupil voice in school experience is not a new one.

"Through the experiences gained from the earliest years of education all young people should come to see themselves as persons capable of thinking, exploring, reflecting and developing a point of view, as well as to be able to accept responsibility for the environment and for their own behaviour and futures" (Scottish CCC 1995, The Heart of the Matter)

Schools have worked over the years to develop aspects within the informal and formal curriculum which are designed to promote pupil ownership of learning. Students' opinions are valued, used to influence the decision making process within the school environment and students are encouraged to become partners in their own education. There is wide recognition that this is an essential element in raising attainment and in the provision of high quality learning and teaching.

The consensus of opinion within our schools agrees with the discussion paper, SCCC Paper Values in Education:

"Young people are more likely to respond well when they feel secure, in contexts where they have a sense of being valued and where they have opportunities to succeed."

The purpose of this policy is to take the good practice already evident in our schools forward and to provide for our pupil population, from nursery to school leaving age, planned and progressive experiences which will promote pupil participation in education.

2. Aims

Through the use of this package we aim to:

- raise the profile in individual schools across the Council of the development of pupil voice.
- enable schools to audit their present position and provision.
- identify, promote and share good practice.
- ensure the provision of opportunities to develop a pupil voice in a planned and integrated manner appropriate to the age and stage of the pupil.

3. Rationale

A pupil voice should be developed over a range of school experiences from involvement in own learning to consultation on aspects of school life. Checklists for nursery, primary, secondary and Council are appended to this policy statement.

Pupils may benefit particularly from involvement in the activities associated with the Pupil Voice if they are at risk of social exclusion on the grounds of their gender, religion and belief, age, sexual orientation, ability, race or social status or a combination of these factors.

The participation, empowerment, lifelong learning, and citizenship of pupils can be promoted through development of the Pupil Voice. Teachers should consider actively encouraging participation from pupils who are from groups which may have a lower level of participation in the life of the school and wider society, less empowerment, and a less positive approach to lifelong learning and citizenship on account of their gender, religion and belief, age, sexual orientation, ability, race or social status or a combination of these factors.

Pupils may benefit from exposure to positive role models from all sections of society regardless of gender, religion and belief, age, sexual orientation, ability, race or social status. Schools should consider actively encouraging representation from all sections of the school community on bodies such as Pupil Councils in recognition of the benefits of providing positive role models from all sections of society.

Pupils should be provided with opportunities to:

- develop appropriate skills whereby they can express opinions, reflect on experiences and influence the decision making process
- develop skills of reflective thought empowering pupils to empathise with others, to appreciate different points of view and to solve problems.
- develop a sense of responsible citizenship within the school and the wider community.

- be active in evaluating the progress of their own learning.
- provide effective feedback which improves the quality of learning and teaching.
- develop a sense of belonging to the group, the class, the school and the Council.
- take on areas of responsibility suited to age and stage.

4. Key Principles

This policy recognises the vital part played by the student in his/her own learning and personal and social development. It is therefore essential that there are:

- shared aims
- shared targets
- feedback and action points
- successes recognised and celebrated at all levels
- involvement in self evaluation for both learning attainment and personal and social development
- pupil voice is seen to influence decision making and effect change.

5. Further Development

The lists appended, though not exhaustive, may be used to audit present practice and to identify areas for further development appropriate to the school's needs.

Education Officers can provide information on schools which have developed or gone some way to developing specific areas contained within the appendices to this policy.

6. Future Considerations

For those schools which already have well-established policies for developing pupil voice, consideration might be given to:-

Developing a means of monitoring the effectiveness of pupil voice opportunities for example -

- I know who my rep on the Pupil Council is
- I know how to get in touch
- The school provides time for reps to report on Pupil Council meetings
- I know something which has been introduced/changed because of the Pupil Council.

Training young people to develop the skills necessary to participate fully in the democratic process.

7. Further Reading

The Heart of the Matter, Scottish CCC, 1995

Values in Education, Scottish CCC

Promoting Positive Discipline, Whole School Approaches to Tackling Low Level Disruptions, Scottish Office, 1999

West Lothian Children and Young People's Charter

Success Stories II a Catalogue, Scottish Executive, 1999

A Manual of Good practice Special Education Needs, SOEID, 1999

A useful precise of curricular packages is available from page 42 of Promoting Personal Safety and Child Protection in the Curriculum, SOEID, 1998

Quality Assurance in Education Development Planning, West Lothian Council, Appendix 10

Improving Our Schools: Consultation Response to the Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc Bill

How Good is Our School? Self Evaluation Using Performance Indicators, SOEID, 1996

Using Ethos Indicators in Primary School Self Evaluation, SOEID, 1992

Using Ethos Indicators in Secondary School Self Evaluation, SOEID, 1992 (Taking Account of the Views of Pupils, Parents and Teachers)

APPENDIX ONE

EXAMPLES OF CHECKLISTS FOR NURSERY/PRIMARY/SECONDARY/SPECIAL

School	Date
Developing A Pupil Voice: Nursery	

Area of School Life	Comments/Observations	Action Points
Promote listening to adults and other children.		
Promote verbal communication: with adults children		
Involve pupils in discussion of activities		
Seek pupil opinion on nursery experience: informal discussion draw and scribe/write		
Encourage pupils in reasoned choice of activity.		
Recognition of success.		
Celebration of success.		
Value contribution made by children eg items of interest brought by individual pupils.		

School	Date
Developing A Pupil Voice: Primary	

Area of School Life	Comments/Observations	Action Points
Ethos		
Access to relevant staff when necessary.		
Confidence building through addressing an audience.		
Stewardship/playground initiative.		
Enterprise education.		
Charity support initiated by pupils.		
Production and distribution of pupil publications.		
Consultation on aspects of school life: school aims class rules school rules		
Pupil notice board.		
Involvement in parent consultation/meeting to discuss pupil need and where appropriate school reports.		
Pupil Council. Senior pupil act as helpers/friends/buddies in areas of school/school life.		

School	Date
Developing A Pupil Voice: Primary (Continued)	

Area of School Life	Comments/Observations	Action Points
Class		
Pupils involved in discussion of own targets.		
Regular self evaluation of progress over a range of curricular areas.		
Pupils involved in evaluation of a range of lessons.		
Pupils' opinions sought on the quality of school experience.		
Peer evaluation.		
Recognition of success praise rewards		
Celebration of success – certificates		
Circle time/bubble time.		
Pupils involved in agreeing class rules/class routines.		

School	Date
Developing A Pupil Voice: Secondary	

Area of School Life	Comments/Observations	Action Points
Ethos		
Student council.		
Student representatives - School Board - Working Groups - School Committees		
Students consulted through: - discussion - questionnaire		
Student initiated charity fund raising.		
Student initiated school fund raising.		
House structures.		
Prefects/monitors/befrienders/buddies		
Pupil presentations - assemblies - parent evenings - school board - community		
Enterprise education		
Recognition and celebration of achievement		
Personal planners/homework diaries.		

School	Date
Developing A Pupil Voice: Secondary (Continued)	

Area of School Life	Comments/Observations	Action Points
Class		
End of unit student feedback		
Student involved in self assessment.		
Student involved in target setting.		
Student input in maintaining progress files.		
Student support for Discipline for Learning		
Student comments on reports.		
Students involved in parent consultation.		
Success is recognised and rewarded.		
Availability of Debating Clubs for each year group.		

School	Date
Developing A Pupil Voice: Special	

	1	
Area of School Life	Comments/Observations	Action Points
Ethos		
Pupils asked for their opinion of school through: questionnaire discussion		
Pupils asked to identify areas which are problems for them, eg bus travel, playtime.		
Pupils see that action has been taken to support them in these problematic areas.		
Staff take care to explain aspects of school to pupils classwork homework acceptable behaviour		
Pupils are involved in presenting to others pupils parents community		
Pupil council.		

School	Date
Developing A Pupil Voice: Special (Continued)	

Area of School Life	Comments/Observations	Action Points
Class		
Teachers and support staff clearly explain expected outcomes to children.		
Pupils are encouraged to enter into an appropriate dialogue in a supportive manner.		
Pupils are involved in the discussion of next steps/targets.		
Pupils are encouraged in the process of self evaluation.		
Pupils' opinion of the learning process is sought.		

Developing A Pupil Voice: Council Level

Area of School Life	Comments/Observations	Action Points
Student representation at Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Meetings.		
Student representation on: working groups committees		
School Board Student Representatives attend School Board/PTA information meetings organised by West Lothian Council.		
A student voice is promoted through West Lothian publications.		
Education and Cultural Services actively promotes in its schools the involvement of students from all sectors in individual target setting.		
Education and Cultural Services actively promotes student self evaluation over all sectors.		
Education and Cultural Services actively promotes the setting up of democratically elected Pupil Councils.		
That a forum is set up to allow students to meet with the Director of Education and Cultural Services.		

APPENDIX TWO

Examples of questionnaires currently in use in some West Lothian schools and which the staff of individual schools may wish to consider, adopt or adapt to suit their own needs. Most of these have been derived from using ethos indicators in primary/secondary school self evaluation and are regularly used by HMI as part of school inspection.

SECONDARY PUPILS QUESTIONNAIRE

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF	ACA	DEMY?		
Please answer the following questions as ac value your opinions. Your answers will help				We
Please indicate whether you are a boy or a g	irl.			L
Please indicate your Year Group in the box.				•
SECTION 1				
In this part of the questionnaire you are aske whether this is true almost all of the time, mo example, if you generally enjoy school but n the heading 'most of the time'.	ost of the tim	ne, sometim	es or never	. For
THE SCHOOL AND THE CLASSROOM	all of the time	most of the time	sometim es	never
I enjoy being at school				
I find school work interesting				
I get homework to do				
I feel that I am learning and making progress				
I get to use computers to help me with my work				
I get bored in class				
I am unhappy in class				
The head teacher talks or says hello to me personally				
There are lots of activities after school				
There are lots of activities at lunchtime				
The classrooms are clean and tidy				
The social areas and playground are clean and tidy				
I feel unsafe in the corridors and stairs when moving from one class to another				
I feel unsafe in the social areas/playground				

In this section you are asked to do something slightly different. Again read each statement but this time think whether this statement is true of all of your teachers in the school, more than half of them, less than half of them or just a few. So, for example, when you read the statement "teachers listen to what you have to say", if you decide this is true of all but a couple of your teachers tick the box in the first column headed "true of nearly all".

TEACHERS	true of nearly all	true of more than half	true for less than half	true of only a few
Teachers listen to what I have to say				
Teachers show respect for pupils				
My teachers tell me how well I am doing				
My teachers are fair to me				
Teachers treat all pupils fairly				
When I am having difficulty teachers usually know and give me help				
I feel able to ask teachers when I don't understand something				
Teachers give me a chance to give my own opinion and develop my own ideas				
Teachers take time to explain what they want to do for homework				
After I have done homework teachers talk to me about it				
Teachers aren't strict enough with pupils who don't behave well				
Teachers expect you to do your best at all times				
When there is something worrying me I can talk to my Guidance teacher				
When there is something worrying me there are other teachers I can talk to				

In this section there are some comments that pupils might make. We would like to know whether you agree with them. Look at each statement in turn and then tick one of the four boxes. If you strongly agree with the statement place a tick in the box under the heading "strongly agree".

WHAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY	strongly agree	agree	disagre e	strongl y disagre e
A lot of things we do in class are pointless				
People think this is a good school				
Your chances of getting good results are higher in this school than most others				
I know a lot of pupils who are unhappy at school				
I am confident that I understand the work I do in class				
Pupils show respect for teachers in this school				
You are encouraged to work hard in this school				
Most pupils behave well in classrooms				
Most pupils behave well in the social areas and playground				
Most pupils behave well in the corridors and stairs				
All pupils should follow dress code				

Here are things that sometimes happen in schools. Do you think it is likely that they would happen in this school?

THINGS THAT MIGHT HAPPEN	would never happen	unlikely to happen	likely to happen	happen s often
Older pupils bully younger ones every day				
A teacher made fun of someone in front of the class				
A pupil cracked a joke about the teacher and the teacher took it in good part				
A pupil didn't understand the work but was too afraid to ask				
A pupil swore at a teacher				
A teacher swore at a pupil				
A teacher went out of her/his way to encourage and praise pupils who were not very good at classwork				
A pupil was punished for being late even although it was someone else's fault				
A teacher made unkind remarks to a pupil because the pupil looked different				
Pupils who weren't very interested worked well because they liked the teacher				
A pupil told others where they could get drugs				
A teacher told one of the pupils he was "thick"				
A pupil explained she already had a lot of homework but the teacher said, "I don't care what other teachers do"				
A teacher blamed the same pupils for everything, even though it was not always their fault				
A group of pupils stayed off school once a week. They went to one pupil's house to watch television and play tapes.				
A teacher apologises on discovering that he/she had blamed the wrong person				



PRIMARY PUPILS QUESTIONNAIRE 1 I am a boy girl 2 What year are you in? P3 P5 F

	•		•	
THE SCHOOL IN GENERAL	all the time	most of the time	sometime s	never
I enjoy being at school				
I find school work interesting				
I feel unsafe in the playground because of some of the other children				
The school is clean and tidy				
I get to use computers to help me with my work				
Teachers are nice to everybody				
Some children are naughty in the classroom				
Pupils think the teachers at this school are good				
There are lots of activities after school				
There are lots of activities at lunchtime				
I get homework to do				
I think pupils should wear uniform				
People think this is a good school				
The headteacher talks to me or says hello to me personally				
Teachers treat pupils fairly				

THE CLASSROOM	all the time	most of the time	sometime s	never
I get bored in class				
I feel able to ask the teacher when I don't understand something				
I get to do things I'm interested in				
My teacher tells me how well I am doing				
My teacher is fair to me				
My teacher talks about my homework with me				
When I am having difficulty the teacher usually knows and gives me help				
I am unhappy in class				
I'm worried I can't do the work				

THINGS THAT MIGHT HAPPEN	would never happen	unlikely to happen	likely to happen	happens often
Pupils go on trips outside school with a teacher				
Older children play football in the playground and the little ones can't get past				
Boys are given more attention in class than girls				
A teacher is especially kind to a pupil who is upset				
The whole class is not allowed gym because one or two pupils did not bring gym shoes				
Going home from school, older children annoy younger ones				
White children don't play with black or brown children				
A pupil is having difficulty with his work and others in his group help him out				
A pupil does not understand his work but does not want to tell the teacher				
A teacher makes unkind remarks to a pupil because the pupil looks different				
There is no toilet paper in the pupils' toilets				
Pupils were allowed to stay inside the school at playtime because it was raining				

OTHER COMMENTS

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE EITHER GOOD OR BAD YOU WOULD LIKE TO WRITE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL OR YOUR CLASS?
please use this space

SPECIAL SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE

1	I AM A BOY GIRL	
2	WHAT CLASS ARE YOU IN?	

THE SCHOOL IN GENERAL

	YES	NO	OTHER RESPONSE
I enjoy the school			
I use a computer in class			
The teachers are kind to me			
I think pupils should wear school uniform			
Do other people (your family) think this is a good school?			
The Head Teacher talks to me			
The school is safe for me			
I get lots of praise when I do well			
I like getting badges/certificates			
I like playtimes (because?)			
Going home in the bus is good (why?)			
Going home in the bus is bad (why?)			
There are lots of things to do at playtimes			
I feel frightened in school (when?)			
I feel sad in school (when?)			
Anything else you'd like to say			

THE CLASSROOM

	YES	NO	OTHER RESPONSE
My work is interesting			
My work is easy			
My work is hard			
I get homework			
I get bored in class			
I can ask the teacher if I don't know what to do			
My teacher tells me if I'm doing good work			
I am happy in class			
I worry I can't do my work			
Some pupils behave badly in class			
I get homework to do			
I use a computer in class			
Anything else you'd like to say			

OTHERS

	YES	NO	OTHER RESPONSE
What is a good teacher?			
How does he/she make you feel?			
What is a good Head Teacher?			
How does he/she make you feel?			
What is a good school?			
How should you feel when you are in it?			
What happens at a good playtime?			

OTHER COMMENTS

Please write or draw something you really <u>like</u> about the school
Please write or draw something you really don't like about the school
Please write or draw something you really don't like about the school
Please write or draw something you really don't like about the school
Please write or draw something you really <u>don't like</u> about the school
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