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# Pupil Participation – Good Practice Guide



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# Section 1

## Introduction

- Pupil participation, pupil voice, learner voice - what do these mean, and what difference can they make to children and young people's learning and well-being in your school?
- What role can pupil participation play in an effective school?
- What does 'good practice' in pupil participation look like - and how can schools go about developing it?
- How can we gather evidence about the outcomes of learner voice, and establish a baseline to build upon?

So many questions!

This Good Practice Guide aims to answer these questions and more!! It has been written for Senior Managers and Governors in schools, but can also be used by other professionals - and by pupil themselves.

We hope that you will enjoy using it, and that it will help you to develop effective pupil voice in your school.

Please send any comments, queries or suggestions to: [childrenandyoungpeoplesrights@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:childrenandyoungpeoplesrights@wales.gsi.gov.uk).

## Pupil Participation in Context

### The International Context

The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** is an international agreement that protects the human rights of children under the age of 18. Wales is the first country in the United Kingdom to embed the principles of the UNCRC into legislation. The 'Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure, which became law in May 2011 strengthens and builds on the rights-based approach of the Welsh Government by placing a duty on Welsh Ministers to have due regard to the rights and obligations within the UNCRC.

Several articles of the UNCRC are particularly relevant to educational settings. Articles 13 and 17 set out the right of children and young people to access and share reliable information; whilst Articles 28-30 set out the right to an education which develops every child's personality and talents to the full, in the context of their language and culture. A full list of the UNCRC Articles, including a young-person-friendly version can be found at [www.uncrcletsgetitright.co.uk/](http://www.uncrcletsgetitright.co.uk/).

The basis for pupil voice is to be found in **Article 12 of the UNCRC**, which sets out the right of children and young people to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account when decisions are being made on any matter that affects them. This Article is seen as particularly important, in that it is an enabling right, empowering and supporting children and young people to access broader rights under the UNCRC. The Welsh Government wants **all** children and young people to have opportunities to actively participate in decision-making at local, regional and national levels in Wales. Opportunities are presently provided through mechanisms such as school councils, youth forums and the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales ('Funky Dragon').



Pupils can be involved in raising awareness of the UNCRC and the importance of children's rights. You can see how **Llangyfelach Primary School in Swansea** did this in the **Primary Case Studies section** of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

### The National Context

Participation forms part of local authorities' **Children and Young People's Plans** in Wales. Under Section 12 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 all local authorities are required to have a participation strategy and a youth forum in place, so that young people can be part of decision-making processes at the local level.

**National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales** have been developed for and with young people, setting out how children and young people can be involved in decision-making in meaningful and effective ways. These can be viewed at: [www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/about-us/what-is-participation/](http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/about-us/what-is-participation/).

## Involvement in Decision-making in Educational Settings:

**The School Councils (Wales) Regulations, 2005**, made it a statutory requirement for all maintained primary, secondary and special schools in Wales to have a school council in place - thus ensuring representative mechanisms for listening to and acting on learners' concerns, and involving them in the planning and management of their learning environment. To support this requirement, the Welsh Assembly Government (now referred to as 'the Welsh Government') issued **Guidance for Governing Bodies** in October 2006. **A Pupil Voice Wales website** ([www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk](http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk)) has also been developed, containing information, training materials and case studies so that pupils and professionals are supported in developing and sharing good practice.

Although school councils provide a firm basis for participation in educational settings, research evidence has indicated that - to be effective - learner participation needs to be integrated into all aspects and at all levels of organisational life<sup>1</sup>. Many schools have already taken this message on board, and support pupils to get actively involved in their own learning, and in a variety of groups and initiatives.

**The School Effectiveness Framework (SEF)** is the Welsh Government's overarching educational policy to which all other policies and programmes are aligned. It aims to transform educational standards and provision in Wales, in particular:

- Achieving better learning outcomes and wellbeing for all children and young people, regardless of their socio-economic background; and
- Reducing the variation in learning outcomes within and between classrooms, schools and local authorities.



Pupils have a vital role to play in working with professionals to improve the quality of their learning experiences and environment in all six areas of the Framework. A video with examples of how pupils have become actively involved in improving their learning and the school environment can be seen on the "**Effective School**" page of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site and on the SEF web-site ([www.sefwales.co.uk/](http://www.sefwales.co.uk/)).

Learner voice is also inspected through questions 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 of **Estyn's 2010 Common Inspection Framework**.

This **Good Practice Guide** contains suggestions as to how schools can develop holistic, inclusive and effective pupil participation, in line with national policy, the SEF and Estyn's Common Inspection Framework. It is supported by a range of good practice case studies gathered from schools around Wales. We know, however, that these are only a few of the good practice examples that exist. If you have a case study you would like to share, please send it to: [childrenandyoungpeoplesrights@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:childrenandyoungpeoplesrights@wales.gsi.gov.uk).

<sup>1</sup> York Consulting for the Welsh Government: 'Children and Young People's Participation in Wales'. December 2008.

## What do we mean by Pupil Participation? - Definitions

The literal definition of participation is 'taking part'. In the context of children and young people's rights, however, participation is about children and young people having their voice heard when decisions are being made that affect their lives, and being actively involved in decision-making processes.

Participation is a process rather than an event, with varying degrees of involvement from being consulted on a predetermined issue to young people choosing their agenda, making their own decisions and taking them forward. There are a number of models which describe degrees of participation - and some of these can be viewed on the Pupil Voice Wales web-site at [www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/about-us/what-is-participation/](http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/about-us/what-is-participation/). It is useful to consider which degree of participation is most appropriate and effective in different settings and situations.

In 2004 the Welsh Government ran a competition to produce **a national definition of participation** that would be easy to understand for adults and young people. The winning 'sound-bite' was:

*"Participation means that it is my right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing any action that might affect me. Having a voice, having a choice"*

Sometimes consultation is equated with participation, but they are not the same thing. Through being consulted, people are able to voice an opinion or give feedback about a service or policy which has already been determined by the service-provider. Input by those consulted may result in changes to provision, but often consultees are not informed of this, and don't know whether they have made a difference. Although there are different levels of participation, it tends to be a more active approach, calling for the direct involvement of stakeholders in planning, decision-making and implementation of policy and processes. Participation implies degrees of ownership and empowerment, and offers opportunities for those participating to develop responsible attitudes and skills. Both these approaches have a place - and indeed are to be encouraged - in educational settings.

**Pupil participation** is about developing a culture in schools where all children and young people have a voice and have the opportunity to play an active role in decisions that affect their learning and well-being, as set out in Article 12 of the UNCRC. Although having an active school council is an essential part of this approach, it is only one aspect.

Pupil participation should happen **in a variety of ways and at different levels** of school life. Some of these are:

- As part of teaching and learning;
- By involving pupils in school self-evaluation and assessment;
- Using the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales;
- Consultation mechanisms such as questionnaires, surveys, circle-time, focus groups, and suggestion boxes;
- Participatory and representative groups such as the school council, eco-committee, healthy schools and peer mentors;
- Learner involvement with the governing body, and in staff appointments;
- Learner involvement in planning, reviewing and implementing policies and procedures, including the school development plan;
- Learner involvement in budgeting and how money is allocated/spent;
- Having structures in place so that all pupils can be involved in decision-making, including those with additional learning needs.

More details and examples of these approaches can be found in the "Implementing your Policy" section of this guide. (Section 5)

 Examples of what a participative school may look like can be found on the **"Get Involved"** page of the Grown Ups' section of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

**Consulting pupils** on decisions that affect them may be part of the participation process, but it is not synonymous with it. Where pupils are consulted regarding policies and services, it is important that this is done in line with the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales so that:

- Information is presented to children and young people in ways that are clear and accessible;
- Children and young people are clear why they are being asked to give their views, and how these views will be taken into account to influence change;
- Children and young people have a choice as to whether they wish to be involved;
- Everyone gets a chance to have their say;
- Children and young people know what they can get out of taking part - in terms of increased skills and confidence, accreditation or qualifications, certificates, vouchers, etc.; and
- Pupils get to know what has happened as a result of them being involved. If change hasn't been possible, they should know why not.

## The Benefits of Pupil Participation

Research commissioned by the Welsh Government in 2008 suggests that developing children and young people's participation in decision-making has benefits for individuals, organisations and communities. Children and young people who participate in decision-making enjoy enhanced self-esteem and motivation, gain important personal, social and organisational skills, and become familiar with group and democratic processes. At the organisational level, pupil involvement in decision-making leads to better relationships, more relevant and effective policies, and better learning. In the best case scenarios, pupils and adults work together as partners to ensure that their school provides the best possible learning environment for all. Children and young people are involved in their own learning, and feel that they have a stake in their learning community<sup>2</sup>.

Developing more effective pupil participation can lead to:

- Improved pupil engagement, well-being, behaviour and learning;
- Better pupil - staff and pupil-pupil relationships;
- Better whole-school policies and procedures, based on the real needs of pupils;
- More inclusive communities, where all pupils are encouraged and supported to participate, not just those who are most confident and articulate;
- Increased opportunities for pupils to develop personal and social skills, and to have those skills recognised and accredited should they so wish.



A DVD "All Together Now" illustrating some of these benefits can be viewed at: [www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/get-involved/an-effective-school/](http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/get-involved/an-effective-school/).

<sup>2</sup> 'School Councils in Wales: Best Practice Guide' - August 2009, downloadable at: [www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/about-us/benefits-of-participation/](http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/about-us/benefits-of-participation/).

# Section 2

## Developing a Whole-School Approach

### A Whole-school Pupil Participation Policy

It is recommended that schools develop a **Pupil Participation Policy** so that **all** pupils have opportunities to have their voice heard and to participate in decision-making processes in their learning environment, not just those who are more articulate or elected onto representative bodies such as school councils. The overall aim of having a policy is to ensure that pupil participation is taken forward in a holistic and consistent way, so that everyone in your school/organisation can benefit from it.

Policies on their own do not change cultures, but the process of formulating, developing and reviewing your pupil participation policy should enable you to map present achievements, to assess gaps in provision, and to address these in an ongoing way. Involving pupils themselves in this process will send strong messages to all members of the school community that pupil voice is taken seriously, and encourage a sense of ownership and motivation.

Changing cultures takes time. After carrying out a baseline assessment, an organisation may decide initially to concentrate on one area of their community's life - e.g. how information is disseminated and shared, and how feedback is acted upon and results publicised. Involving pupils themselves in this process will help to identify areas which children and young people feel need addressed most urgently.

Suggestions as to how organisations may go about developing a holistic approach and a pupil participation policy are outlined below and in 'Developing a Whole-school Approach to Pupil Participation: Top tips' (Appendix B) and 'Developing your Pupil Participation Policy' (Appendix A).

 Examples of schools which have developed whole-school approaches to pupil participation can be found **on the Primary and Secondary Case Study pages of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.**

## What should the policy look like?

Your pupil participation policy should be developed as an integral part of the school's development plan, linked to school effectiveness and improvement.

Although the **contents and structure** of your policy will vary according to the nature of your organisation and the ages and development of pupils it is suggested that it should include the following elements:

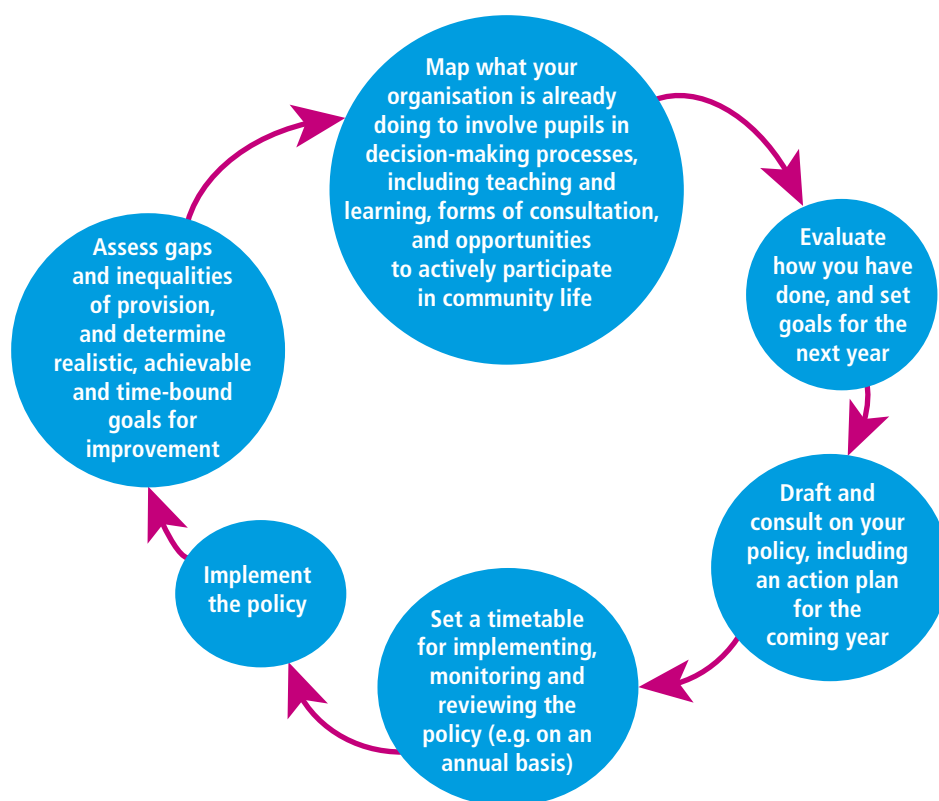
- A **definition** of what pupil participation is;
- A **statement of commitment** from the organisation's senior management to ensure that **all** pupils have opportunities to have their voice heard and to participate in decision-making processes in their learning environment as stated in Article 12 of the UNCRC;
- Clear **strategic aims** for listening to learners and enabling them to participate in a range of decision-making processes, linked to school effectiveness in terms of improved pupil well-being and outcomes;
- A **rationale** of how pupil participation contributes to better outcomes, both individually and for the organisation;
- A **mapping** of structures and processes for learner involvement that currently exist - including teaching and learning, arrangements for self-assessment, gathering pupils' views and involving them in formulating, implementing and reviewing policies and processes;
- An **action plan** for the current year, with realistic priorities linked to pupil and organisational improvement and informed by pupils' views;
- **Methodology:** How the policy is implemented so that it is inclusive, meaningful and effective - e.g. through using the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales, integration into teaching and learning, staff and pupil training, and through regular communication and feedback;
- **How pupils themselves are involved** in formulating, implementing and reviewing the policy;
- **Resources** available to ensure that pupil participation is meaningful and effective, including time, accommodation, training and financial resources;
- **Inclusion:** Arrangements for ensuring that all pupils have opportunities and are actively encouraged to participate, including more marginalised and 'difficult to engage' children and young people;
- **Communication:** How stakeholders are informed in a timely and accessible way, and mechanisms for collating views and providing feedback;
- **Publicity:** Arrangements for ensuring that all pupils are aware of the policy, know what it means and how they can be involved;

- How the policy is **monitored and evaluated**, involving pupils themselves (e.g. through using the National Participation Standards Self-assessment tool and/or the School Effectiveness Profile).

Your policy should be accessible, so that all staff and pupils in your organisation understand it, and know what it's trying to achieve. Consider having a young people-friendly version of your policy - e.g. in poster form - which can be displayed around your organisation. One way of publicising your policy would be to organise a competition for the best poster portraying it.

## Developing your policy

The continuing process of creating, developing, reviewing and evaluating a pupil participation policy is cyclical in nature, and should entail working with pupils to:



## Publicising your Policy

For your policy to be truly inclusive, everyone in the school community needs to know about it and have the opportunity to be involved! You should consider how pupils will be informed and consulted about the formulation of the policy in good time, so that they have time to input opinions and ideas. Once the policy is in place, it should be publicised across the school community - if possible in fun and accessible ways. Some possibilities for raising awareness are:

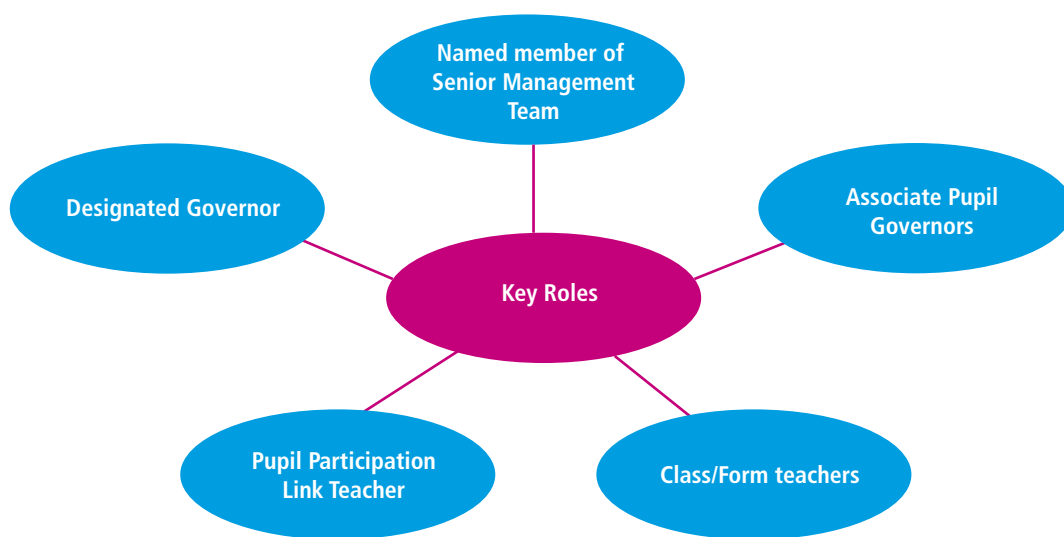
- Notice-boards and posters;
- Assemblies and time with class teachers/form tutors;
- The school web-site;
- School newsletters;
- Leaflets to parents.

# Section 3

## Key Roles and Responsibilities: who needs to be involved?

To ensure that pupil participation is taken forward in a way that is strategic and holistic, it is recommended that there are key roles in place so that pupils are included in decision-making processes as a matter of course.

**Key roles should include:**



Training materials are downloadable from the **Resources** page of the Grown-ups section of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

## Designated Governor for Pupil Participation

This role should include the following elements:

- Ensuring that the governing body is aware of the benefits of developing a whole-school approach to pupil participation.
- Encouraging the governing body to adopt the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales to underpin their ways of working when involving pupils in decision-making.
- Maintaining active links between the governing body and pupil representative groups. This may entail attending school council or other meetings, and - in secondary schools - ensuring that the school council is aware of their right to nominate two pupils from amongst their membership as Associate Pupil Governors to represent pupils' views on the governing body.
- Ensuring that pupil participation is a standing item on governing body meetings, and encourage the school council and other representative pupil groups to contribute their views and ideas.
- Ensuring that pupils are actively involved in a timely and appropriate manner when policies and procedures which affect them are being planned, reviewed and evaluated.
- Ensuring a good flow of communication and feedback between the governing body and pupils, using the networks and channels of communication that are in place.
- Working with senior leaders to promote a whole-school approach to pupil participation and to communicate this approach to staff, partners/carers and local partners.
- Encouraging the governing body to celebrate the role of pupils as active citizens in improving their learning and environment.

Apart from the training modules available on the **Resources** page of the Grown-ups' Section of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site, governor training in pupil participation is available in many local authorities across Wales. Where possible training for governors involved in promoting and developing pupil participation should be undertaken jointly with pupil representatives.

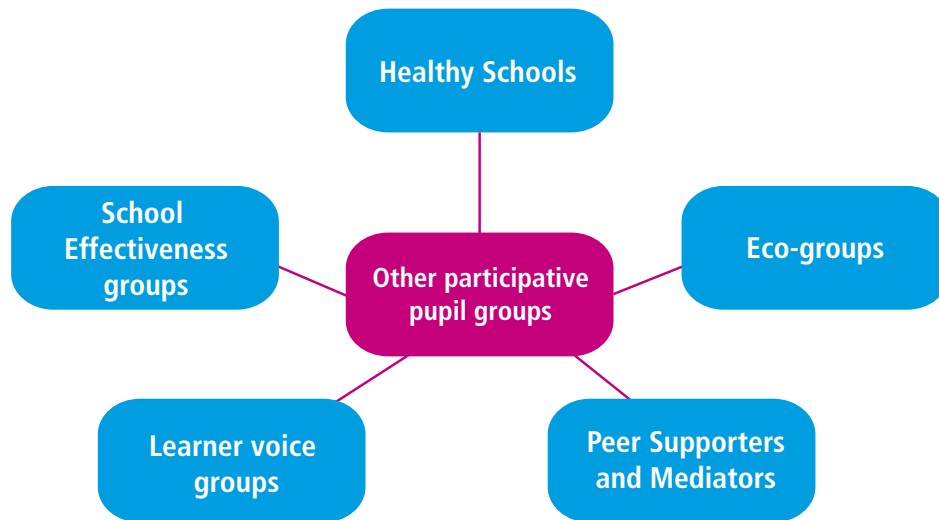
The role of **named member of the Senior Management Team** could include the following elements:

- Liaising with the designated governor to ensure that pupil participation is promoted and developed as a whole-school approach - including the development and implementation of a pupil participation policy - in line with the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales;
- Working with the designated governor and the Senior Management Team to ensure that effective approaches to pupil participation are:
  - incorporated into relevant school policies;
  - identified in the school improvement plan;
  - reflected in strategies and methodologies for teaching and learning;
  - discussed at Senior Management and staff meetings;
  - a standing item on Governing Body meeting agendas;
  - monitored and evaluated by staff and pupils.
- Encouraging understanding of and positive attitudes towards pupil participation amongst the whole staff, including non-teaching staff, through the sharing of information, training and good practice.
- Promoting inclusive policies and methods of participation which encourage all pupils to participate in decision-making processes, including marginalised pupils, and those with Additional Learning Needs.
- Ensuring that channels for communication and feedback are working effectively, so that information is shared in ways that are timely, inclusive and appropriate.
- Promoting and celebrating the achievements of pupils through participation - e.g. through regular or special Assemblies, the school newsletter/web-site, prize-giving ceremonies, notice boards, etc.

**The School Council Link Teacher** has traditionally supported the school council by:

- organising elections;
- training class/year group representatives;
- arranging and attending meetings;
- helping pupils to prepare agendas and minutes;
- offering support and guidance;
- reporting back to colleagues;
- informing governors and parents/carers;
- helping to raise the profile of the school council; and
- monitoring and evaluating progress made.

This role could be extended to include support for **other participative pupil groups** such as



These groups may be sub-committees or linked to the school council, or they could be autonomous, as long as channels of communication between the groups are clear.

This is an important role, and should be supported by a member of the Senior Management Team.

The **Class Teacher/Form Teacher** has an important but not time-consuming role in supporting pupil participation. He/she can support active and effective pupil participation by:

- Raising awareness of a range of opportunities for pupils to play an active role and to participate in decision-making (e.g. through announcements, a class notice-board, posters);
- Ensuring that all pupils are encouraged to participate, not just those who are most articulate or popular;
- Allowing regular time for class discussions to gather views, and feedback;
- Encouraging and supporting discussions so that they reflect the views of all pupils;
- Providing alternative ways to collect the views of pupils (e.g. suggestion boxes, focus groups, questionnaires...)

All staff, including non-teaching staff, should be aware of the benefits of participative approaches, and these should be supported and encouraged through awareness-raising and training. Training activities suitable for use in staff-inset days can be found on the **Resources** page of the Grown-ups section of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

Although some members of staff, governors and pupils have a key role to play in promoting and supporting a holistic approach to pupil participation and making it happen, ultimately it is everyone's responsibility. Participation is as much about a culture as having policies and roles in place. Sometimes it's not who is involved but who isn't which might be a better indication of whether participation is genuinely working in your school. Governors, senior management and representative pupil bodies should consider how as many pupils as possible can be encouraged to participate, including those who are more marginalised or who have additional needs.

### Associate Pupil Governors (APGs)

The role of Associated Pupil Governor (APG) was established by the School Councils (Wales) Regulations (December 2005). School councils in secondary school settings have the right to nominate 2 pupils from Years 11-13 from amongst their membership to sit on the governing body. APGs represent the voice of the school council (as representative of the views of all pupils in the school) at governing body meetings, and in turn communicate matters from the governing body to the school council, and to the wider pupil population.

#### Key Responsibilities include:

- Attendance at full governing body meetings. (These often take place at the end of the school day);
- Attendance at governing body sub-committees as appropriate and manageable;
- Involvement in consultation and discussion prior to and at school council meetings as to what issues pupils may wish to include at governing body meetings;
- Liaison with the Designated Governor to discuss the inclusion of items on the governing body agenda;
- Feedback to the school council regarding issues arising at governing body meetings which are of concern to pupils, including the possibility of wider whole-school consultations.

#### Other possible Responsibilities:

- Contributing to planning, drafting and implementing policies and strategies which affect pupils (with the school council or other pupil groups);
- Involvement in budgetary matters which affect pupils;
- Ensuring that pupil views inform the school self-evaluation process and are integrated into the school development plan;
- Involvement in major developments - e.g. the development of new school buildings and facilities;
- Presenting pupils' views and ideas to the governing body - e.g. as part of school self-evaluation or prior to inspection.

The above list is not exhaustive. The extent to which APGs feel able to take on additional responsibilities will depend on the individual and their other (e.g. academic) commitments.

## Training for the Role

It is important that Associate Pupil Governors receive training to help them fulfill the above responsibilities. Training may be available through the local authority, but otherwise could be happen through the Link Teacher or Designated Governor. Training should include the following elements:

- Understanding the role of the Governing body and its sub-committees;
- Understanding the role of Associate Pupil Governors, including their representative nature, and the scope and limitations of the role;
- The format of Governing body meeting agendas;
- Procedures for contributing to meetings;
- Understanding jargon;
- Listening and communicating in meetings;
- Feeding back from Governing body meetings;
- Raising awareness of the APG role amongst pupils and staff;
- Ensuring effective and inclusive communication.

Sample training activities to prepare APGs for their role can be found at:  
[www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/get-involved/key-roles](http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/get-involved/key-roles).

To enable newly appointed APGs to become familiar with their role, they could be allowed to attend one governing body meeting with observer status before formally taking up the role.



An example of how young people have experienced this role and how communication between pupils and the governing body works can be viewed on the **Secondary Case studies** section of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site. See also: "The Role of APGs - Encouraging Good Practice" (Appendix D).

# Section 4

## The Scope of Pupil Participation

Article 12 of the UNCRC states that children and young people have the right to have their opinions taken into account when decisions are being made that affect their lives. This applies to a large percentage of the decisions which are made in schools, since these largely focus on pupils' learning, development and well-being. Section 2.20 of the School Councils Guidance, 2006, sets out a list of matters which could be considered by school councils, and this could also be used as a guide.

Ultimately the senior management and governing body of the school will need to decide on the scope of matters which pupils can be consulted on and involved in, bearing in mind their role as duty-bearers in relation to the implementation of the UNCRC. **A possible list of matters which pupils can be involved in** is set out below:

- Improving learning;
- Improvements and additions to the curriculum;
- Planning, reviewing and implementing school policies which affect pupils (e.g. the school's pupil participation policy, anti-bullying, behaviour and attendance policies, inclusion, transport to and from school, school uniform...)
- School self-evaluation processes and the school development plan;
- School improvement, including working with other schools to share good practice;
- Whole school ethos and a code of conduct for pupil-teacher relations;
- Extra-curricular activities - e.g. after-school clubs;
- Staff appointments;
- Fundraising, links to charities and use of allocated budget;
- Developing resources and facilities (e.g. IT, sports, music and drama);
- Improvements to the school environment (e.g. school buildings, playground, dining area, décor, toilets...);
- Sustainability (e.g. development of a whole-school environmental policy, recycling, development as an eco-school);

- Pupil welfare - to include anti-bullying, peer support, mentoring and pastoral support arrangements;
- Transition from primary to secondary school, and to further or higher education;
- The quality of pupils' experience of their Learning Pathway at 14-19, including the range of learning options available, accessibility and support;
- Food and fitness (including school meals and provision for keeping fit and healthy);
- Links with the local community and involvement in community projects;
- Representation to the local authority on issues of concern to pupils (e.g. transport, safe routes to school, the environment, etc.).

Governing bodies and headteachers should include pupils in decision-making processes as much as possible, whilst having due regard to their age and maturity. This should not be used, however, to exclude pupils from decision-making processes. The ability of pupils - properly supported - to contribute considered and constructive views and ideas from an early age should not be underestimated.

There are some matters which pupils will be unable to change - such as the amount of time devoted to national curriculum subjects and the timings of school terms. This should be explained to pupils, with reasons as to why this is the case.

As a general rule, **pupils should not be involved in** decision-making about matters relating to:

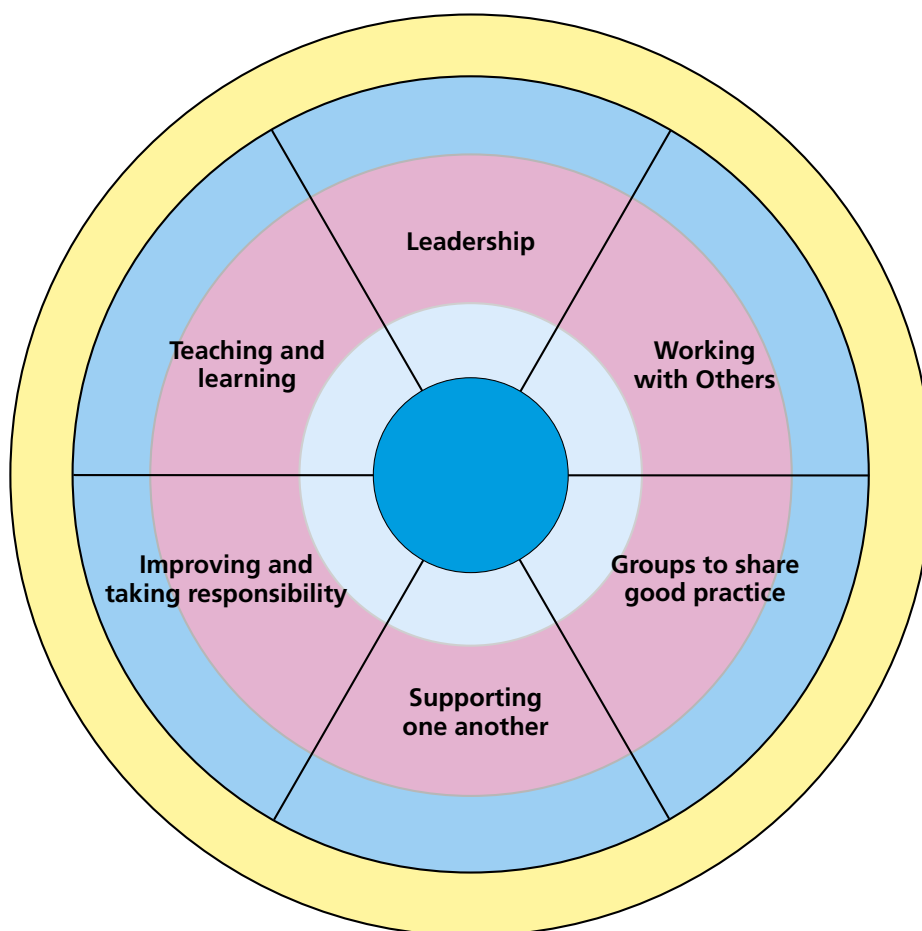
- individual pupils;
- individual staff or other professionals.

# Section 5

## Implementing your Policy

### Developing Pupil Participation as an integral element of an Effective School

Improved outcomes for pupils in terms of better learning and well-being are at the heart of the Welsh Government's **School Effectiveness Framework (SEF)**. A key component of the SEF is partnership working, and this should include pupils, so that they are consulted on and included in planning, implementing and reviewing policies and processes for school improvement, and are able to actively contribute through ideas and initiatives. Pupils can be involved in all areas of the SEF - i.e.:





Ideas of how this can happen can be viewed in a children and young people's version of the SEF entitled: **"School Effectiveness - what does it mean for You?"** and a DVD: **"All Together Now!"**, both of which are downloadable from: [www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/get-involved/an-effective-school/](http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/get-involved/an-effective-school/).

Pupils can also be involved in school self-evaluation through the **School Effectiveness Profile** and in **Pupil Learning Communities**, looking at how to improve specific areas of school life across a cluster of schools. Examples of successful SEF groups can be found on the SEF web-site ([www.sefcymru.org](http://www.sefcymru.org)) and on the **"Effective School"** page of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

## School Self-evaluation and Estyn's Common Inspection Framework

Pupil voice is included in questions 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 of Estyn's 2010 Common Inspection Framework, as outlined below:

1.2.2: Inspectors should consider:

- whether pupils' views about what and how they learn are taken seriously;
- how pupils discuss the topics to be covered and help to plan schemes of work and activities; and
- whether pupils make choices about how and what they learn.

1.2.3: Inspectors should consider:

- pupils' participation in decision-making, including the effectiveness of the school council;
- the extent to which all pupils, including those from different groups, are involved in making decisions about their life in school.

As Estyn inspections are based on the school's annual self-evaluation process, it is recommended that a review of pupil voice be included in this. Possible questions which could be included in an annual review are suggested below:

1. **What opportunities do pupils in your school have to have a voice and actively participate at all levels of school life?** e.g. as part of teaching and learning; class councils; year and school councils; eco-groups; healthy schools; anti-bullying groups; charity and fund-raising projects; staff appointments; involvement in school development plan; policy planning and implementation.
2. **What different ways does your school use to consult with pupils and take on board their experiences and needs?** e.g. suggestion boxes, questionnaires, focus groups, class > year reps, whole-school consultations; teaching methodology, assessment for learning.

3. **How inclusive and representative is your school council?** e.g. Are all sections of the school community represented? If not, are there mechanisms for ensuring their views are represented? Do all pupils feel that their views are listened to and respected? If not, how is this addressed?
4. **How effective is your school council?** e.g. Do all pupils know who their representative is, and what the council is doing to further the needs of students? Is the council properly resourced in terms of time and resources? Are achievements publicised and celebrated?
5. **Staff Training:** e.g. Do staff understand the benefits of pupil participation and how it can help the school? Do they have the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to promote and extend a participative environment?
6. **Sharing Good Practice:** e.g. Do your pupils have the opportunity to share ideas with students from other schools about how they can be involved in working with staff to improve their school community? How could such opportunities be extended?
7. **School Self-assessment Processes:** e.g. Are pupils and staff aware of the National Participation Standards? Could it benefit your school to assess areas of school life against the Standards?
8. **Monitoring and Evaluating Progress:** e.g. How can the increased confidence and skills which come from participation be evidenced? How can this be recorded so that improved outcomes are recognised and celebrated?

Examples of the role of pupil voice in developing effective practice can be found on Estyn's web-site at: [www.estyn.gov.uk/english/annual-report/case-study-films/](http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/annual-report/case-study-films/).

## The National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales

The National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales were launched by Jane Davidson, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning in January 2007. They form a firm foundation for implementing participation in an effective and consistent way across an organisation. These standards have been developed from commonly agreed 'core principles' of participation - i.e. quality standards that can provide a means for measuring and assessing participatory practice. The National Children and Young People's Participation Standards can be viewed on the "**What is Participation?**" page of the Grown-ups Section of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site, and also on the **Resources** page of the Participation Workers' Network for Wales site.



**What the Standards might mean in practical terms** for a school or other educational setting is outlined overleaf:

**INFORMATION**

This is about ensuring that pupils have information in a timely and accessible manner, so that they are able to provide input from an informed position, and know how they can make a difference. This may involve a consideration of communication mechanisms - e.g. use of notice boards, assemblies, times with a class or form teacher, feedback mechanisms with a school council or other pupil groups. It may also involve looking at ways of consulting with and involving pupils in decision-making processes, such as questionnaires, surveys, suggestion boxes and focus groups.

**IT'S YOUR CHOICE**

Children and young people should always have a choice whether they get involved in decision-making processes. This means knowing what a commitment involves and being able to make an informed decision. This could apply to having role descriptions for pupil groups such as the school council and eco-groups, and knowing what's involved when being included in focus groups and consultations.

**NO DISCRIMINATION**

Children of all ages, abilities and circumstances have the right to have a say and get involved in decisions that affect their lives. Although it might be necessary to consider how a young person's needs might affect the way they get involved, this should not exclude them from taking part.

**RESPECT**

If young people are being asked to contribute their views about matters that affect them, they need to feel that they are listened to and taken seriously. This means engaging with children and young people in a respectful dialogue, genuinely taking their issues on board, and working with them to see what changes are possible. This implies give and take on both sides, and should be done on a basis of mutual respect.

**YOU GET SOMETHING OUT OF IT**

If young people are being asked to give their views or actively participate in initiatives, they need to know how they can benefit as a result. Often this is about increased self-esteem and skills, but recognition can also happen in terms of certificates, inclusion in records of achievement, and qualifications (for instance, the Pupil Participation Project has worked with Agored Cymru to develop a set of modules around Young People's Participation that could link into a young person's learning pathway or as part of the Welsh Baccalaureate: see: [www.agored.org.uk/default.aspx?id=238&natcode=&opusid=&qstring=Young+People%27s+Participation+&lookfor=1&lookin=1&level=&credit=&sector=&lang](http://www.agored.org.uk/default.aspx?id=238&natcode=&opusid=&qstring=Young+People%27s+Participation+&lookfor=1&lookin=1&level=&credit=&sector=&lang)). Outcomes also come in terms of children and young people taking pride in the fact that they have been able to make a difference to their school or wider community.

### FEEDBACK

This is one of the most important elements of effective participation. If pupils have been involved in giving their views - e.g. as part of questionnaires, surveys, focus groups or through pupil representatives - then they need to know what happened as a result of their input. This may very well be nothing if there are barriers and restrictions to things happening, but children and young people generally accept this if reasons are given why ideas can't be implemented. Feedback should happen as soon as possible, and in ways that are accessible and understandable.

### IMPROVING HOW WE WORK

The outcome of involving children and young people in making decisions should be a better learning environment for all. At the end of a consultation process, it is good to review with pupils how things have gone, what went well, and what can be improved next time. This includes both improving policies and processes, and also how adults work with young people to make decisions. This means taking the time to build a review or evaluation process into the decision-making cycle. Participation should be fun too, so that children and young people want to get involved.

Below are **some questions** that may be useful to help schools in implementing the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards:

- What methods of communication are used when pupils are being involved in making decisions? Are these methods accessible and timely? Is information shared in ways that are meaningful for all?
- Are children and young people able to make a choice whether or not to get involved in decision-making processes from an informed basis?
- Are all pupils in your organisation able to take part in decision-making at their own level, regardless of age, ability or circumstances?
- Are young people's views genuinely listened to and taken into account when decisions are being made that affect them?
- If pupils get involved in decision-making, do they know how this has improved things and what difference they have made? If their views cannot be implemented, do they know why this is the case?
- Are pupils helped to develop self-esteem, skills and qualifications through participation?
- Is participation part of a broader approach to school improvement, involving pupils in a cyclical process of learning and improving as a Professional Learning Community, and across clusters of schools?

## Degrees of Participation

Another way of assessing how effective pupil participation is in your school is through using a model such as Hart's ladder. This will enable you to explore to what extent pupils are genuinely involved in decision-making, and whether levels of participation can be improved.

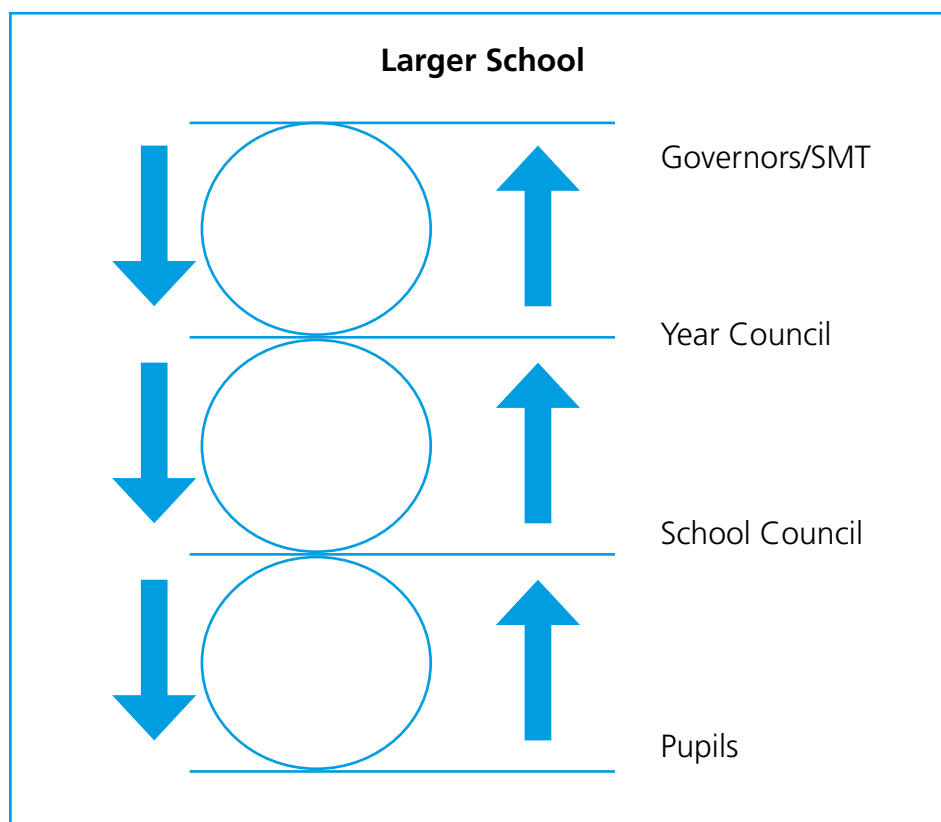
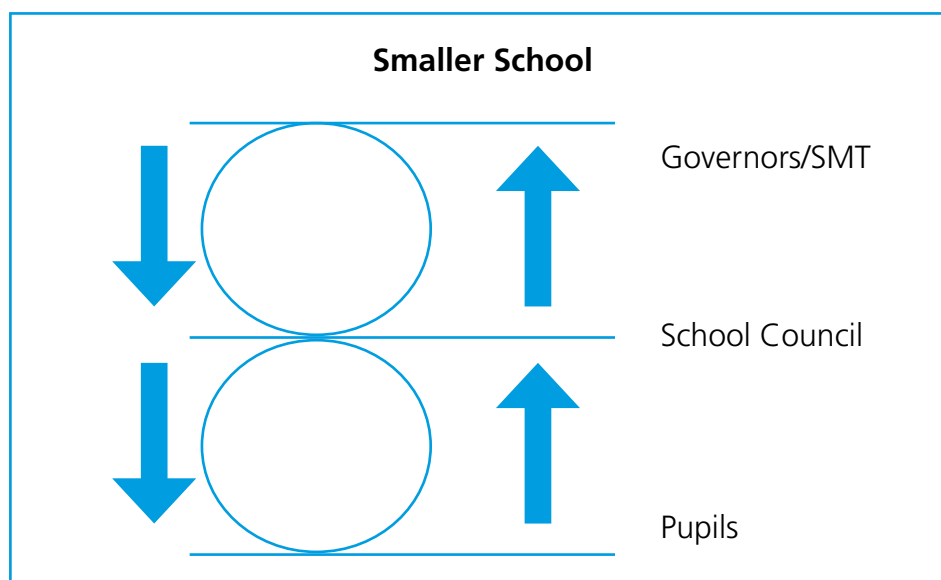


|        |                                |                          |
|--------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Rung 8 | Shared decision-making         | Degrees of participation |
| Rung 7 | Children and young people lead |                          |
| Rung 6 | Adults initiate                |                          |
| Rung 5 | Consult and inform             |                          |
| Rung 4 | Assign                         |                          |
| Rung 3 | Tokenism                       | Non-participation        |
| Rung 2 | Decoration                     |                          |
| Rung 1 | Manipulation                   |                          |

A useful training activity which helps staff to measure practice against Hart's ladder can be found in **Theme 2** of pupil participation training materials on the **Resources** page of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

## Communication

Communication between pupils, the governing body and senior management tends to happen through the school council and other representative pupil groups. For this to be effective, it's vital that communication channels are working well. Possible models of communication are outlined below:



If communication is not working properly, some of the risks are:

- Pupils may not feel listened to (even if they are!);
- Some pupils may feel excluded;
- Feedback isn't received, leading to the perception that 'nothing happens';
- Good news stories aren't shared.

Communication between governors/senior managers and pupils should not be restricted to the school council. It is recommended that members of the governing body take an active interest in and encourage communication with pupil groups such as Healthy Schools, Eco-schools, Peer Mediators, and the SNAG (School Nutrition and Action Group). This can include attendance at meetings, pupil presentations to the governing body on specific initiatives, and celebration of successes.

Communication isn't all about more formal channels however. Some **other ways of sharing information** about consultation and decision-making processes are:

- Notice boards and displays;
- TV screens;
- School Assemblies;
- The school intranet/website;
- The school newsletter;
- Regular times for discussion and feedback.

One way of checking whether pupil participation is working in your school is for a member of the governing body or senior management team to **stop pupils at random** in the corridor or playground and check out their opinion.

Questions could include:

- Do you feel listened to in school?
- Do you know who your school council representative is?
- Can you name anything the school council has done for you in the past year?
- Would you like to be involved in making decisions in school?
- What might stop you from doing this?
- What would encourage you to take part?

## Consultation

Gathering pupils' views and opinions should be a regular feature of school life. Pupils are the stakeholders most likely to be affected by decisions, and are able to contribute unique viewpoints as to how decisions are working on the ground.

The views and ideas of children and young people should be sought in schools when planning, developing and reviewing policies and procedures that might affect them. This does not need to be a time-consuming process once systems are set up - and consultations can be planned, implemented and evaluated by pupil groups. In order to be inclusive, consultations should be well-advertised, happen in a timely manner, and a variety of methods used. Some of these are:

- Consulting through pupil bodies - e.g. school council representatives;
- Group or class discussions;
- Circle time;
- Questionnaires or surveys;
- Focus groups or workshops;
- Initiatives such as learning detectives/roving reporters; and
- Suggestion boxes or electronic mailboxes, or on the school web-site.

In order to avoid tokenism, pupils need to know what will happen as a result of their input, and receive timely feedback about how their views have influenced outcomes. Feedback can happen through:

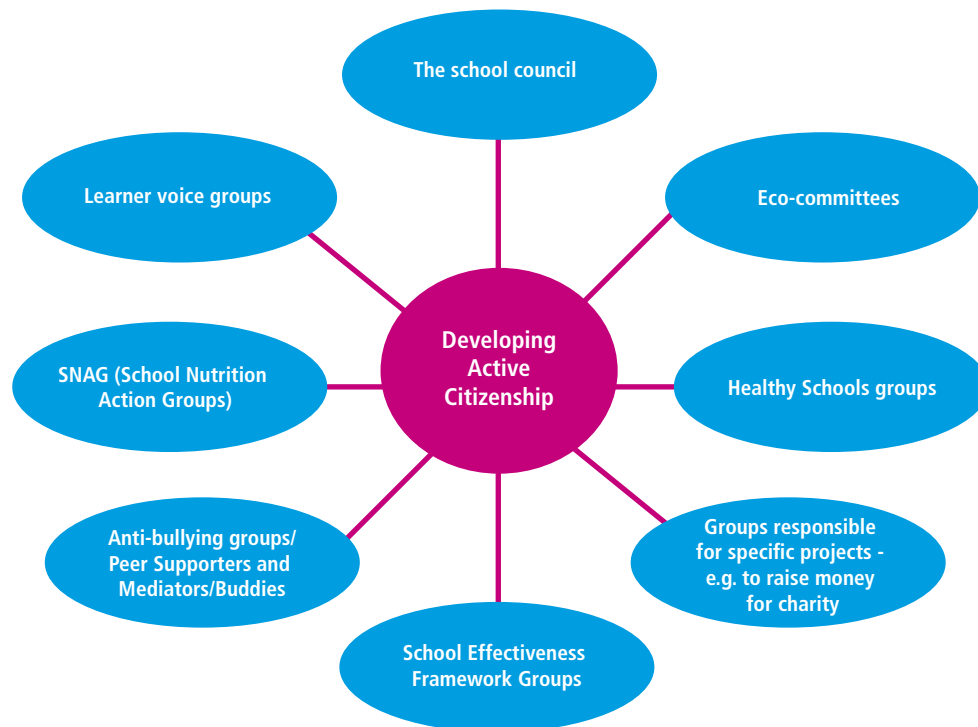
- Pupil representatives on groups such as the school council, eco-council or healthy schools;
- School assemblies;
- Notice-boards and TV screens;
- The school magazine and web-site.

If it has not been possible to take forward ideas submitted by pupils, the reasons for this should be explained. Examples of how children and young people have been actively involved in consultations can be found **on the Primary and Secondary Case Study pages of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.**



## Developing Active Citizenship

Schools should encourage all pupils to become actively engaged and involved in their school community by promoting and offering a variety of opportunities for participation at different levels of school life. For some pupils having the opportunity to have a voice through consultations may be sufficient involvement, but others will value the opportunity to play a more active role in helping to improve their learning and environment. Channels for developing active citizenship can include:



Schools should consider how groups such as the above are linked, to ensure communication between them and to avoid duplication. Groups may be organised as sub-committees of the school council, for instance, or there may be a link member of the school council on each of the other groups. A senior member of staff and the designated governor should have oversight of all groups, and ensure that they have staff support as necessary.



Some examples of how schools have structured opportunities for active pupil involvement as part of a whole-school approach can be found on the “**Get Involved**” page of the Grown Ups’ section of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

## Involving Pupils in Evaluating Learning

Involving pupils in evaluating and improving their own learning goes to the heart of how we define effective education. For learning to be effective, children and young people need to be actively involved in this process, so that they are motivated, engaged and able to develop as independent learners. Pupil participation should therefore be something which all pupils experience at the classroom level. Whole-school approaches to pupil participation through learning can be encouraged by adopting and developing strategies such as Assessment for Learning and Philosophy for Children, by involving pupils in deciding what and how they learn, in evaluating their learning, and planning for improvement.

As mentioned earlier in this guide, this aspect of pupil participation is now inspected under Section 1.2.2 of Estyn's Common Inspection Framework. Estyn inspectors will consider whether pupils' views about what and how they learn are taken seriously; how pupils discuss the topics to be covered and help to plan schemes of work and activities; and whether pupils make choices about how and what they learn.

Evidence of the benefits of actively involving pupils in their learning can be found in the findings of a network of six research projects carried out for the Welsh Government by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) in 2009, entitled: "Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning." The research findings indicate that children and young people benefit from being allowed to play a more active role in their own learning, with genuine participation being almost synonymous with being engaged. In order for this to be effective, however, teachers need to identify and focus on key skills that learners need to take control of their own learning, be willing to 'let go' and give more autonomy to the learner. Researchers established that there are levels of consultation and participation within learning:

- **Stage 1:** Listening to learners - pupils are a source of data. Teachers respond to this data, but are not involved in discussion of it.
- **Stage 2:** Learners are active participants - Teachers initiate enquiry and interpret the data, but pupils are taking some role in decision-making.
- **Stage 3:** Learners as researchers - Pupils are involved in enquiry, and have an active role in decision-making.
- **Stage 4:** Learners as fully active participants and co-researchers - Pupils play an active role in decision-making. Together with teachers, they jointly plan action in the light of data and review the impact of the intervention.

This research indicated that, 'if teachers go further than consulting learners ... and actually engage them as co-researchers in the consultation process, and if pupils and students feel they matter in school and that their views are respected, pupils are more likely to commit themselves to learning.'

A full copy of this network of research projects: **"Improving Learning by Taking Account of Learners' Perspectives"**, can be found on the **"Benefits of Participation"** page of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

The findings of the above research project are in line with best practice approaches being adopted in Wales, where learners - with appropriate support and training - are encouraged to become co-constructors of the curriculum and active partners in Professional Learning Communities in individual schools and across School Effectiveness clusters. These approaches have been shown to have a positive impact in terms of increased motivation, engagement, and improved learning outcomes for pupils. Some examples can be viewed at:

[www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/get-involved/an-effective-school/](http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/get-involved/an-effective-school/).

For further guidance about involving pupils in evaluating and improving learning, see 'The Role of Pupils in Evaluating and Improving Learning' (Appendix C). A case study showing how one school in Wales involved pupils in improving learning can be accessed **on the Learning and Teaching page** of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.



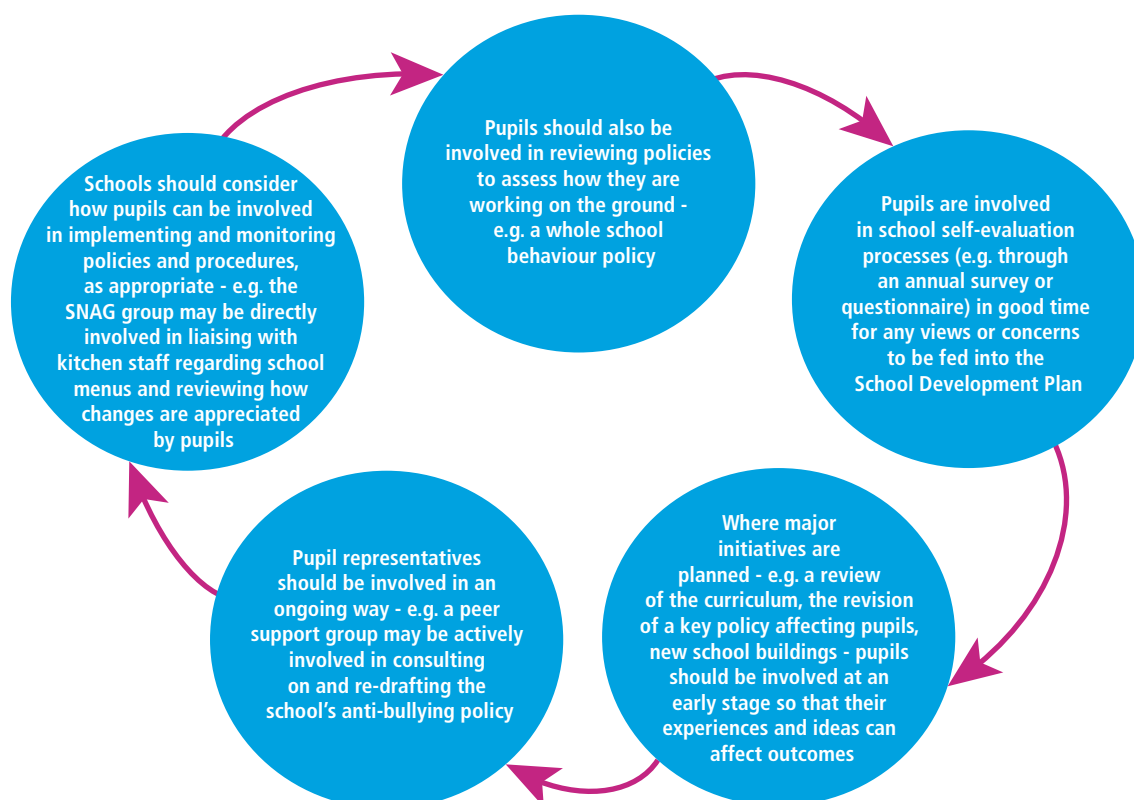
## The Curriculum

As part of a holistic approach to participation opportunities to develop communication, thinking and decision-making skills and to actively involve pupils in their learning should be developed across the curriculum.

Learning about and developing skills related to Active Citizenship is one of the key themes identified in Personal and Social Education (PSE) Framework for 7 to 19-year-olds in Wales. Engaging with this aspect of the PSE Framework should enable children and young people to develop a practical understanding of their rights, and to gain the necessary skills to play an active role in their families and communities. It should also help them to develop 'political literacy', so that they can work with others to make effective decisions, including engaging with political systems at both the local and national levels. A toolkit aimed at raising children and young people's awareness of the United Nations Convention, can be accessed at: [www.uncrcletsgetitright.co.uk/toolkit2.aspx](http://www.uncrcletsgetitright.co.uk/toolkit2.aspx).

## Planning, Reviewing and Implementing Policies and Procedures

Actively involving pupils in decisions that affect them in a holistic way calls for a **proactive, cyclical approach** to planning, reviewing and implementing policies and procedures, as set out below:



## Pupil Involvement in Staff Appointments

Many schools involve pupils in staff appointments both through a pupil panel being involved in the interviewing process and through candidates being required to teach sample lessons. Involving pupils in appointment processes is felt to be beneficial because:

- Candidates are able to demonstrate how they relate to children and young people and their approach to matters directly affecting them - e.g. monitoring behaviour in ways that are fair and consistent;
- Pupils can have direct experience of candidates' teaching methodologies, and be able to give feedback as part of an overall evaluation of their performance;
- Pupils feel that they have some ownership and involvement in appointment processes, and that their views are taken into account.

It is important that pupil involvement in staff appointments is well thought-through, prepared and managed so that it happens in an appropriate and effective manner. In particular, schools need to ensure that:

- Pupils understand their part in the process, its implications and limitations;
- Pupils receive training and support for the role;
- Staff understand their role in supporting pupils and enabling them to participate;
- Core principles are respected - e.g. confidentiality, fairness and equality;
- Any implications are considered - e.g. where there are internal candidates;
- Feedback is built into the process, so that all involved understand what factors affected the final decision, and so that experience and learning can be built on for future appointment processes.

Further guidance concerning the involvement of pupils in staff appointments, and supporting examples can be found in 'Involving Pupils in Staff Appointments' (Appendix E). An example of how pupils have been involved in staff appointments can be viewed in **the "All Together Now" video** on the **"Effective School"** page of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.



# Section 6

## Inclusion

Communication between pupils and the governing body has traditionally happened through **the school council**. This is appropriate, in that the school council is an elected, representative body which is able to convey the views and ideas of all pupils in the school to the governing body and senior management, and to feedback decisions to them. Governors need to be aware, however, that the school council tends to be comprised of more confident and articulate pupils. Care should be taken, when seeking pupils' views, to ensure that consultations are as wide and accessible as possible, and include more marginalised pupils.

All pupils, regardless of their background or ability should have the opportunity to have a say and to participate in decisions that affect them. All schools in Wales now have a school council, and research carried out in Wales pointed to the benefits which increased pupil participation can bring for individual children and young people, the school and the wider community. At the same time, there is a tendency for more articulate, eloquent and engaged pupils to be elected onto the school council and other pupil bodies. In some cases those chosen as pupil representatives are the most popular pupils, leaving others feeling excluded and unrepresented. This is a cause for concern, especially where this may be a further demotivating factor amongst pupils who are already at risk of feeling disengaged from education. Research commissioned by the Welsh Government in 2006 indicates that the risk of some pupils feeling excluded from opportunities to participate increases at secondary school. (See: [www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/get-involved/](http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/get-involved/)).<sup>3</sup>

The above findings are corroborated by recent research carried out by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) in Wales. Research projects carried out under the broad heading 'Authenticity in Consultation' highlighted that an uncritical adoption of learner voice might actually reinforce existing hierarchies among children and young people. It's important for schools to avoid creating a learner voice elite, and to ensure that a multiplicity of voices are heard, including the quiet ones.

As part of a whole-school approach to participation, schools should consider how opportunities to participate in decision-making processes can be made accessible to **all** pupils, so that they feel included and involved in the school community, and know that their views count. This may be particularly important for pupils who feel marginalized - e.g. looked-after children and young people, those from gypsy traveler communities, and pupils from minority ethnic groups.

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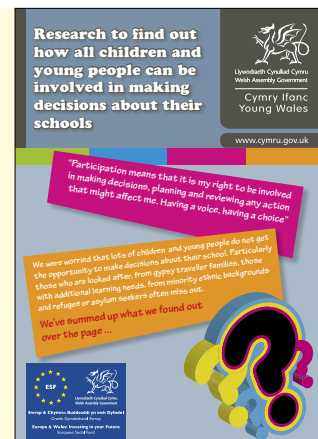
<sup>3</sup> Kath O'Kane consultancy for the Welsh Government: 'Research to develop more inclusive and representative models of pupil participation in Wales'.

### Some ways of extending opportunities to participate include:

- Co-opting pupils onto groups such as the school council to represent particular groups or interests;
- Forming sub-groups or focus groups to ascertain the views of a cross-section of pupils, and to find out how they would like to be involved;
- Ensuring that all pupils have the skills to participate through encouraging teaching methodologies which focus on listening, communication and thinking skills, and on the ability to work in a group, to discuss, negotiate and make decisions.

**Some key messages from research** carried out amongst more marginalized groups of young people to find out how they would like to be included in decision-making processes were:

- Find out about the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards and use them!
- Schools should make rights and participation really central to the way they work;
- Look around your school council, check who is not represented and invite them to join;
- Promote ways to involve all children and young people in having a say in their school;
- Regularly change the members of school council to help get more people involved;
- Train children, young people and teachers in the skills they need to listen and say what they think; and
- Schools should get together and share ideas about how they listen to pupils.



A full copy of the young people's research report can be accessed on the **Get Involved** page of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.



Examples of how schools and other settings have aimed to include all children and young people in decision-making can be found in the **Quick Links** on the Home page of the site.

## Younger Pupils

The ability to participate effectively in decision-making processes depends to some extent on an individual's level of communication and social skills. As these are skills which develop with age and maturity, there is a tendency for opportunities to participate to increase with chronological age. This does not mean to say, however, that younger children do not have relevant views, or that they are unable to express these views in ways appropriate to their age and understanding. The Foundation Phase lays increased emphasis on encouraging young children to make choices and to actively participate in their learning. Many schools already include younger children in their school council, either through class representatives or through mechanisms such as circle time, so that the needs and views of these pupils are represented.

Given the above considerations, the governing body and headteacher should consider how the views of younger children (Years 1 and 2) can be represented on the school council, either through class representatives or through mechanisms such as circle time. The children themselves should be involved in the decision as to how they would like to be represented.

An **interactive PLAP pack** to encourage the development of decision-making skills with 5-7 year olds can be found on the **Primary Resource page** of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

# Section 7

## Monitoring and Evaluation

It's important that pupil participation is monitored and evaluated, so that the impacts for children, young people, staff and the school community can be measured and a baseline established on which to build and improve.

Professionals know that developing active pupil participation makes a difference. A Best Practice Guide based on research to explore the benefits of participation for children, young people, schools and communities was published by the Welsh Government in 2009, and illustrates positive outcomes for all in terms of:

- Learners being empowered to take on responsible roles;
- Improved engagement, behavior and skills;
- Better facilities due to the input of pupils' ideas and insights; and
- Better staff-pupil relationships.

This Guide can be accessed on the **"Benefits of Participation"** page of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

In practice, however, assessment of the impact of participation tends to be anecdotal, and there is a need for a more structured approach, so that progress can be documented and measured.

Individual pupil progress in terms of 'softer skills' - i.e. the attitudes, behaviours and personal and social skills acquired through participation - can be measured through 'Demonstrating Success' - a model developed in Wales to help professionals capture changes in the social and emotional dispositions and skills of young people. Further information about this model can be found at: [www.demonstratingsuccess.co.uk/](http://www.demonstratingsuccess.co.uk/).

Personal learning through active participation can also be captured through accreditation. The Welsh Government has worked with Agored Cymru to create modules on young people's participation in decision-making. These modules could be used as part of a young person's learning pathway at 14-19, or as part of the Welsh Baccalaureate, and support learners in developing and documenting the learning and skills acquired through playing an active role in their school or youth setting. These modules shouldn't be compulsory, but can be offered to young people as a way of having something to show for the time and energy spent in

participating. The modules can be viewed by typing **“Young People’s Participation”** into the **Units search section** of Agored Cymru’s website.

Through the **National Participation Standards for Wales**, it is also possible to assess how a school is doing in terms of developing effective pupil participation. A National Participation Standards Self-assessment Pack - “Do we Meet your Standards?” - has been developed, which enables organisations to collect evidence against the seven Standards, and to document how children and young people have been involved in the self-evaluation process. A National Standards kite-mark has also been developed for organisations who meet and are able to deliver against the National Children and Young People’s Participation Standards. The Self-assessment pack was piloted and welcomed in a number of schools across Wales in 2008, as a way of helping schools to evaluate and develop good practice. Details of the self-assessment pack, the kite-mark and research using the self-assessment tool in schools in Wales can be found on the **“What is Participation?”** page of the Grown-ups Section of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

The **School Effectiveness Profile** has been developed as part of the School Effectiveness Framework to enable schools to evaluate where they are on a continuum from Expected to Transforming in terms of effective leadership. Pupil participation is integrated throughout the Profile and enabling learners to play an active part in the school community so that they are engaged as partners in school improvement is highlighted as good practice. In two schools in South Wales, pupils created their own School Effectiveness Profile. The pupils set criteria under broad SEF headings - i.e. Leadership, Supporting One Another, Teaching and Learning, Improving and Taking Responsibility, and Groups to Share Good Practice. They then drew up statements which would describe practice from level 1 (low) to 4 (high), and collected supporting evidence to decide what level their school attained. Pupils presented their Profile and findings from it at a SEF educational conference. Further details of the SEP and the pupil SEP can be found on the **Get Involved** page of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

Learner voice plays an important role in Estyn’s 2010 Common Inspection Framework, recognizing that actively involving pupils in their own learning and in decisions that affect them has a direct impact on learner motivation and engagement. The process of preparing for inspection now includes a pre-inspection pupil questionnaire. Gaging pupils’ views of their experience of learning and of the school environment and provision isn’t something to be done just as part of the preparation for inspection, however. It should be an integral part of the school’s annual self-evaluation process.

# Section 8

## Support and Training

For pupil participation to be effective, schools should consider what training and support needs to be in place for both staff and pupils. Research has indicated that pupil participation is most effective where it is part of a holistic rights-based approach, based on mutual respect. Although some children and young people may naturally possess skills which are necessary to participation in decision-making, these can be developed in a more inclusive way by ensuring that all pupils are able to develop behaviours and skills essential to active citizenship - for instance by developing a cross-curricular approach. Activities which can be used to develop understanding and skills based on a rights-based approach can be downloaded at: [www.letsgetitright.org.uk](http://www.letsgetitright.org.uk) and [www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk](http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk).

Awareness-raising and training around pupil participation should include knowledge and understanding of:

- the UNCRC in general, and Article 12 in particular;
- structures and policies which support pupil participation in Wales;
- what participation is, including different levels of participation;
- the National Participation Standards for Children and Young People in Wales;
- the benefits - why pupil participation is important;
- what should be in place in school;
- barriers to participation, and how to overcome them;
- how to provide opportunities for and implement consultation and participation;
- how to ensure that participation is inclusive;
- how to develop an action plan; and
- how to monitor and review.

Sample training activities for staff, governors and pupils covering the above aspects can be found on the **Resources** page Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

Opportunities to develop the understanding, behaviours and skills necessary to develop active citizenship can be found in Personal and Social Education (PSE), and across the curriculum. Some of the behaviours, attitudes and skills which can help to develop active citizenship are:

- self-esteem and affirmation of others;
- communication, including listening skills and the ability to express and represent views;
- valuing others;
- consultation skills;
- negotiating and decision-making;
- working in a team;
- project-planning;
- committee skills;
- how to give and receive feedback;
- evaluation skills; and
- financial literacy.



Training materials which help to develop these skills can be found on the **Primary** and **Secondary Resources Pages** of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

 **Young People's Training Activities and DVD clips** showing how these can be integrated into school life is available on the **Secondary Resources page** of the site.

Schools should ensure that the necessary support and resources are in place so that pupil participation is effective. This will include the roles of designated governor and a member of the Senior Management Team, as set out above.

The development of pupil participation does not require any major financial outlay, but schools should consider what resources are necessary in terms of:

- **time** - for instance time for pupil representatives to consult with their peers and to feed back in form/class tutor groups, and time for a member of staff to support groups such as the school council;
- **accommodation** - e.g. a school council or peer mediators' base;
- **training** for staff and pupils; and
- **a designated budget** - e.g. for the school council, eco-committee, SEF group.

Schools should note that a sum of money has been designated as part of local authorities' Revenue Support Grant for a member of staff to be released for half a day six times per year to support school council meetings in core time. In some authorities, this money has been further delegated to individual schools. Where possible meetings of the school council and other pupil groups should happen in core time and not at break and lunch-times, as stated in paragraph 2.14 of the School Councils Guidance (2006). This should ensure that pupils who volunteer to participate are not excluded from activities which happen at these times - e.g. sports and cultural activities.

# Section 9

## Pupil Participation in Different Settings

### Nursery settings

Pupil participation should be developed bearing in mind the age and understanding of pupils, whilst at the same time not underestimating their capabilities, given proper support. At the nursery stage, pupil voice will inevitably involve simple choices, including the choice of activities, refreshments, equipment and colours.

### The Foundation Stage

Choice is an integral element of the Foundation Phase, so that the ability to negotiate and make decisions in a group can be developed from an early age. As children progress through the Foundation Phase, opportunities to express opinions and to participate more actively in decision-making can be developed through the curriculum and through processes such as circle-time. An **Interactive PLAP Pack** to support participation for children aged 5-7 years is available on the [Primary Resource page](#) of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

It is recommended that pupils aged 5-7 years be represented on the school council, either through having pupil representatives, or through holding circle-time sessions to express their views to the school council, discuss ongoing issues, and receive feedback. It is important that this happens in age-appropriate ways, whilst ensuring that the views of younger children are taken seriously.

An example of how younger children have been involved in decision-making as part of the Foundation Phase can be seen in the [Primary Case Studies](#) section of the Pupil Voice web-site.



### Children and Young People with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

Developing and implementing pupil participation in special school settings has its challenges, but can happen very effectively with appropriate support, so that pupils with a range of additional learning needs are able to communicate their views, develop important skills, and play an active role in their learning and in the school community. Case studies from special school settings can be found through the [Quick Links](#) at the bottom of the Home



Page of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site. Further examples of inclusive practice in special school settings can be found on the **Primary** and **Secondary Case Study** pages of the site.

## 14-19 Learning Pathways

One of the key elements of 14-19 Learning Pathways is the idea of the development of an individual learning pathway for all learners, one which is focused on and responds to the individual needs, interests and aspirations, learning styles, skills and abilities.

The learner has a central role in determining their own learning pathway and should be supported to do so with impartial information, advice and guidance. By 2012 all learners will have access to a local curriculum, which will enable them to choose their course of study from a minimum of 30 subject choices, including at least five vocational options, at both KS4 and post-16.

The Learning and Skill (Wales) Measures requires curriculum planners to take into account the views of learners to ensure that their curriculum meet their needs. Statutory guidance on the formation of the local curriculum at KS4 and post-16, highlights that learner interest and demand should be a key factor in determining the local curriculum. It suggests that planners make use of learner surveys, where available, to provide a valuable insight into learner interests and preferences. Where surveys are not available, it requires curriculum planners to identify an appropriate means of obtaining such information, such as sampling of learner opinion.

As learners are increasingly accessing educational opportunities across a variety of settings, it's important that they experience consistent practice across these settings in terms of being able to express their views and take an active role in decisions that affect them. Learners' views and experiences should be taken into account when decisions are being taken about issues such as:

- the number, nature and location of option choices;
- transport; and
- accessibility.

Learners should also be invited to give feedback and ideas concerning the quality of their learning experience, about the support they receive, and about practical issues that affect their learning - e.g. transport, facilities, access.



Examples of learners being actively involved in shaping and improving provision for learning pathways can be found in the **Secondary Case Studies** section of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

## Further Education, Work-based and Adult Community Learning

Further education institutions, work-based and adult community learning providers are required to have a formal Learner Involvement Strategy in place, based on guidance published in 2010. These mirror the arrangements which should be in place in secondary schools, ensuring that young people experience consistency in approach and practice. In the post-compulsory sector, learners will experience a diverse range of settings, from college campuses to community learning venues and workplaces. This poses particular challenges for learner involvement and providers are expected to use a range of strategies to engage learners in decision-making, including course representatives; student governors; students' unions; learner surveys and focus groups. Pupils who have developed their personal and social skills by participating in school can go on to further develop these skills in other learning settings, such as further or higher education institutions.

Learner Involvement Strategy Guidance for post-16 providers can be found at:  
[www.wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/100414learnerinvolvementen.pdf](http://www.wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/100414learnerinvolvementen.pdf).

## Alternative Learning Settings

Consulting with children and young people in alternative learning settings and involving them in decision-making poses challenges due to the often transitory nature of the population and to issues with behaviour and attendance. A "Quick Start Toolkit" and a wealth of supporting video-based case-study materials for developing participative practice in these settings can be accessed on the Pupil Voice Wales web-site at:  
[www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/home](http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/home).

## Links to Participation Locally and Nationally

All local authorities in Wales are required to have a local participation strategy and a youth forum in place to promote, implement and evaluate children and young people's participation, and to ensure that young people get their voice heard in decisions that affect them (Sections 12 and 17 of the Children and Families Measure, 2011). Participation is also developed as part of each authority's Children and Young People's Plan (Core Aim 5).

Schools should make children and young people aware of opportunities to participate at the regional and national levels, and active links between school councils, youth forums and the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales (Funky Dragon) should be encouraged. Sharing of good practice and a joined-up approach can also be encouraged through mechanisms such as school council conferences, local authority questionnaires and pupil learning communities.



Some examples of **junior and secondary school county forums** can be found on the **Primary and Secondary Case Study pages** of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.



## APPENDIX A



# Appendix A

## Developing your Pupil Participation Policy

Developing, implementing and reviewing a pupil participation policy should be part of your organisation's annual self-evaluation process. It may also be aligned to work you are doing on school effectiveness (e.g. through the School Effectiveness Profile) or to implementing the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards, using the National Standards' Self-assessment tool.

Mapping, developing and reviewing policies can seem tedious processes. It's the process itself, however, rather than the end-document, that is important. By involving children and young people in creating your policy, you will send strong messages that you take their voice seriously, and want to involve them in making their learning environment better. Schools who have engaged in such processes report improvements in engagement, behaviour and attainment, and a better environment for all.

It's important not to lose sight of why this process is happening - i.e.

- So that learners feel they are listened to, respected, and involved in their organisation;
- To improve outcomes for learners in terms of well-being and learning;
- To engage learners in the process of organisational improvement, so that they can be active agents in their school community, thus developing important life skills;
- To ensure that policies and processes reflect the needs of learners, and are therefore effective.

The grid overleaf sets out how you may go about developing your pupil participation policy. The columns on the right show how these processes relate to the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards, and to Articles of the UNCRC. For easy reference, the National Participation Standards are listed below. For more detail go to the **"What is Participation?"** page of the Grown-ups Section of the Pupil Voice Wales web-site.

## The National Children and Young People's Participation Standards:

|                      |                                |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1: Information       | 5: You get something out of it |
| 2: Your Choice       | 6: Feedback                    |
| 3: No Discrimination | 7: Improving how we work       |
| 4: Respect           |                                |

## Developing your Pupil Participation Policy - the Process:

| Step of process                                                                 | What this may entail                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | National Standards | UNCRC Articles  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Step 1:</b><br>Map what your organisation is already doing.                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform pupils and staff of what you are doing, why, and how they can be involved;</li> <li>Set up a <b>working group</b> to create a policy. This should include representatives from senior management, governors, staff and a representative cross-section of pupils, including different ages and groups;</li> <li><b>Map</b> what is already happening in your organisation in terms of learner participation and consultation. This could be partly a paper exercise, but it's important to directly involve learners to find out what's working and what could be improved - e.g. through questionnaires, focus groups, suggestion boxes ...</li> <li>For examples of questions that could be asked, see Activity 1e at <a href="http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/resources/theme-1-what-is-pupil-participation">www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/resources/theme-1-what-is-pupil-participation</a></li> </ul> | 1, 2, 3, and 4     | 17, 12, 28 & 29 |
| <b>Step 2:</b><br>Draft policy, based on the responses to the mapping exercise. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at the responses to the mapping process, and draft a policy, based on these (see list of suggested contents in Section 2 of this Guide);</li> <li>Ensure that your policy includes an <b>action plan</b> for the coming year, based on priorities identified during the mapping exercise;</li> <li>Make sure that your policy is clear about how pupils will be involved in the ongoing implementation and review of the policy;</li> <li>Decide how the policy will be communicated to pupils in a way that is accessible and engaging.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                    |                 |

| Step of process                                                                 | What this may entail                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | National Standards | UNCRC Articles |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| <b>Step 3:</b><br>Consult                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a whole-school <b>consultation</b> on your policy, using existing groups and mechanisms.</li> <li>• Think about how to make the consultation as inclusive as possible.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 1, 3, 4            | 12             |
| <b>Step 4:</b><br>Revise policy in the light of consultation, and give feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make any further amendments to the policy in the light of feedback;</li> <li>• <b>Present</b> your policy to pupils, and tell them how it has changed because of their input (or if not, why not!)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 1, 6, 7            |                |
| <b>Step 5:</b><br>Launch and implement the policy                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Launch</b> your policy, so that everyone is aware. Consider inviting a local celebrity to make this a memorable event!</li> <li>• Discuss in the working group as to how pupils can be as involved as possible in the implementation of the policy - especially the action plan.</li> <li>• Set up processes for monitoring implementation of the policy (e.g. item on school council and governing body meetings).</li> </ul>                                                                                      | 1, 5, 6, 7         |                |
| <b>Step 6:</b><br>Review policy and Evaluate progress against priorities        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Towards the end of the year, review progress against your priorities in the action plan:</li> <li>• What has been achieved?</li> <li>• What are the outcomes for pupils and for the organisation?</li> <li>• What didn't go so well, and why?</li> <li>• What lessons can we learn?</li> <li>• What are emerging as priorities for the coming year?</li> <li>• Feed this back to learners. What do they think? What would they like to see happen next?</li> <li>• Remember to celebrate successes as well!</li> </ul> |                    |                |

| Step of process                      | What this may entail                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | National Standards | UNCRC Articles |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| <b>Step 7:</b><br>Recommence process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Once your policy is in place, the process in subsequent years will be more focused on the action plan, rather than the whole policy. The following process is suggested:</li> <li>Appoint a new working group;</li> <li>Look at your policy. Has anything changed? Does anything need amending?</li> <li>Conduct a whole-school consultation on the priorities for the coming year;</li> <li>Draft, present and implement a new action plan.</li> </ul> |                    |                |



## APPENDIX B



## Appendix B

# Developing a Whole-school Approach to Pupil Participation

### Top Tips

Adopting the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales as a school will encourage a consistent and effective approach to involving pupils in decision-making.

Integrating pupil participation into work on school effectiveness will ensure that it's high-profile, embedded in the school development plan, and inclusive. It will also encourage pupils to get involved, as outcomes of their involvement become evident. In the words of a Year 11 pupil from a South Wales comprehensive school:

*"I think that the student council and pupil voice element of the SEF helps fully display the differences that are made in our school. Pupils can see that their input is being taken into account."*

To encourage understanding of and positive attitudes towards pupil participation the whole staff, including non-teaching staff should:

- understand what is meant by pupil participation;
- understand the benefits of pupil participation for individual pupils and staff, and for the whole school community;
- be clear about their role in terms of supporting pupil participation;
- be kept well informed about issues being discussed and proposals put forward by the school council and other pupil representative groups.

Identifying and sharing good practice is a crucial aspect in promoting a coherent approach which supports continuity as pupils move between classes and year groups. Effective approaches to pupil participation should be:

- incorporated into relevant school policies;
- identified in the school improvement plan;
- reflected in approaches to teaching and learning;
- discussed at staff meetings;
- reviewed at Governing Body meetings;
- monitored and evaluated by staff and pupils.





## APPENDIX C



## Appendix C

# The Role of Pupils in Evaluating and Improving Learning

## Why involve pupils in evaluating and improving their own learning?

Involving pupils in evaluating and improving their own learning creates a purposeful partnership between pupils and staff which promotes better learning through:

- developing independent transferable skills;
- creating an ethos of cooperation and collaboration;
- supporting creative and positive attitudes to learning;
- Giving a sense of ownership and a deeper understanding of learning; and
- Promoting experiences of personalised learning.

As part of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP), a research paper was produced in 2010 entitled: "Improving Learning by Taking Account of Learners' Perspectives." Key findings from this research included the following:

- Involving learners as active partners in shaping their learning experiences and environment reaps benefits in terms of learner engagement, self-esteem, confidence and skills; and
- When embedded in the school effectively, the emergence of a clearer learner voice should support an agenda for change, in which pupils feel they play an active part. This active involvement can then become part of a more inclusive framework for school self-evaluation.

## What does it look like? How can pupils be involved in evaluating and improving their own learning?

Pupil voice aims to involve all pupils in both learning and teaching and in the life of the school. A range of classroom approaches have been developed which aim to include all pupils in the process of learning. These approaches encompass what pupils learn, how they learn and why they learn. Some examples are listed below:

- Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies, such as peer marking, self-evaluation, setting of success criteria and higher order questioning;
- Transfer of skills between subject areas and key stages;

- Co-construction of lessons through such strategies as consulting pupils in the planning stage, giving pupils opportunities to research topics, presenting findings, getting feedback through questionnaires on learning and involving pupils in the sharing of learning;
- Opportunities for pupils to contribute their own understanding, interests and needs so that their expertise is utilised;
- Enquiry-based learning including pupils as researchers and in such approaches as circle time and philosophy for children;
- Encouraging pupils to gain increased independence as learners through taking responsibility for their own learning;
- collaborative learning which involves pupils working with teachers and sharing understanding with their peers;
- Developing pupils' ability to reflect on their learning and develop meta-cognitive skills.

Pupil voice is most effective when it is developed as part of a whole-school ethos. Training for staff and pupils should be integral to the school's development of pupil voice which can be further enhanced through:

- effective school councils;
- special interest groups e.g. Eco-schools, Healthy Schools;
- consultation on specific issues e.g. spending and resources.

### **Links to the School Effectiveness Framework and to Estyn's Common Inspection Framework**

The improved learning and well-being of children and young people is at the heart of the School Effectiveness Framework. Collaborative learning is central to SEF, and this works best where pupils are partners in that process. There needs to be a consistency of approach in involving pupils in their learning within schools and across schools. Pupil Voice or SEF groups within schools or across clusters can help to spread good practice through sharing ideas, insights and practices about what constitutes effective learning. Estyn's 2010 Common Inspection Framework also includes an increased focus on the importance of learners as active agents in their own learning.

## Some Questions to Address

### 1. 'Developing pupil voice entails more work.'

Putting emphasis on pupil voice should not create more work, but should rather allow teachers to work more effectively by using pupils' knowledge and experiences in the classroom. Using pupil voice is a reflection of good practices which are already happening in schools. When pupils are given opportunities to help plan, contribute to and reflect on lessons then the curriculum can only be enriched.

### 2. 'Teachers are the experts on education. Why involve pupils?'

Teachers will always be the experts in teaching but by allowing students a voice, education is better served by personalising the curriculum and giving students opportunities to use their own experiences and expertise. In the past, teachers have consulted pupils about their understanding and learning: pupil voice is only a more formalised version of well-established practices.

### 3. 'There's not enough time to consult students as there is a syllabus to teach.'

Pupil voice is not another bolt-on or something extra to the curriculum. It is a method of delivering the syllabus more effectively. Research shows that pupils learn best when actively involved in learning. The teacher can act as a facilitator supporting students as they develop strategies for problem-solving and research, making learning more independent and deep-seated.

### 4. 'Pupils should never be in a position of judging teachers.'

There is no question of 'judgements' being made. In the development of learner voice, pupils and teachers work together collaboratively in the classroom. At the end of units of work or courses, teachers may give out questionnaires on the learning process in order to elicit views and to adjust teaching in order to improve pupil understanding. Where schools invite pupils to give feedback about their learning experiences, this should include training, so that pupils are aware of boundaries, and only comment on their learning and positive aspects of lessons. Through such involvement, students are actively learning about the learning process.





## APPENDIX D



## Appendix D

# The Role of APGs - Encouraging Good Practice

The role of Associated Pupil Governor (APG) was established by the School Councils (Wales) Regulations (December 2005), with the aim of ensuring that pupil voice could be represented at governing body meetings in secondary school settings in Wales.

Some areas of the role are elucidated and explored below, in order to encourage good practice.

## Appointment of Associate Pupil Governors

It is important that Associate Pupil Governors are correctly appointed, and there are indications that this is not happening in all cases. The position is therefore clarified below:

- As stated in paragraph 7.-(1) of the School Councils (Wales) Regulations 2005, the headteacher of a school must ensure that the school council has the opportunity to nominate up to two pupils from its membership to be Associate Pupil Governors. This means that the school council must be informed that they have this choice, and be allowed to choose those pupils who will best represent them at governing body meetings. These representatives may be the Headboy and Headgirl - but not in every case. Staff selection of Associate Pupil Governors is not acceptable.
- The governing body must accept any pupil nominated in accordance with paragraph (1) above, and appoint him or her as an Associate Pupil Governor, unless there are reasons to disqualify him/her under Schedule 5 of The Government of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2005.

## Benefits of APGs

It's important that governing bodies are aware of the role of APGs - and their potential benefits for the governing body and the wider school community. Supporting and developing the role of APGs should enable the governing body to be more effective in its decision-making, including new insights and fresh approaches.

## Continuity

There can be problems with lack of continuity with the role of Associate Pupil Governors, partly due to the fact that older pupils are not available during the summer term due to exam pressures. To alleviate this problem, schools should consider a hand-over period for the APG role at the beginning of the summer term, and ensure that training for the role is in place. Governors should also consider whether younger pupils (e.g. Years 9 and 10) may be allowed to have representation on the governing body

Associate Pupil Governors may hold office for one year, after which they may be reappointed if they are still on the school council. When school councils are nominating pupils from amongst their members to be APGs, the merits of continuity should be weighed against the desire to be inclusive and to give new members the opportunity to represent the school council and pupils as a whole on the governing body. The effectiveness of Associate Pupil Governors will depend on the skills of those appointed, but also on the quality of the relationship and trust built up between governors and pupil representatives. These are all issues that need to be considered carefully.

### Suggestions for Effective Communication

- Consideration should be given to effective, inclusive and timely communication between the governing body, Associate Pupil Governors, the school council and the body of pupils in the school so that information is shared, opportunities for pupils to contribute their views are maximised, and feedback is received.
- Pupils should be aware of the role of APGs, who they are, and what they are able to achieve, whilst also understanding the importance of presenting views and ideas through democratic channels.
- Governors (in particular the Designated Governor) can support APGs by ensuring that they receive any papers well in advance of meetings in an accessible form, and by being aware of the use of language, acronyms and jargon in governing body meetings, which can be intimidating and form a barrier to participation.
- When APGs have been involved in discussing policies and procedures at governing body meetings following wider consultation with pupils, they should ensure that the results are fed back through school council or other pupil representatives to the body of pupils, if possible with an explanation of how pupils' views were represented and influenced the final decision.

### Exclusion of Associate Pupil Governors from meetings

The governing body may exclude Associate Pupil Governors from discussions regarding sensitive and confidential matters. These include:

- Staffing matters such as pay, discipline, performance management, grievance and dismissal;
- Individual pupil discipline;
- Admissions;
- Election, appointment and removal of governors.

In addition, the governing body has discretion to exclude Associate Pupil Governors from any discussion which, because of its nature, is considered to be confidential.

This discretionary power must in no circumstances be used as a pretext to exclude Associate Pupil Governors from discussions, and there should be an expectation that Associate Pupil Governors are present for a significant proportion of governing body business. An understanding of the scope and limitations of the Associate Pupil Governor role should be part of induction training for pupils taking on this role.

## **The budget and financial considerations**

One of the areas of discussion which governing bodies are presently advised they may wish to exclude Associate Pupil Governors from is the budget and financial considerations of the governing body.

Governors should consider carefully before excluding pupils from these matters. It is recommended that young people gain knowledge and experience of budgeting, and this is encouraged by other areas of Welsh Government policy. Pupils may also be able to bring a unique perspective to discussions around what would be value for money, and how pupils would react to proposed developments. For these reasons, it is recommended that Associate Pupil Governors are included in discussions around budgeting and finance in appropriate ways wherever possible.

## **Effective planning and timings of meetings**

Considering that Associate Pupil Governors may be excluded from certain agenda items, it's important that governing body meetings are carefully planned, so that items to which Associate Pupil Governors may have input are placed together on the agenda, preferably towards the beginning. Consideration should also be given to the timing of governing body meetings and their accessibility for Associate Pupil Governors. Many governing body meetings take place at the end of the school day, and the school should ensure that Associate Pupil Governors are able to travel home safely. The Designated Governor should also ensure that Associate Pupil Governors have opportunities to participate effectively in meetings, and that they are supported in becoming acquainted with the format of meetings, and the language used.

## Pupil representation at non-statutory governing body committees

Associate Pupil Governors may be members of non-statutory governing body committees, and may vote at those committees if the governing body grants them voting rights. Associate Pupil Governors may not be members of the following statutory governing body committees:

- staff disciplinary/dismissal committee
- staff disciplinary/dismissal appeal committee
- pupil discipline and exclusions committee
- admissions committee
- staff grievance committee.

There may be an argument for saying that pupils can play a more valued and meaningful role on some of the non-statutory governing body committees rather than on the full governing body. Pupils can play a key role in the School Improvement committee, for instance, including a genuine input into the School Development Plan, school self-evaluation and school effectiveness. Whilst this is true, it must be remembered that it is the governing body rather than its constituent committees that has a strategic view and takes key decisions regarding the management and development of the school. Pupils have a right to be represented on the Governing Body through Associate Pupil Governors, and they must be presented with all the necessary information to make a genuine choice as to what is best for the pupils of the school as a whole. As mentioned above, support should also be in place to ensure that Associate Pupil Governors are able to take an active role in governing body business.



## APPENDIX E



## Appendix E

# Involving Pupils in Staff Appointments

Selection and interviewing processes are about getting the right person for a given situation, in terms of assessing who meets the requirements of the post, and has the qualities and skills to best carry out the tasks and responsibilities it entails. In an educational context this usually means assessing who is best able to provide high quality teaching, whilst engaging and inspiring pupils as part of the learning process, although it may also include judgements about leadership and management skills. It is important that selection processes are carried out in line with certain key principles - in particular openness, fairness, confidentiality, impartiality and equality.

## Why do we need Guidelines on Involving Pupils in Staff Appointments?

The practice of involving pupils in staff appointments is becoming increasingly common, in particular in secondary schools. Whilst this is to be welcomed, it is important that pupils are involved in an effective way, with due regard to key principles and involving preparation and training, so that possible pitfalls are avoided.

Schools should be clear about the benefits of involving pupils in appointments, and what this adds to the process. A list of issues to consider is given below, and it might be useful for staff involving pupils in interviews to work through this prior to the process.

## Rationale - Why Involve Pupils in Staff Appointments?

There are sound reasons why it is a good idea to involve pupils in staff appointments. As recipients of learning, pupils are uniquely placed to contribute views about the effectiveness of candidates' manner, approach to teaching and classroom management techniques. Children and young people also have a right - as stated in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - to be involved in making decisions that affect their lives, and the right to an education (Articles 28 and 29).

Reasons for involving pupils in staff appointments can be divided into benefits for the school and benefits for children and young people themselves. Some benefits are listed below, although this list isn't exhaustive.

## **Benefits for the School**

Through involving pupils in staff appointments you will:

- Gain an added perspective on the candidate - in particular how he/she relates to pupils and is able to help them to learn;
- Better understand what skills and qualities pupils look for in an effective teacher;
- Send a powerful message to pupils that their views are valued and taken seriously;
- Help to develop stronger working relationships between staff and young people;
- Develop more inclusive and effective recruitment and selection processes.

## **Benefits for Pupils**

Through being involved in the interviewing process, pupils:

- Gain confidence and self-esteem;
- Feel that they are valued and that their opinion counts;
- Develop a sense of belonging and ownership;
- Acquire important knowledge and skills - e.g. about the interview process and what principles this is governed by; about how to carry out a fair and effective interview;
- Improve their communication and team-working skills;
- Learn something about what makes a good teacher (and how hard it is to be one!);
- Feel they can make a difference.

For these benefits to be felt, pupils' role in the staff appointment process does need to be meaningful. If pupil involvement is used in a tick-box fashion, there could be prejudicial effects, in that children and young people may feel that they have been manipulated or ignored.

## **Principles for Good Practice**

Any organisation should have consistent systems in place for the recruitment and selection of staff, regardless of whether young people are involved in the process. The following paragraphs explore how schools wishing to involve young people in the various stages of the recruitment and selection process can ensure that standards of fairness and consistency are maintained and that the process is safe and positive for all involved.

**Planning** - It should be remembered that, however pupils are involved in the appointment and selection process, it is the governors who have ultimate responsibility for the recruitment and selection of staff. It is therefore the governors who should decide at the planning stage how and where they would like to involve pupils in the recruitment and selection process, and how pupils will be selected for this role. It may not be appropriate for pupil voice to be represented at every stage of the process. It would be good practice for a school to set up a system, which could be utilised for all appointments, with the proviso that it is monitored and reviewed regularly.

The range and extent of pupils' role should be made clear to all concerned at this stage, so that the pupils involved know that their views will be taken into account but that they will not have the final say. Prospective candidates should also be informed that pupils will be involved in the selection process, so as to help them in preparing their application.

**Training** - Everyone involved in the recruitment and selection of staff needs information, support and training to ensure that the process is confidential, fair and consistent and has due regard for equal opportunities. Training for pupils will depend on their specific role but should cover areas such as: equal opportunities, confidentiality, forming questions which will give the information required, scoring candidates and feeding back to the appointments panel. This may seem a formidable task but there are several resources available which offer activities to help prepare pupils for every stage of the process. A 'Recruitment Pack' (Save the Children 2005) is available to download from [www.savethechildren.org.uk/scotland](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/scotland) and offers a step by step guide to involving children and young people in appointments, as well as useful training activities. It can be helpful to give one adult particular responsibility to support the pupils involved throughout the process, ensuring they have the necessary information and training to undertake their role effectively.

**Drawing up the Job Description and Person Specification** - In a school setting, job descriptions will probably be in place already, unless a new role is being created, but pupils could certainly contribute to the person specification and consider the knowledge, skills and experience which would help somebody to be effective in this role, from a pupil perspective. Pupils will not have the experience to have an overview of all the qualities a candidate will need to carry out their role effectively, but their insight into particular aspects of the role e.g. classroom management, teaching styles and rewards and sanctions, can provide useful and relevant information. Pupil involvement at this stage will help them to understand principles for good practice at the interview stage. Their ideas need to reflect the requirements of the job as described in the job description and ensure that due regard is paid to equal opportunities. They will need to feed their ideas to the appointments panel as the final person specification will form the basis for questions asked at interview.

**Shortlisting** - We would not recommend that pupils are involved in the short listing process for school appointments. Logically, if pupils are to be involved in the shortlisting process, candidates should be informed in advance and tailor their applications to the age of the pupils, and this would be impractical. Also where internal candidates are rejected at this stage, it is easier for everyone if pupils are not involved in that decision. Basically the shortlisting is about selecting the right candidates for interview based on the essential criteria. Where there

are a large number of candidates who meet the essential criteria, shortlisters would consider desirable criteria. The process follows a formula and should be impartial, so pupil involvement at this stage would not influence the outcome. However it is important for pupils who are to be involved in other parts of the process to know what happens at the shortlisting stage so that they don't feel disempowered.

**Interviewing** - Many schools now give pupil representatives an opportunity to be involved at the interview stage. Good practice can include asking shortlisted candidates to teach a lesson and then collecting feedback from the pupils in the class and/or giving pupil representatives an opportunity to conduct a parallel interview with candidates and give feedback to the formal interview panel. In order for this to be a positive, open, fair and safe experience for candidates and pupils we recommend that you consider the following aspects:

- **Openness** - the candidates should know beforehand what is expected of them so that they can prepare. As well as knowing the brief for the demonstration lesson (if appropriate), they should know the age range and number of young people who will be involved in the interview and how the pupils' views will feed in to the decision making process. The school will need to decide whether to give the candidates the interview questions beforehand or not.
- **Fairness** - pupils should ask the same questions of all the candidates and have an agreed scoring system. It helps if pupils have discussed beforehand the elements that will demonstrate a candidate's competency. All the questions should be based on the Person Specification. All people interviewing candidates must disregard any prior knowledge of candidates and base their scoring/feedback solely on the answers to the agreed questions.
- **Safety** - An adult observer should be present at the interview to ensure that the process is fair and to act as a witness if the process is challenged at a later stage. The observer will also ensure that child protection procedures are observed. All pupils involved in the interviewing process must have an understanding of the importance of maintaining confidentiality. They should know from the outset that they must not discuss any of the candidates with anyone not involved in the selection process. Confidentiality is a complex issue and it can be helpful to draw up an agreement which all pupils involved are asked to sign.
- **Positive experience** - having a named 'mentor' who supports the pupils through every stage can help ensure that the experience is safe and positive for them. The mentor should be present at the interview to give any advice or reassurance that the pupils require. They should only intervene if fairness is being compromised or if the pupils need support. (Their role is different from the observer, who is there to observe and record proceedings.) The panel should be large enough for pupils to feel confident and be able to represent pupil voice but not so large that candidates feel intimidated. The chair of the panel should make each candidate welcome, and the panel should stick to the agreed questions and avoid any 'trick' questions.

**Feedback to the Adult Panel** - The format for pupils' feedback to the panel and the weighting that will be given to it should be agreed as part of the planning process. The pupils could score each candidate and collate their scores so that the average score for each candidate is presented by their mentor or the pupil chairperson to the main panel, or pupils could rank the candidates and give their ranking order to the main panel. Some schools set a specific weighting for pupil scores (e.g. 20% of the total score), whilst others agree that the main panel will take the pupils' views into account and consider all aspects before coming to a final decision. Pupils need to know from the outset how their views will feed into the process to avoid disappointment and disillusionment later on. On the issue of feeding back to the candidates our recommendation is that this is always undertaken by the adult managing the recruitment process and candidates and pupils should be told that they must not discuss the process with each other. This reinforces the fact that it is the governing body who is responsible for appointments and that they are not handing over their power to pupils. The main panel should let the pupil representatives know the final decision. Where this does not agree with the recommendation from the pupils, it would be good practice to give a brief explanation of factors that were taken into account.

**Induction** - It would be entirely appropriate for pupils to help to identify how they can help a new member of staff settle into their new role. They can consider what the new member of staff needs to know, who they need to meet and how they can contribute to this process.

## The Selection and Interviewing Process - Issues to Consider

A list of possible questions to consider when involving pupils in selection and interviewing processes is provided below. The aim of these questions is to clarify thinking, and to ensure that young people are involved in an appropriate, fair and effective manner. The list is not exhaustive, but it should help to guide thinking.

| Element of the Process                                                                          | Some Issues to Consider                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Planning<br> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it appropriate to involve pupils in this appointment process?</li> <li>• Which aspects of the process should pupils be involved in?</li> <li>• What is the aim of involving pupils? What will the benefits and outcomes be?</li> <li>• How much weighting will pupil views be given?</li> <li>• Which pupils should be involved, and how many?</li> <li>• How will pupils be selected?</li> <li>• How will expectations be managed?</li> </ul> |
| Training<br> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What support and training do the pupils need, and who will provide it?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

| Element of the Process                                  |                                                                                     | Some Issues to Consider                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Drawing up the Job Description and Person Specification |    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can pupils be involved in drawing up the person specification, or in contributing to the essential and desired criteria for the candidates?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Shortlisting                                            |    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will pupils be informed about what happens at the shortlisting stage?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Interviewing                                            |    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will the interview be conducted? (e.g. who will ask which questions)</li> <li>Will the interview process include lesson observation? If so, which class will be involved, and what criteria will be used?</li> <li>How will information be recorded and shared?</li> <li>Who will support the pupil panel?</li> </ul> |
| Feedback to the Adult Panel                             |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who will provide pupil feedback to the adult panel?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Induction                                               |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can pupils be involved in the induction process? If so, how and with what aspects?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## Using the National Participation Standards when involving Pupils in Staff Appointments

Evaluating processes for involving pupils in staff appointments against the National Participation Standards (see <http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/about-us/what-is-participation/>) should help to ensure that young people's involvement is meaningful and effective. A checklist is provided below to help schools in incorporating the Standards into their practice.

| National Participation Standard | What this means for the effective involvement of pupils in staff appointments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Information                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils receive the information they require in a timely manner and in an accessible format so that they understand the processes involved, and are able to participate in interviewing and selection in a meaningful and effective way.</li> <li>Pupils receive training which enables them to understand the selection and interviewing processes, and their role in it.</li> </ul> |
| It's your Choice                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils have a choice as to whether they wish to be involved in the interviewing and selection processes or not.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| No Discrimination               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where possible, a cross-section of pupils is involved in the interviewing and selection process, not just a select group (e.g. the school council). This can happen through lesson observation, and/or through ensuring a cross-section of pupils are represented on the pupil panel in terms of age, gender, background, ability and additional needs.</li> </ul>                   |
| Respect                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils are clear about the scope and limitations of their role.</li> <li>Adults listen to pupils' views, and take them into account.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| You Get Something out of it     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils gain an understanding of the interview and selection process, and the principles it must adhere to.</li> <li>Pupils are supported in gaining skills to help them in fulfilling their role effectively (through staff support and training).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                        |
| Feedback                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils are informed of the impact of their involvement.</li> <li>Where the outcome of the interview differs from that recommended by the pupils, other factors taken into consideration are clarified.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Improving how we Work           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone involved in the interviewing and selection process (including the pupil panel) is able to feed in their thoughts about how things went, so as to improve practice in the future.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                 |

## **Elements to include in Training for the Pupil Panel**

Training is an important part of involving young people in staff appointments, so that members of the pupil panel:

- Have the information and skills required to play a meaningful and effective role in the process;
- Are aware of key principles which need to be adhered to when interviewing and selecting candidates for a post;
- Have a positive experience and gain confidence and important life skills.

### **Key elements to include in the training are:**

- An explanation of job descriptions and person specifications (including essential and desirable skills);
- Clarification of the selection and interviewing process - as well as the scope and limits of pupils' involvement in this;
- Necessary principles that have to be adhered to as part of the appointment process, and their implications for practice (i.e. openness, fairness, confidentiality, equal opportunities);
- Some understanding of employment law (for older pupils);
- First impressions and countering bias (especially where internal candidates are involved);
- Listening skills;
- Interviewing and question techniques - e.g. how to ask questions in order to gain the required information from a candidate;
- How to use recording and score sheets and how to record comments and opinions in a clear and appropriate manner;
- Making decisions as a group;
- Giving and receiving feedback in an appropriate way.

Some training materials are available in "The Recruitment Pack" produced by Save the Children, Scotland. This is downloadable at: [www.savethechildren.org.uk/scotland](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/scotland).

## Interviews involving Internal Candidates

Particular sensitivities are involved where internal candidates are to be interviewed. It is important that all concerned - both the pupil panel and candidates - understand that they should under no circumstances discuss the interview process with anyone else outside the interview itself, either before, during or after the recruitment and selection process. Any questions which candidates may have about the process should be directed to the named adult contact.

Members of the pupil panel and candidates should understand that all decisions are based on the candidate's response to agreed common questions and evidence of how they meet the person specification as evidenced during the interview, and should in no circumstances be influenced by what is known about them outside the interview situation. Where internal candidates are involved, it will be important to include something in the training for the pupil panel about first impressions, impartiality and countering bias.

Where internal candidates are involved, particular care should be taken in selecting members of the pupil panel, as it's important that judgement isn't clouded by any positive or negative bias due to experiences outside the interview process.

Offering the successful candidate the post, giving feedback to candidates on the interview process, or telling them they have been unsuccessful should always be undertaken by an adult. This is particularly important where a candidate is known to the young people involved.

## References:

'The Recruitment Pack' - Save the Children Scotland ([www.savethechildren.org.uk/scotland](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/scotland))

