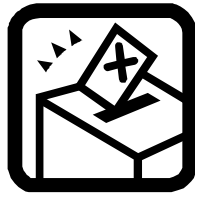


# School Council



## Giving pupils a say in school life

As a result of a growing acknowledgement of children's rights to be heard in situations where their interests are affected, the value of involving even young children in the running of the school community is increasingly recognised and appreciated.

Prof. Lynn Davies of Birmingham University claims that schools with effective councils tend to be more inclusive. Her study suggests that school councils can contribute to an environment in which there is increasing peer support for difficult children, an increased ownership of codes of conduct, thereby exerting positive peer pressure. School councils can contribute to a more caring and inclusive environment across the school.

## Benefits to the children

Through involvement in a school council, children can gain:

- Ø Life skills :
  - Pupil councils provide a basis for active learning of important life skills, such as speaking and listening skills, teamwork, emotional literacy, problem-solving, moral reasoning skills, self-esteem and self confidence.
  - Pupil council experiences provide a dynamic foundation for learning about citizenship
  - Young people and children acquire skills which help them to become resilient to negative experiences.
  - School and class councils enable pupils to have a voice and to understand that their opinions count.
- Ø A better understanding of their problems
- Ø A say in matters which concern them
- Ø Opportunities to learn about the way organisations function, including how resources are deployed and shared problems addressed
- Ø Increased self-confidence in tackling issues, being proactive, speaking in public, debating issues and handling matters in a business-like manner
- Ø Opportunities to become more socially and morally responsible
- Ø A greater sense of community across all the school years
- Ø A practical chance to plan for change and see the benefits in reality
- Ø Increased self-esteem

## Benefits to the schools

Schools significantly gain from having a school council. Some of the benefits they bring are:

- Ø Improved behaviour:
  - Positive peer leadership develops and the responsibility for maintaining good behaviour is shifted away from teachers and towards members of the classroom and school community.
  - Pupils become able to resolve conflicts amongst their peers.
  - Disruptive behaviour, vandalism, truancy and exclusions reduce.
- Ø Reduced vulnerability and stress
  - There is improved communication between pupils and teachers, senior management and governors.
  - The school develops into a community where pupils and teachers work in partnership towards shared goals.
- Ø Building the school community:
  - Improvements in behaviour have a positive impact on teachers' stress levels, teacher-pupil relationships and the learning environment.
  - Peer mediation enables pupils to support vulnerable classmates, so promoting an inclusive and caring community where all pupils feel valued and safe
- Ø Greater awareness of pupil issues and of the realities of the school experience
- Ø Greater pupil involvement in school affairs as pupils assisting in the implementation of school policy
- Ø Harnessing of pupil energy and enthusiasm, such as fund-raising
- Ø Increased pupil responsibility and ownership of the school

(RRR articles 3, 12, 13, 14, 15, 29 & 31)