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Participation  
*and* Learning



**Save the Children**

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## DVD production and booklet authors

Andrea Priestley and Alison Ritchie, Save the Children

Save the Children fights for children and young people in Scotland and around the world who suffer from poverty and injustice. We work in Scotland and over 52 countries worldwide. Save the Children works with children and young people to find lasting answers to the problems they face.

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## Foreword

Inspiration is contagious. This DVD shows how inspired teachers and their pupils have worked together to create vibrant school communities, based on a commitment to involving children and young people. Teachers, headteachers and pupils talk about the difference this has made. It is important that teachers are central to this film, relating their initial fears about some aspects of participation, as well as their enduring enthusiasm. Like any professional group, teachers will benefit from opportunities to share and reflect on their work with their colleagues. That is what this film provides.

This film shows that the participation of pupils – a central principle of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – actually supports existing agendas rather than taking time and resources from them. It models to the whole school community the respectful attitude that we all wish to see. Participation increases children and young people's confidence and encourages them to learn. But it also helps adults learn and grow. We are all learning all of the time. This resource promises to make a substantial contribution to the 'learning communities' that are our aim.

**Kathleen Marshall**

Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People

Participation is more than just taking part, it is about listening, sharing experiences and learning from each other. If we want our children to take an active part in society we must value their voice and hear their views. The enthusiasm and motivation of the young people involved in this DVD shows what can happen if we work together on an equal footing. We see bright and keen young people, passionate about what they are discussing, genuinely taking part and sharing their experiences and learning with each other. Teachers who are inspired by the work they are doing in building mutual respect and trusting relationships and partnerships.

This resource offers us all an opportunity to reflect on how we work with young people in schools, how we can learn from them and from each other. It encourages us to value children and young people as equal partners in learning. These are vital steps to support young people in becoming successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens who contribute effectively to the changing society in which they live now and in the future. The young person's voice is important and we must listen to it.

**Bernard McLeary**

Chief Executive, Learning and Teaching Scotland

## Introduction

*'How do you get pupils involved in decision-making? How do you arrange things, set things up, create an environment where it is not just one or two pupils that get involved? Well, I don't know, but I think it starts off from the right ethos where people feel confident that they can come forward and try things...'*

Headteacher, Fortrose Academy

This booklet, together with the accompanying DVD, provides examples of how Scottish school communities are enabling children and young people, teachers, parents and others to 'get involved' and participate in all aspects of school life. It offers ideas about how people can be involved in joint decision-making, creating environments of mutual respect. The resource demonstrates how different schools find different approaches that work for them, creating vibrant, motivating learning environments in which children and young people, from 3 to 18, are able to flourish and excel. It illustrates how these practices can start in the early years and be developed throughout the school experience and beyond. It is hoped that these examples of practice will provide a basis for reflection and discussion around the issues of participation and decision-making in school life.

This is an exploration of participation that goes beyond the simple provision of a school council, or other formal consultative processes, or indeed the more general interpretation of participation as simply 'taking part'. The findings presented in the resource and DVD are consistent with the four dimensions of participation described by Fielding and Ruddock<sup>1</sup>, namely:

- the organisational dimension (through which young people feel more positive about school),
- the personal dimension, leading to students feeling more positive about themselves,
- the pedagogic dimension, which helps students to better manage their own progress in learning, and
- the political dimension, which helps young people understand how they can make a difference to things that matter to them in school, and indeed beyond school.

The chapters describe schools on their journey to develop participation, from the deeply cultural to the very practical.

**Chapter 1** explores the cultural climate of the school in which participation can best thrive: one where people feel safe and secure and have a sense of belonging and ownership. Examples, presented in the form of case studies, show the different ways in which schools have built a strong sense of community and positive relationships, where people feel respected, trusted and valued.

**Chapter 2** focuses on classroom ethos and presents a variety of practical approaches that teachers have used to build a relaxed, friendly and motivating climate based on dialogue and partnership.

**Chapter 3** centres on listening, which is fundamental to effective participation. This chapter explores some of the ways that schools have tried to listen to and consult with the school community, respecting and responding to people's views and ideas.

**Chapter 4** explores the cumulative effect of participation in schools. It reflects on the diverse ways in which these schools have enabled students to use their voice and confidence to get involved in activities or issues of interest to them, developing citizenship, and personal and social responsibility.

**Chapter 5** reminds us that '... of course the same applies to adults!' The final chapter reflects more explicitly on the critical role of leadership, and how these schools have worked to empower and enable staff to contribute to the quality of ethos, relationships and participation.

### The Policy Framework

The right for children and young people to participate and make decisions in their school life is enshrined in Scottish legislation. The basis for this has come from the ratification by Scotland in 1991 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*. This contains articles directly pertinent to education: 12, 28 and 29. Article 12, the most widely known, states that 'parties shall assure, to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views, the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child in accordance with age and maturity of the child'. *The Children (Scotland) Act 1995* and the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000*, reflect this commitment to the UNCRC.

In 2002 the *Education for Citizenship in Scotland*<sup>2</sup> framework was developed. This describes an open participatory ethos as a pre-requisite for effective education for citizenship. The ethos and climate for learning described by this document suggest an ethos that is 'positive and challenging, characterised by respect and care for individuals and their communities, stimulating and motivating, promoting thoughtful interaction and critical debate and one that is conducive to enterprising, constructive thinking'.

The rationale for *Curriculum for Excellence*<sup>3</sup> has at its core the notion of improved student participation in order to develop the four capacities: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

The same policy perspective can be found in other legislation and guidance, such as; *Determined to Succeed*<sup>4</sup>, *Better Behaviour – Better Learning*<sup>5</sup>, *Assessment is for Learning*<sup>6</sup> and the *Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act*<sup>7</sup>.

Several dimensions of excellence in HMIE's most recent document, *The Journey to Excellence*<sup>8</sup>, feature aspects of participation:

- engaging young people in the highest quality learning experiences (including developing a sense of community and shared values)
- developing a common vision among young people, parents and staff
- fostering high quality leadership at all levels (including drawing on collective knowledge and experience of staff and on students' views)
- valuing and empowering young people and staff (including involving young people in making decisions about the future work of the school)
- promoting wellbeing and respect.

Thus the current policy climate actively encourages participation and decision-making at all levels within a school community. This resource comes as a timely reminder of ways in which this already happens and hopefully opens up avenues for reflection and discussion of what might and could be.

### Participation and learning for all

Children have the right to an education. For all of us, our experience of school education as a child and young person is unique. For the most vulnerable young people in society, schooling can be a very negative experience. For some, this negativity is never overcome; for others, it remains a constant challenge. In spite of a growing policy climate of awareness and support for those struggling to succeed, schools remain difficult institutions for many young people to negotiate.

*There's nothing to look forward to at school ... That's what bugs you – you do the work, then you get bored with the work ... So then you talk to your pals and that's when the teacher tells you to shut up and that's when you start getting annoyed with the teacher ... It's the work that bores you into doing other things ... things to amuse yourself.*<sup>9</sup>

Young person

Schools bring together people from diverse walks of life and attempt to provide equal opportunities for all. At times, despite the best endeavours of teachers and others working through the school, existing inequalities are not only untouched, but sometimes reinforced.

*When I went to school first of all they would all go 'Gypsy! Go back to where you belong!'*<sup>10</sup>

Young person

Efforts to develop stronger approaches to participation, which include listening to young people who are socially excluded, is an important strategy for developing our understanding of young people's needs.

We had went on an outdoor activity week and there was a lot happening before that, and I felt really bad about myself. A lot of things happened there: I got bullied, and I went off my nut. I decided to shout, swear and punch people for no apparent reason. Instead of sending me home, this teacher realised my problems ... and spoke to me. I came back and felt refreshed and important. I felt really comfortable talking to him because he seemed to really know what it was that I was going through – it was really, really important.<sup>11</sup>

Young person

Teachers' comments can stay with you for life.

B.Ed student

Creating a collaborative, supportive culture within a school community is a challenge. Many schools across Scotland have exciting and innovative examples of this to share. Several schools have shared their experiences and provided insights for reflection in this resource. Each school operates in a unique way, serving its local context and culture within a framework of centrally initiated educational reforms. Schools take many different routes to try and ensure that they create a community where people feel valued and listened to. Most striking is the importance placed on ensuring that school is a place of respect, trust, collaboration and enjoyment for all.

This is not a comprehensive account of participation and participatory pedagogies but it is hoped that those illustrated will provide ideas for reflection and questions that lead to fruitful discussions with colleagues and others.

This DVD and booklet are available online at:  
[www.LTScotland.org.uk/participationandlearning](http://www.LTScotland.org.uk/participationandlearning)

## Building community and relationships

This chapter uses short case studies to explore some of the key aspects in the establishment of a culture of participation:

- building trust
- building relationships with the community
- building community through active learning
- building shared values
- taking time to listen.

There seems to be no single prescription for establishing a participatory school ethos. An environment where people feel secure, have a sense of belonging and build relationships that are characterised by mutual respect and trust seems central. Common to all these case studies are strategies that recognise and build on existing strengths. Typically, these schools also set the 'school community' boundaries widely, encompassing not only managers, teachers and students, but also other school staff and related workers, parents, carers and the school's immediate neighbours.

### Fortrose Academy: building trust

Fortrose Academy is a secondary school in Highland. It has 687 students on roll aged 11–18 years.

...the thing that struck me most is that it has got a really friendly atmosphere. There is definitely a kind of balance between the academic features of the school ... there is just an amazingly welcome, hospitable, friendly atmosphere between pupils and teachers alike...

Student

In this school the management team lead by example. Its enthusiasm for learning is visible to the school community. The headteacher learnt to unicycle and took Higher French alongside his students. The deputies are learning to swim and ride bicycles. They communicate the desire to provide a learning experience that is successful whilst still being fun. Their efforts to ensure that students are involved in decision-making at all levels range from students being on the senior management team to students being asked to comment about their teaching.

When we looked at it we identified that we could distil the aims of Fortrose Academy into a couple of things ... for pupils to excel, but to feel that they can come to school and have as much fun as possible.

Headteacher

### Considered risk-taking

The headteacher sees that taking risks is part of an effective organisation. Such risks may elicit unexpected outcomes. Some of these may be positive, but others, perhaps 'mistakes', can also provide valuable lessons. However, risks are best taken in a supportive environment that values the learning which can be drawn out.

Well I think any effective organisation should be an organisation that encourages people to take risks – I don't think you learn anything unless you take risks.

I want them to be secure enough and confident enough in what they are doing, that they are prepared to take risks, and they know it is not going to come hammering back, the blame is going to be on them if they are going to get it wrong. But obviously you don't want to be making the same mistake too often. But I would ... not criticise mistakes, but actively look for people to be taking risks and occasionally making mistakes.  
Headteacher

This approach seems to give all in the school permission to be creative and supports the notion of permissible risk-taking.

Yes, I think a lot stems from the headteacher's attitude. We get children coming to us with ideas that are really quite difficult to implement, and staff as well ... but because Douglas leads by saying 'yes', I think we are all more inclined to say 'yes' ... everybody feels that they have got permission to come up with something.  
Depute Head

### What do we think of one another?

Recognising that the idea of seeking students' views and feedback on their classroom experience is for many teachers quite challenging, this school decided that it would first model the process by asking the staff to feedback on the performance of the senior management team.

...we gave every teacher in the school the opportunity to anonymously or otherwise, comment on Senior Management ... almost all the teachers responded to that, and it provided us with ... extremely encouraging feedback from the teachers, that most of them actually valued what we were doing ... And to get that sort of positive feedback about the job that we are doing, was extremely encouraging.  
Headteacher

A variety of ways of contributing were offered to ensure staff felt comfortable with the process. This signalled how important it was for everyone to have an opportunity to feed in, whilst being aware of sensitivities and barriers to participation. Transparent follow up and feedback were essential to the credibility of the exercise.

... that was an exercise which I think took great courage on their part to do, but I think they took it on board, a lot of the suggestions and perhaps criticisms that were made by the staff – that there were areas that perhaps they could improve on and were really quite happy to then try and do that ...

Teacher

Building on the strengths and enthusiasm of those within the school community has enabled this school to develop its approach to consultation. Listening is part of the ethos, so senior students as well as principal teachers have been welcomed into the management team meetings. This occurs on a rotation basis so that all senior students have the opportunity of being part of this decision-making body.

This amalgamation of consultation, co-operation, support, learning and risk-taking is described by members of the senior management team as being like a family. Here the strong relationships can provide a safe and secure environment, which engenders a sense of belonging so learning is more likely to take place.

Well my view of the school is that it ought to be like an extended family, and that's how I think it runs. I think the seniors play a part because they are older, they set the example. The young ones – we are trying to encourage them at all times to become part of a community and not be on the outside or the periphery of it, but to actually belong to it and contribute to it from a very early stage – and I think they do.

Depute Head

... what you hope is happening in the family is that you get together and you work through what it is, and I think that that is the way we would like to think the school is as well – when something goes wrong we can sit down and we say 'well how can we make sure that doesn't go wrong again', or 'how can we make sure things are better in the future', and that is involving the children, as we would in a family.

Depute Head

### Antonine Primary School: building relationships with the community

Antonine Primary School was established in 2005 as a result of merging two established primary schools in the Drumchapel area in Glasgow City. A split site arrangement was in place prior to May 2007, when the population of approximately 242 pupils moved to a new building.

#### Creating a safe and secure environment

The changing leadership and the prospect of merging two small primaries into a larger one housed in a new school building provided the headteacher with the challenge of creating an environment to meet the needs of all involved.

The headteacher felt a crucial step would be to create a shared ethos. After discussion with staff and students, a Relationships Policy was developed, which identified the key features of positive relationships that the new school community should be aiming for. The policy was also shared with parents.

... we wanted to try to create ... a sense of respect from the children to the teacher, but also the teacher to the children, and a mutual respect amongst the children.

Headteacher

This process of discussion and sharing views across the school community was also used to develop a Behaviour Policy. This policy was based on a set of shared Zero Tolerance rules, with children recording their behaviour daily, using a traffic lights system. Parents contributed to the development of this policy.

The kids have a lot of respect for not only the other kids, the members of staff, the janitor and anybody coming in and out to the school. All the kids now will help you, they are very polite towards you – it has just worked fantastic.

Parent

The discussion process that led to the creation of these policies modelled the school's underlying values of mutual respect, good relationships and trust. It also demonstrated the school's commitment to participation as key to good relationships: having a say, being listened to, being heard and then seeing the consequences play a very important part.

I said to the children – ‘what do you want [to]... change?’ They said ‘we would like some after school clubs...’ I said ‘okay, I promise I will deliver that...’ When they saw that I was delivering, they were happy to participate... They saw that together we were actually making a difference.

Headteacher

### Building relationships with parents

The school takes trouble to ensure that parents and carers are engaged from the start. Sometimes this can mean trying to get parents/carers to review their perspective on school as some have a negative view owing to their own experiences.

Understanding the complementary roles that parents and teachers play in a child's education is recognised and valued within this school. The positive benefits that a home-school relationship, based on reciprocity, trust and respect, can have on the children's experience of education are valued. The newly introduced behaviour management system is an example of this.

... we engaged [with] a number of parents, and they followed that traffic light system at home ... that helped with the relationship-building at home, but it also helped with the continuity in terms of behaviour management – that what was happening at school was being consistently dealt with back at home as well ... the children understood that that process was then working between school and between home, and it built a good relationship with these parents ...

Headteacher

In this school, participation has been fundamental in creating an environment where people feel safe, valued and have a strong sense of belonging. This has been reflected in the children's learning and achievement, including a significant rise in literacy attainment figures.

### Oban High School: building community through active learning

Oban High School is a secondary school in Argyll and Bute. It has 1,130 students on roll aged 11–18 years.

Reflecting the participatory ethos of the school, the staff team have created structured opportunities to develop relationships with the student population. The school used the Critical Skills Programme (CSP) as a catalyst to begin a process of change, judging that its community values and participative techniques were appropriate to this task.

Putting 20 staff through a three-day CSP training programme involved a big financial investment. In practice the consequences were very positive, both in relation to approaches to learning and teaching, and in building cross-curricular relationships between staff. Building community within the staff team, making them feel more involved, valued and supported, was an important first step. This then enabled them to build community and develop participation amongst the student population.

...when you take secondary teachers ... 20 of them together for three days, you very quickly build a very strong bond together, and they all said that that is what they thought was incredibly valuable ... And we found that to be the biggest impact, and one that quite surprised us because we hadn't thought about it ... There was a real sense that we were building something really powerful here.

Principal Teacher

The staff who attended the training appreciated the opportunity for new and different learning and they also expressed the view that the training is just the beginning. Time and support is given by the senior management team to enable staff to continue with their development.

... we are always encouraged to continue with it [develop practice] – it is not something we do on a course, tick a box, and then go back to the way we were before.

Teacher

### Building positive relationships through small structural changes

The importance of relationships to this school has meant that teachers have worked on providing structured opportunities for positive relationships to build up. Responding to feedback from an inspection, the senior leadership team decided to radically change the Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme. Six staff members came out of timetable for a whole day and looked at what was required. It was decided to try setting up tutor groups to encourage students to get to know one member of staff really well. The 'check-in' technique was adopted to build community in the PSE tutor groups.

... a very simple technique where we just check in, which is where all the pupils sit round the table and we just ask them how their week has been or what they have been doing, or anything interesting that they want to speak about within the group ... that may well be the only time in the whole week where someone asks them how they are feeling or what has been happening in their personal life. And so we find the check-in very powerful. Some pupils will just say 'pass' if they don't want to say anything.  
Teacher

All PSE lessons were timetabled to take place at the same time. This highlighted the importance the school was placing on this as an opportunity to build relationships and community between staff and students.

It was one of these moments, you know, when we very first decided to have the PSE programme with everyone involved in it. I remember standing in a room that was up in the courtyard and I looked around, and every classroom – they were all doing a check-in, and I thought 'oh that's the whole school doing that' ... I was quite blown away by that moment actually!  
Principal Teacher

The less formal atmosphere of check-in, where there is time to interact on a more personal level, was appreciated by the students. They suggest that even simple interactions can help put them in a better mood in lessons so enabling them to engage with their learning.

Yes, if you are in a bad mood you just sort of sit there bored and you don't want to do anything. It is always much better if they put you in a good mood before they start teaching you.  
Student

A teacher suggested that the advent of the 'check-in' had, in her mind, changed the learning environment in the classroom making it less stressful for both the teacher and student.

And overall, in an informal ... or less stressed environment, the children learn an awful lot more and an awful lot better. And as a teacher, I think you work a lot better in an environment which has not got as much stress in it ... because everybody sort of feels valued and feels part of a team working together.  
Teacher

Implementing change, however small, can be threatening to some people and unless the resources and support are in place, cultural change may not take place. This was recognised by the senior leadership team, which has worked hard to sustain the momentum of the new initiative. Working with staff to ascertain the type of support needed is standard practice, as is a recognition that some staff may still struggle with the innovation. The senior leadership team is very conscious that things can slip, 'not all staff see check-in as time well spent', so it has created a booklet for all PSE tutors, to give them different and fun activities that they can do at any time in their class, to get everyone in the mood for learning.

### Dalry Primary School: building shared values

Dalry School is a combined 3–16 school in Dumfries and Galloway. It has 55 students in the primary section and 73 in the secondary.

Schools sit in diverse and complex communities. School staff, students and parents can all have different values and attitudes and whilst this is to be celebrated, it does challenge the idea of a school community with a clear sense of identity and cohesion.

I had a wee boy two years ago, and he was saying 'in school I wouldn't hit anyone, but in the street I would', and I said 'why is that?' He said 'because my Dad tells me to – my Dad says you have got to fight back, you have got to kick out and do this and defend yourself, to be a man'. And he said 'but I know that is not what I do in the school'. So I said 'how does that make you feel?' And he said 'it's okay, because I know there is a school world and there is an outside world'.  
Headteacher

The primary section of the school initiated a dialogue about aims and values. Initially it was an exercise with parents, children and school staff from the primary sector. A staff meeting with parents and children took place. Supply teachers were brought in to cover classes so that all teaching and support staff were involved. The group worked to choose a value and choose a mission statement. It was soon realised that as the primary sector shared a site with the secondary school, it should be a joint venture and so the consultation began again the following year.

The following school year, every class teacher worked with the children to produce posters expressing their views on the school values. The school then used a February in-service day to discuss the shared values with the wider community, including a representative from the Community Council. All of the children's posters, secondary, primary and nursery, were displayed in the room around them as they worked.

Well we couldn't get them all in, but we had representatives and we sent letters around all the community and parents saying 'give us your views – if you can't come, give us your views'.  
Headteacher

...people said – manners, truth, trust, respect ... And that was a huge exercise, but so worthwhile, because ... we agreed on the values we would expect.

Headteacher

### Corseford Residential School: taking time to listen

Corseford Residential School provides specialist education for children and young people with disabilities between the ages of 5 and 18. The school is funded and run by Capability Scotland. It has 37 young people on roll.

The children and young people at Corseford Residential School have a range of communication difficulties. The respect for individual voices and the time taken to listen seriously is apparent. This type of respect is modelled by the teachers and the students.

We wait – no matter how long the communication takes, we wait – and you will see that in any class you go into, and that is a huge thing.

It is not just the staff that do that – other youngsters and people in the class wait while someone uses their communication system, which is probably more important to a young person than the staff doing it. If your peers will wait for you, then your contribution is important. That's part of the ethos of the school, from the very beginning – that everybody waits and gives them their turn to say what they have to say or to comment on something.

Depute Head

This striking example of waiting time reinforced the importance of enabling individuals to have the time to express themselves and illustrated that there needs to be a balance between 'getting on' with prescribed content and personal growth. The student council is covered further in Chapter 3 – such councils depict the importance attached to everyone having a say and being enabled to be listened to and heard. This gives the students an enormous amount of self-esteem as they feel their voice is important. The students themselves model this behaviour with their peers.

This chapter has illustrated the way five schools have worked at building community and strong relationships. The following chapter explores how the classroom environment contributes to and reflects the overall ethos of the school and its community.

## Discuss and reflect

- Using the paper carousel activity described below, reflect on home–school relationships. How important are they and why? How are they enabled or constrained?
- '...a very simple technique where we just check in...that may well be the only time in the whole week, where someone asks them how they are feeling or what has been happening in their personal life.' What might be the benefits and challenges of 'checking in' with students?
- 'In school I wouldn't hit anyone, but in the street I would ... it's okay, because I know there is a school world and there is an outside world.' Explore statements about values and attitudes within the staff team, using the activity on page 18. How are school staff, parents, children and young people enabled to build a shared understanding of the values they want to experience within school?

## Activities to try

### Paper carousel

This is an activity that can be used to gather information or views from a group, giving everyone an opportunity to comment on each other's ideas.

- Split the group into three or four groups, depending on the number of questions you have.
- Give each group a piece of flipchart with a question at the top.
- Give each group 5–10 minutes to write down all their ideas about that issue, then move the sheets of flipchart round to the next groups.
- Give each group another five minutes to read and reflect on the ideas noted and to add their own, ticking those they agree with.
- Repeat until all groups have considered all the questions.

(adapted from *Participation, Spice It Up*<sup>12</sup>)

## Activities to try continued...

### Agree/Disagree continuum

This activity is useful for exploring sensitive or controversial issues. It is also active and gets people out of their seats and walking around. It allows non-verbal expression of views as well as stimulating discussion.

- Tape 'agree' and 'disagree' signs at either end of the room and create a line down the middle of the room, marked by a chair, the facilitator or some masking tape.
- Read out or display on a flipchart or board questions or statements, and then invite participants to stand on the line according to their opinion or reaction to that statement, for example, agree strongly, agree a little, disagree strongly, etc.
- People should be encouraged not to 'sit on the fence' and invited to explain their chosen position. Responses can be challenged and defended within the group and then people invited to move if their views change on hearing different arguments.
- An alternative to this activity for large numbers of people or when movement is limited, is to hand out 'agree' or 'disagree' flashcards or red and green 'traffic light' cards that people can hold up in response to a statement.

## Building partnership in learning

**‘If they treat us with respect then we will treat them with respect – and that is really what the class is about.’**

Senior student, Oban High School

Building these positive, respectful relationships, as suggested in Chapter 1, comes from a myriad of opportunities that build into a way of working and interacting. This chapter explores different examples of approaches and practice which have influenced the learning dynamics in the classroom. The practice may not be new or radical but it seems to work well in building a collaborative learning environment, where students are able to take increased responsibility for themselves as learners. These examples include:

- dialogue about classroom environment and conduct
- the physical learning environment
- working in groups
- giving students choice in their learning
- students pacing their learning
- students preparing and presenting the lessons
- peer assessment.

### Dialogue about classroom environment

Students said that they valued teachers who were 'interested in them as a person', 'interacted with them' and valued their experiences. Relating students' own experiences to a lesson made the lessons feel more relevant and interesting to them. It also made the students feel that their voices were heard and valued. They talked of their motivation coming from a sense of 'fun' within the learning environment and from a varied approach to teaching and learning. They enjoyed group work in its different guises, valuing the interaction and learning they can have with peers.

Students and teachers have their own ideas and visions about what learning and teaching are about. Starting at this point is one way of initiating dialogue and thinking about the classroom environment and how it might look and feel.

What sort of expectations do people have about the classroom? How is it physically organised? What types of approaches to teaching and learning are useful? How are students and teachers motivated? What makes the environment fun? How can students be supported in their learning?

These questions and many more can be raised with students and teachers to build a sense of shared ownership for the classroom space, a common sense of purpose, an environment conducive to learning.

... we thought about a positive classroom climate, and ... what sort of environment we work best in ... then we compared it to what we thought a negative classroom climate would be, and ... decided as a class – ‘well this is what we want – this is the ideal for us’.

Teacher, Oban High School

### Agreeing classroom conduct

Agreeing conduct within the classroom by allowing the students some decision-making within the process communicates respect and trust from the outset. One classroom teacher realised that both she and the students liked and disliked aspects of each other's behaviour. In a discussion with the young people they devised a set of teacher 'dos and don'ts' and a set of pupil 'dos and don'ts'.

The children can be quite difficult and they like to have a sense of autonomy and to know that they have been given a choice to do something.

... we actually discussed what they didn't like, like ... if I shouted or ... if I pointed. ... Billy said 'I would prefer it if you did that and just gave us an open hand'. And I said 'well I don't really like it when you tut at me and say 'oh sakes' – so they were like 'okay, well we will try not to do that...', ... we are trying to encourage each other to be positive. And it is difficult ... but they are starting to remember and go 'oh teacher don'ts, pupil don'ts'.

Teacher, Antonine Primary School

The teachers described successful behaviour management systems as those based on fairness and consistency. The perceptiveness of the students as to the teacher's state of organisation or mood can, these teachers point out, lead to young people feeling they have been treated unfairly. The teachers suggested that being able to step back and reflect on actions is part of being fair and consistent. They also liked to offer the students opportunity to choose to change their behaviour by offering them different options. This, they reasoned, enhanced students' sense of personal responsibility.

... it is very much, I think, down to the way a class teacher treats these children ... what they get out of them at the end of the day. And the teacher who treats the child with respect, who has got good programmes in place, cares about them, shows they care about them, is well organised in the classroom – will get even the most difficult children to work very, very well. But if a teacher goes in ill-prepared, antagonises the children, sees that difficult child as a barrier to everybody else's learning and says, 'well, it is not my responsibility to work with that child' – they set up a very different climate in their classroom – they set up a very different class, and they don't actually allow that child to attain ...

Headteacher, Antonine Primary School

The students expressed appreciation for the efforts made by their teacher to deal with behaviour in their classroom calmly. Their articulation of the steps taken by the teacher to deal with inappropriate behaviour highlights the mutual understanding and partnership involved as well as the importance of consistency when dealing with students.

At first she gives them a warning and then next she moves them down the traffic lights. She doesn't shout until they are doing something really, really, really bad. But she tries to deal with it in a nice calm voice.

Student, Antonine Primary School

### The physical learning environment

There are many features of the physical environment of the school that demonstrate respect for children and young people as individuals and as learners. These include access to computers and appropriate books, spaces for different kinds of learning, carpets and other forms of sound baffling to dull excess noise, comfortable chairs, access to drinking water and access to hygienic toilets. These issues often form a major part of discussion in school councils and other forms of student consultation.

The physical layout of the classroom, which can so often be taken for granted, provided a focus for change for some of the teachers in the study. The movement of desks and chairs created more than just a different looking room. It had the effect of 'shifting some responsibility to the students for their learning', enabling students to learn from each other and creating a positive environment for all.

... if you have got a classroom where all the desks are facing the teacher, all the responsibility for the teaching is on the teacher. But if you have got groups, then the responsibility is shared slightly. And the pupils themselves have to take more responsibility for their learning...

Teacher, Oban High School

...And I think straight away the pupils came in and had a smile on their faces when they realised, 'oh we are getting to sit in a group' ... it means a lot more interaction ... and they can learn from each other as well as the teacher ... I suppose the old way was to hide and keep it away ... [but] it is not a competition against each other.

Teacher, Oban High School

### Working in groups

Group work and discussion play an important role in enabling participation. Doune Nursery has been using 'Learning Groups'<sup>13</sup> as a way of listening to children and supporting their learning. The Learning Groups are formed at the nursery when a group of children are observed over a period of time, sharing an interest in a particular subject.

This way of working with small numbers of children ensures that all have an opportunity to be listened to, have time to formulate their theories, inquire using a range of research methodology and have time to discuss their knowledge with each other. The children as researchers work alongside the adults who see themselves as co-researchers. Parents and carers, siblings, school children, buddies, teachers, grandparents and other specialists are invited to join the Learning Groups to further support the children's learning. Some examples of child-initiated Learning Group projects are: Light and Dark (electricity), Photography (ICT), Dinosaurs, Doune Village and Minibeasts.

A Learning Group has four features: 'the group should include adults as well as children; use documentation of children's learning processes to make their learning visible as well as helping to shape the learning that is taking place; values the emotional and aesthetic elements of learning as much as the intellectual dimensions; and recognises that the focus of learning extends beyond the learning of individuals to create a collective body of knowledge'.<sup>14</sup>

This nursery has found that 'learning groups' provide the children with skills to be able to work successfully in groups. However, if these skills are not developed early students can find group working challenging. In another primary school, an experienced teacher made the observation that not all her classes had responded well to group working and concluded that working in groups requires particular skills that children build up over time.

*The first class I tried it with, it was just awful – they just couldn't do it – they wanted to be told exactly what to do and get it done.*

Teacher, Duns Primary School

Her solution was to introduce group working more slowly so the skills needed to make this approach more successful were introduced more gradually. Using thinking skills techniques has helped this teacher enable her classes to become more comfortable with working in groups, using their own initiative and promoting focused dialogue.

### **Giving students choice in their learning**

*... if you are having fun at school, then you are going to remember the fun ...and it will come back to you ... fun is a very major part of learning!*

Student, Oban High School

Teachers sometimes find it difficult to keep learners engaged in routine tasks. Offering the students a choice in how or when they complete such tasks can make learning more interesting. This teacher recalled how she had made a task that the children complained about – spelling – more interesting and more fun by introducing an element of choice. By giving the students the opportunity to choose between three different activities, which still allowed them to learn their spelling words, she found that their attitude to spelling became much more positive and so the classroom climate changed. The children still learnt to spell but had some fun, painting posters or making up scary stories using the words.

*... they were all being responsible about getting resources and putting resources away – and it made a really sort of boring task ... quite good fun ... I find that Monday is quite a calm day because they are all really on task and they enjoy choosing what they want to do.*

Teacher, Antonine Primary School

Shifting some of the responsibility for learning over to the students by allowing them to choose their learning method is a way to begin the process of decision-making by students with regard to their own learning. Allowing students to make their own decisions can be an unsettling experience for both the teacher and the students but starting in small ways can build confidence in both parties.

*... sometimes even giving them the chance to make the decision about how they present their own information ... they enjoy that because they are having a say about what they are doing ... although it is only small ... they are determining what they are learning and how they are learning.*

Teacher, Oban High School

### **Students pacing their learning: brain breaks!**

*...the concentration span of people varies, and you need to have something that engages them, not just having you sit there and listen because that means that you are just going to wander off and you won't remember a thing.*

Student, Oban High School

As relationships of trust build up between students and staff, increased opportunities for autonomy seem to be given. Recognising that a person's concentration span is time limited one teacher used 'brain breaks' to provide the students with structured time out. A popular whole class brain break is called 'silent ball'. A beach ball is thrown around the classroom whilst the students remain silent. After having a turn they keep their hands by their side. Having used the brain break technique many times the teacher trialled the idea of allowing the students to choose when to take their ten minute break.

*...they were given three options – they could read their book, they could draw on their white board or they could do some finger exercises ... some of them were saying 'oh I am going to take mine now because we have only got 20 minutes left and I still need to finish that off' ... I think if you give them responsibility, then they can surprise you and show you that they can actually be very responsible in return.*

Teacher, Antonine Primary School

### Students preparing and presenting the lessons

Keen to provide variation in his teaching methods, a geography teacher gave his Higher class the opportunity for more self-directed learning. They gathered their own resources, provided a visual record of these and shared their learning with the rest of the class.

An example of that was in my Higher class – when I taught them one section which was ‘Soils’ in the Higher Geography ... I read from the book and I gave them notes and we highlighted and all the rest of it ... Quite a dry topic for quite a lot of them, I think ... right after that it was a ‘Sand Dune’ topic, and I thought ‘oh here we go’ – I decided I am not going to stand and talk through all of this again – I am just going to hand them over all the notes, all the books, and I am going to get them, as a group, to make up a poster or ... make up a Powerpoint and come and teach the class about the sand dunes ...

... three periods they had to do that, which was as long as it would have taken me to teach it, and at the end of the three periods each group stood up and gave a five minute presentation of the Sand Dunes ... And within a period we had five or six groups doing the same thing ... over the period it had been repeated again and again and they were all picking up on the main points. And when it came to exam revision and I asked them about whether they knew Sand Dunes or Soils better ... about 90% of the class said that they knew the Sand Dunes better.

Teacher, Oban High School

### Students supporting one another’s learning: peer assessment

In most schools initiatives such as *Assessment is for Learning*<sup>15</sup> have stimulated new interest in classroom participation. Self-assessment has become much more commonplace in work practices. Using peers to give constructive criticism seems a logical next step. Peer assessment in the classroom can offer students the opportunity to actively support one another and to learn from each other, building confidence and giving them valuable learning skills for life.

#### Peer assessment in a nursery setting

At Kinneil Nursery, children are being given the opportunity to try out a peer assessment process, commenting on a peer’s picture. This activity is seen as important in building confidence and self-esteem for the child whose picture is peer assessed and for the children who are making the comments. Children’s comments are recorded on a star, stuck on the picture and are then put up on the wall. The children will then invite parents to come in and read the comments. For the children commenting on the pictures, the fact that their voice is heard, their comments recorded and displayed next to the picture, reinforces this nursery’s ethos that all the children’s voices are worth listening to and of value.

### Peer assessment in a primary setting

In the primary school the comments became more sophisticated, looking not only for the positive aspects about the piece but also places where improvement could be made. The ‘two stars and a wish’ system was employed here. In order to respond to the children’s concerns about peers writing in their neat jotters, a compromise using sticky notes to record the peer assessor’s comments was devised. Working through these issues with the students seemed to create a shared understanding about the value of the exercise.

My lot last year got very excited about writing paragraphs! ... we would have pupils’ work up on the [white] board and we would discuss how we could make it even better ... they didn’t mind when somebody said ‘well you could change that round to ‘sprint’ or ‘dashed’, or something like that’. And sometimes they would say ‘yes, I like your idea’, and sometimes they would think ‘no, I want it left the way it is’.

Teacher, Dalry School

### Peer assessment in a secondary setting

Students in one of the secondary schools we visited initially found peer assessment difficult. It was used to give better feedback on students’ progress, but some students needed additional skills to make it successful. However, once they had done it two or three times, they became better at it. They appreciated getting instant feedback instead of waiting for the teacher to mark everyone’s work. The involvement of the students in evaluation of work encouraged a greater degree of engagement. This was seen as a part of the learning process and one that gave the students the skills of feedback, listening and learning from their peers.

I think it is giving them skills ... that we haven’t necessarily taught as such ... they become much more involved and just much more responsible for what they are doing for themselves.

Teacher, Fortrose Academy

This chapter has explored different approaches and strategies that teachers have used to develop partnership in learning. Offering the students a voice in what happens in the classroom and in aspects of their learning can make a difference to the ethos created and successfully engage learners. There is a place for a wide variety of learning approaches, from the most traditional to the most radical, providing variety and stimulation. Fundamental to the most positive learning experience is not necessarily the way it is organised, but the spirit in which it is conducted, based on mutual respect, partnership, dialogue and listening. Having visited the classroom we now look further afield into the corridors and other school spaces to explore the variety of ways in which students, teachers and others can be engaged in consultation and feedback.

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## Discuss and reflect

- Drawing on your experiences as a student and a teacher, what is a safe and secure environment for learning?
  - What might be the stages in developing effective group-working and how can it be sustained?
  - What are the advantages and disadvantages of peer assessment (for students and teachers)? How might the disadvantages be tackled?
- 

## Activities to try

### Sticky notes ideas storm

- Divide into groups of two or three and give each group some sticky notes and a pen.
- Display the question for discussion on the board or a flipchart.
- Invite groups to generate ideas, writing down one idea per sticky note.
- The teacher or facilitator then collects all the sticky notes and sticks them up on the flipchart or board, grouping similar ideas together for the whole group to look at and possibly discuss.
- Sticky notes can be colour-coded according to groups (staff, pupils, parents) or according to responses (strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, hopes or fears).

This is a good activity for coming up with ground rules for the classroom, a meeting or an activity with staff or students. It can be followed up with 'dot voting' (p. 38) to prioritise responses.

(Adapted from *Participation, Spice It Up!*<sup>16</sup>)

## Listening, consulting, feedback

This chapter looks at some of the different mechanisms that schools have developed to ensure that young people have a say in their school. What are the challenges and the opportunities? How do you ensure involvement is really meaningful rather than tokenistic? We address these questions by examining work in the case study schools:

- student voice in classroom practice
- developing a classroom council
- school councils
- consulting staff and students on the School Improvement Plan
- student representation on the management team and other school bodies
- widening consultation to the whole school community
- listening to and involving parents.

Many of the practice examples will be familiar to schools, but present an opportunity to reflect how they support participation that goes beyond just 'taking part'. Interesting consultation methods have been adopted with adults within the school community to ensure that both students' and adults' voices were listened to and heard. All demonstrate that making the student voice more powerful within these schools did not appear to diminish the adult voice. On the contrary, the quality of relationships and dialogue between staff and students in most cases improved.

### Student voice in classroom practice

Fortrose Academy has been developing the use of anonymous pupil survey sheets. Management invited teachers to try out the sheets, which ask for students' views on ten issues about learning and teaching.

*We didn't force the teachers to do it, but the vast majority of teachers have taken it on. It has been an extremely positive experience for most of them – even anonymously, pupils were saying extremely positive things about all the teachers – although, sometimes providing useful information about ways the teacher could go forward. It takes a bit of confidence from the teacher to do that [to use feedback sheets].*

Headteacher

*... I remember my first response to it was 'what, asking the pupils what they think of my teaching? You have got to be having me on!' But anyway, we decided as a department that we would give it a go, because you tend to feel that you can't really knock something until you have tried it.*

Principal Teacher

The sample survey sheet was based on quality indicators of good learning and teaching. This was then adapted by departments to make the survey sheets more accessible to students. Adapting professional or policy documents into accessible yet meaningful language for the purposes of consultation is a common challenge faced by schools. It is important to seek feedback on consultation materials, testing out the suitability of material to elicit the information sought.

The teacher was uncertain whether the students would treat the exercise seriously, never having been asked their views before. She was unsure what to expect and found some responses surprising as well as interesting and informative. She was pleased to discover that students' ideas about what constitutes a good learning environment were similar to her own.

Feeding back to students is clearly essential to the process, either to support or endorse ideas, or to explain why some may not be possible. Above all, it communicates to those that take part that their views have been heard and seriously considered. It allows the students to reflect on the feedback and decide whether to accept or pursue further.

The option of anonymity in the exercise was crucial to enable honest and frank responses. However, this became a drawback when a particular problem was raised in the feedback. One student said that they felt too rushed at the start of the class but not knowing who had said this, the teacher felt frustrated not to be able to respond personally to offer support. Yet this raises a useful question: would this information have been disclosed if the feedback had not been anonymous? Perhaps this process of dialogue, between teachers and students, can become more open over time as mutual trust and respect build up. A clear message was sent to students that their views about the class are of interest to and valued by the teacher. One consequence of this particular consultation was the development of a structured, one-to-one dialogue for all senior students, carried out during class and lunch times.

By listening to the students' views on learning, staff demonstrate that they care about the students' experiences and value their ideas. They become partners in the learning process. The teacher who tried out the feedback exercise started to notice a shift in how the young people conceived their roles. They started to think of themselves as participants in the learning process rather than just passive recipients.

... they are not learning in isolation – there are 30 other pupils in the class, and they can be part of not only their own learning experience, but everybody else's learning experience in the class.

Principal Teacher

### Developing a classroom council

Classroom consultative arrangements can be used to gather views and involve students in all kinds of issues, not just learning and teaching. Responding to the needs or the interests of the students can be very successful and rewarding for all concerned. An experienced P4/P5 classroom teacher decided to try involving the children in solving classroom issues that she felt were having a negative impact on the classroom dynamic. She was also interested in exploring the possibilities of increased pupil responsibility in the classroom and the impact that might have on children's learning (Chapter 2).

We had ... a box, and anyone in the class could write down one of their problems and put it in – they didn't have to write their name on it ... and we would call in the people that posted ... the important ones, and help them with their problem.

Student, Duns Primary School

At a set time, the children would go to the box and discuss the issues noted down. If they thought they could sort out the concerns themselves, they would call people to come and explain it further. Then they would discuss what to do about it with the people concerned and see if it worked. In many cases it seemed to work well.

I think it helped the atmosphere. It stopped me being grumpy at the beginning of every teaching session, because if you are having to sort out things ... it gets you in that mind-set ... It relieved stress on me.

Teacher, Duns Primary School

Both children and teacher thought that children were sometimes better placed than the teacher to address their own concerns. Children demonstrated a real awareness of the responsibility of their role. Peer support has had a positive impact on this class. However, in some instances, children's concerns were passed onto the teacher if they were inappropriate or too challenging for children to handle. Clearly difficult and sensitive issues can sometimes arise through these channels and the need to provide adequate support and training for this work should be emphasised.

### School councils

Legislation<sup>17</sup> now requires students to be consulted on school development issues and, as a result, the current trend is that all schools are expected to have a school council. However, many schools across Scotland had school councils for a long time before the legislation arrived, amongst them a number of the schools in this study, where commitment to the school council was led by the prevailing ethos of the school as a place which values and listens to children.

### An ethos of partnership

The school council at Dalry School has been established for 13 years. It was set up by the headteacher on her arrival because she felt it was a natural extension to the way she wanted to work in dialogue with her pupils. Its status in the school is high and it is well known and well respected throughout the wider community. It is an extension of the school ethos of partnership, part of the democratic narrative of the school, an important vehicle for hearing the student voice and sharing some responsibility for school decision-making and development.

It is a contract and it is a partnership, but it is an equal sort of a partnership. ...One of the teachers asked if the Pupil Council has had a knock-on effect into my classroom – it is almost the other way around. If you are democratic and you actually want to know what the children think, you would be doing that anyway – that is what the Pupil Council is about ... we all work together...

Depute Head, Dalry School

... having done it for years, it has evolved and it has changed. It is never fixed. We have got a constitution that we do every year ... So next week we will have a Pupil Council meeting and look at the constitution that the other pupil councils have made, and usually it is amazing how they will look at it and change it.

Depute Head, Dalry School

The status of the school council in and beyond the school means that students want to be part of it and teachers observe enormous benefits for children involved. A commonly cited criticism of councils is that it is the most articulate and confident who tend to take part and benefit. To avoid this, and to give as many people a chance as possible, students at Dalry School must stand down after one year, allowing more children the chance to participate.

... you can see this person almost growing up as he or she is taking the meeting and involving everyone and making sure that ideas come forward...

Teacher, Dalry School

One key to a successful school council is its relationship with the wider school community. This requires good communication and dialogue between council members, their classmates and staff. The school councils observed were supported by class teachers who ensured that students had time in class to discuss council issues and to make decisions as a class for their representative to feed back. This ensures that everyone feels involved in and can benefit from the school council.

At Corseford School, as well as a representative from each class, there is also a deputy who will attend if the representative is unavailable because they feel it is important that their class is always represented at every meeting. The depute head chairs the first council meeting. The council then discusses how it would like the meetings to be chaired. The vote has been so far that the pupils like to take a turn of being the chair, so they have a rotating chair. The staff can put items on the agenda. For example, the headteacher may ask to add something to the agenda which she feels is a whole school issue.

Occasionally, the school council may deal with behaviour issues within the school. On one occasion council members set up a meeting with a particularly disruptive student in order to let this person know the negative impact of their behaviour.

... they sat face to face and explained that his behaviour was not acceptable within the classroom and was not acceptable within the school and nobody liked it and please would he stop. And it certainly made a big difference to his behaviour ...

Depute Head, Corseford School

### Different models of representation

A different approach to student representation, adopted by Deans Community High School, a large, urban secondary, involved a partnership with the local authority's Community Education team. The school has an active school council, known as the Student Consultative Forum, which has been developed with extensive training and support from community education. This is part of an authority-wide programme to promote the participation of young people through schools.

In partnership with modern studies colleagues, the community education team offer a rolling programme of awareness-raising for all students on democratic structures and the importance of participation. They then provide support for students interested in running for election, help run the election and then provide training and support for new members of the Forum.

School councils don't always have to be set up as formal, traditional structures. There are as many different ways of doing this as there are schools and success can depend on willingness to honestly seek and reflect on wide-ranging feedback and to make changes where necessary to suit users and context. At Fortrose Academy there is a senior student council but it is not a formal institution with elected members. Any students from S4–S6 can come along as and when they want. It is not a regular commitment and meetings take the form of an informal chat with the headteacher. Students find it a fun experience that builds on their relationship with the senior management of the school. It reflects the relaxed and friendly culture of the school.

... we haven't minutes, we just have action points ... that seems to have suited this group quite well ... sometimes they just come in and have a laugh about things that are going on!

Headteacher, Fortrose Academy

An earlier attempt at running a school council for S1–S3 at Fortrose Academy was stopped due to lack of interest. A learning point from the experience seems to be finding the right kind of mechanism or opportunity to suit the young people whose participation you want to encourage. Whilst some primary and senior students seem to respond to structures such as school councils, a variety of alternative set-ups may be more effective to engage more widely, particularly for S1–S3 students.

Senior students had some ideas about barriers to participation amongst certain groups and alternatives which may be more effective. They reflect ideas touched on earlier in the chapter: that if you are not used to being asked your views or invited to participate, then it takes time to learn and develop the skills and motivation to do so. Many secondary schools engage very effectively with senior students, treating them quite differently from younger students.

Meanwhile, S1 students often move from primary schools where they have been given a lot of responsibility, only to find themselves in lower secondary with little status or voice. This raises an interesting question: to what extent are low levels of participation in early secondary schools about the 'junior' status of younger students, as opposed to the changing and pressing priorities of young people at this unique stage of adolescence, when peer group and identity issues become all-consuming?

- Student: In younger years everyone is so much more judgmental ... they want to conform and fit in ... you don't want to stand out too much ... you want to just keep low ...
- Interviewer: So what makes you come to this particular group now?
- Student: Everyone in senior [school] is not so judged...
- Student: Our years all get along together well, but in younger years everyone was in their different groups, cool groups, everyone sticks to their groups... but now everyone talks to everyone else.
- Interviewer: How can you break down these sort of peer influences?
- Student: It's part of growing up...
- Interviewer: But are there other ways of participating which overcome the group thing...?
- Student: Well during class time, all the groups are mixed, so if you have a class discussion all the pupils from different groups can communicate with those they might not otherwise communicate with.
- Student: We used to do that in English... everyone would have a chance to express an opinion... To debate stuff.
- Student: If it is out of school time then you are less likely to do it if your friend is not doing it... but if it is in class time and everyone has to be there then people are more likely to feel free to voice your opinion about stuff.

This discussion with senior students resonates with a wider critique of school councils: that they have their place but they are not always the most effective way of ensuring wider participation that suits all and that there are a variety of good ways to find out what young people think and to tap the creativity of the student population!

...although they are elected democratically, it is sometimes quite hard to make sure that they bring concerns from the children to the Council and take back from it. It could be seen as just a little 'elite' who are in the know about what is going on, and it doesn't filter down to everybody.

Teacher, Duns Primary School

### Consulting staff and students on the School Improvement Plan

Since the legislation was introduced in 2000, many schools have been looking for inventive ways of ensuring that students inform School Improvement Plans in a meaningful way. The headteacher of Deans Community High School described how the school has developed a structure that enables staff to randomly consult with students on the Improvement Plan. Every year, a consultation takes place with a gender-balanced 10% of all the students from 1st year through to 6th year; the consultation takes the form of a small group discussion with a member of staff. The school has based its questions on HMIE's *Journey to Excellence*<sup>18</sup>.

Recommendations that students provide are then passed to staff to consider whilst developing the Improvement Plan. Students are provided with feedback from the process. This kind of whole school consultation, involving large numbers of children in focus groups can be a huge logistical challenge. So how was this exercise resourced and organised?

We have a Staff Development Group ... who organise the In-Service day that looks at the Improvement Plan. [...] So a member of that team will allocate the groups, and there is discussion back and forth between myself and that group about what we should be asking students this year... If there are 10 groups, that might need 15 or 20 staff to manage the discussion. The Staff Development Group ... find volunteers and they will analyse the results and report to me.

Headteacher, Deans Community High School

It is not always appropriate or desirable to involve large numbers of students. For example, Deans Community High School's Student Consultative Forum sent two members to take part in a local authority-wide consultation on the development of new schools in the area. In this case it was useful to have a small number of representatives to engage with that particular issue in some depth, taking on the task of consulting with, representing and feeding back to the wider student population.

There was a survey went out to all 845 students ... some views were like totally terrible ... like TV screens all around the walls which is a bit extreme I think, and Playstation games and snooker tables... There were a lot of sensible ideas in the survey itself...

Student, Deans Community High School

### Student representation on the management team and other school bodies

In many schools across Scotland young people are represented on bodies such as the School Board and working groups; for example, those associated with Health Promotion, Equal Opportunities and Enterprise. Many schools also have active student Eco Committees. At one rural secondary school, the involvement of senior students in Management Team meetings helps to communicate to young people the importance of student voice in the school.

We have been doing that for the last 10 years or so ... I have found that to be extremely valuable, to the extent that if pupils are not at a meeting ... we feel that we don't get as full a view of some of the issues that we are discussing, which almost invariably are about them anyway. So why shouldn't they have a say in it?

An immediate concern would be you are talking about issues that are highly confidential – but we have actually found that has never been a problem. [...] I would say 95% of the issues we discuss, there is no reason why senior pupils can't be there.

Headteacher, Fortrose Academy

### Widening consultation to the whole school community

#### Listening to and involving staff

Consulting the school community on aspects of school policies and other structures within schools is becoming a more widely adopted practice and schools have devised a number of practices to ensure that all voices are heard.

Staff participation is an essential part of a school ethos which effectively involves students. At Oban High School staff use participatory classroom techniques in staff meetings. Activities such as the paper carousel (p. 17) or a 'sticky note' brainstorm (p. 26) involve staff more actively in decision-making, encouraging a sense of ownership.

Yes, it makes people feel involved. As the staff, you are all involved in the decision-making process, you are all consulted.

Teacher, Oban High School

#### Involving everyone in school policies

Opening up policy development and evaluation to the school community is a way of constructing a shared understanding of various issues. At Antonine Primary School there are various working parties where staff are able to contribute to policy development. The homework policy was developed by the working party, led by the deputy head, then sent out to all parents, staff and the school council. Feedback and comments were then considered and incorporated by the working party into the final policy.

Policies that are written by me on my own, and presented to staff, they don't work – you have got to listen to people's viewpoints. And if people are consulted along the way, they understand the relevance of that policy within their day-to-day life.

Headteacher, Antonine Primary School

Workshops for parents on how best to assist their children with their homework were a helpful follow-up to the consultation. They helped address anxieties around homework for both parents and students, and brought them together with teachers.

...the younger ones did some workshops to bring the parents in to show them how to do the homework, how to listen to the reading, how to play the games – so it was bringing the parents in and trying to get them more involved in the school.

Teacher, Antonine Primary School

### Nursery policy development

Park Drive Nursery in Stirling considers that children's voices are very important in the evaluation and development of its policies. The nursery decides what needs to be found out from the children and considers how this can be collected in an effective way ensuring all voices are heard.

Including those who are more vulnerable or less confident is a particular challenge. The nursery has worked to meet this challenge in a variety of ways, including recognising the importance of what children may be saying through their body language and actions. Staff have found that the use of photographs and concrete materials can be helpful and that dialogue with parents and carers allows valuable comments that may have been made at home to be recorded.

The information gathered from the children and other consultations is used to inform the policy. The staff ensure that they feed back to the children on how their views are reflected in the policy. This cycle of consultation forms one way in which the nursery works in partnership with the children and their parents to enable all to have a sense of ownership, where their voices are important and worth listening to.

### Listening to and involving parents

Parents can be involved in a number of ways, beyond the personal involvement with their own child's class teacher. Inviting parents to be part of a one-off consultation for which they receive feedback can be one way of building relationships between the school and home. With the introduction of the *Scottish Schools Parental Involvement Act*<sup>19</sup> parents are now automatically part of their child's school's Parent Forum with the opportunity to become part of the parent council or other single issue group. By inviting parents to take part in short-term working groups, encouraging parents to offer what skills and support they can, depending on other commitments, parental involvement can really grow.

[It] says to them 'you are welcome to come into school ... we want to hear what you have got to say'. ...all that relationship breeds is more parents wanting to come through the door.

Headteacher, Antonine Primary School

Valuing what parents feel they can offer and enabling parents to feel comfortable in the school has been essential to the strong relationship with parents this school enjoys. Offering support in the form of workshops, one-to-one when necessary, or through social events, has led to parents being better equipped to help their children cope with the school environment, homework, behaviour, etc (Chapter 1).

This chapter has highlighted some of the practice that schools are using to meaningfully consult, listen, act and feedback to students, staff and parents/carers. Finding the time and resources to do this has helped build the ethos and positive relationships within these schools. Raising expectations that their voice is important and will be listened to results in people becoming more confident to raise issues and to get involved. The next chapter explores some ways in which these schools enabled students to use their voice and confidence to get involved in activities or issues of interest to them, developing citizenship, and personal and social responsibility.

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## Discuss and reflect

- What benefits and challenges are there to teachers in providing opportunities for pupils to take part in departmental or classroom evaluation?
  - How could schools go about finding '...the right kind of mechanism or opportunity to suit the young people whose participation you want'?
  - What are the key features of an effective school council? What strategies can be used to ensure that it is not just 'the most articulate and confident' who take part in a school council?
- 

## Activities to try

### Dot voting

This is a quick method of prioritising ideas or preferences and gives a quick and very visual reflection of people's views.

- A list of ideas or preferences is presented to a group, for example how to spend some money or which book to read as a class. The list may have been generated within the group or may be one that has come from another source.
- Everyone is given the same number of sticky dots (three or five are commonly used) and people are invited to distribute their dots to indicate preferences.
- People can give more than one dot to a preference, distributing dots as they wish.

### Mapping, ranking, planning

This is a process that enables people to gather views on a topic, rank their responses, and then plan and agree as a group how to proceed with the issue.

- Mapping: use sticky notes ideas storm (p. 26)
- Ranking: use the dot voting technique (above) to rank the ideas from the sticky notes ideas storm.
- Planning: following the ranking discussion you can move on to planning how to move forward using timelines and grids that outline, for example, 'Why? Who? When?'

(adapted from *Telling It Like It is*<sup>20</sup>)

## Making a difference

In all schools, children and young people are initiating or getting involved in a wide range of activities or issues of interest to them. This chapter reflects on how schools enable students to participate in a variety of ways, developing citizenship, and personal and social responsibility. The examples include:

- participation and enterprise
- participation and active citizenship
- participation and sustainable development
- participatory learning programmes.

When children and young people take responsibility to organise events or address issues of concern, teachers observe benefits on many different levels. It provides excellent opportunities for cross-curricular learning, linking citizenship, enterprise, healthy schools, eco-schools and other cross-cutting themes. It helps build relationships across peer groups and between staff and students. It enables schools to engage and motivate students with wide-ranging interests, skills and backgrounds. These experiences give young people the skills and confidence to attempt and achieve more in life.

...if they want to organise something they know they can do it. There are some that have organised amazing things, that are motivated to do it...

Headteacher, Fortrose Academy

The spirit in which the school facilitates these activities can have a huge impact on the quality of the learning that takes place for staff and students alike. Handing over responsibility, whilst providing support and guidance, allows for mistakes to be made and learnt from.

...they have maybe organised a disco or 'Battle of the Bands' and...you are left picking up the pieces afterwards. Like the place hasn't been tidied up or something has been damaged – that kind of thing. Now we have a system where they have to complete a form and say who will tidy up, who is responsible, where the money is coming from, and that is a learning process. The more genuine responsibility they get the better they warm to it and in the main they handle it extremely well.

Headteacher, Fortrose Academy

### Participation and enterprise

The development of Enterprise in Education has led to a proliferation of student-led activity in schools, giving children more scope to make decisions, take ownership and responsibility. In this example both the teacher and headteacher let the children get on with the task whilst providing support, guidance and back up as required to enable them to achieve what they had set out to do. By reflecting back on what they did well and what they could have done better after the event, the teacher was able to maximise learning from the experience and make the links with 'the real world'.

...they organised [the Macmillan Coffee Morning] themselves, which gives them a great sense of ownership. They wrote letters to local bakers and supermarkets and got donations of cakes and coffee and wrote the invitations to all the parents ... they set it all up ... they all had various jobs.

Teacher, Antonine Primary School

...on the Thursday one of the children came and said to me 'I am really worried about this... we have not got anything organised'. So ... I said ... 'take a step back'... where has the communication fallen down...?' And by the Thursday afternoon they actually had a really good plan and it worked very, very well. But it was almost at failure stage when they realised that they hadn't worked together as a team ... gradually they realised that they had to communicate with one another ... and their parents were very proud of them...

Headteacher, Antonine Primary School

For children and young people who feel school to be remote from their life experience, organising 'real' events where they have a responsibility to deliver for their peers or for the public can be very motivating.

Some of these children are second and third generation where their parents are unemployed, their grandparents are unemployed and their extended family are unemployed. And we wanted to say to the children – what is school about? It is about you learning skills ... [for] ... life. So we try and make as many learning experiences at school as relevant to real life as possible.

Headteacher, Antonine Primary School

Antonine Primary School contacted a local supermarket to give students training and advice about running a tuck shop. The students saw it as 'us running our own wee mini supermarket within school'. This responsibility and sense of achievement builds confidence. One P7 child described how much he enjoyed running the school tuck shop, managing the cash and stock, organising the queues and sharing his skills with the younger children.

I like working in the tuck shop because it helps me counting... money ... we need to count money.

Student, Antonine Primary School

### Participation and active citizenship

Enabling young people to take the lead on an issue about which they feel passionate can bring enormous benefits for schools and for the individuals involved.

A group of children in an urban primary school became interested in discrimination and physical disability and formed a group called SNOG (Special Needs Observation Group). The founding member of this group was a P7 boy whose interest in disability access grew out of the difficulties he experienced when assisting a fellow student to get around at school in a wheelchair. He had previously struggled with his behaviour at school but leading this group changed his outlook and behaviour. The headteacher's open door policy gave this group support and they went on to advise the local authority on issues of access.<sup>21</sup>

Many Gypsy Travellers' experience of the school system has been coloured by racism and discrimination. A group of young Gypsy Travellers from across Scotland are running workshops in schools to try to change attitudes and to challenge the discrimination that many face on a daily basis. They are seeking to do this by raising awareness and understanding of Gypsy Traveller culture and tradition through games, stories and video, sharing with others what it is like to be a young Gypsy Traveller living in Scotland today.

### Participation and sustainable development

Primary 7 children from Trinity Primary School, in Edinburgh, voiced their concerns over a new housing development being built at Newhaven Harbour. They discussed them with their science teacher, who then supported the children to plan an investigation into the possible environmental effects of the work. They contacted the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, and followed their advice to investigate air pollution, noise pollution and the number of sea birds present at the harbour. The children's short investigation indicated that the building contractor was making every effort to minimise environmental effects, which encouraged much further discussion. The science teacher structured the investigative approaches used, and ensured that the scope of the investigation built on prior learning. This careful curricular planning allowed for a flexible, open-ended approach to the learning activities, resulting in a meaningful and relevant experience for the children.

### Participatory learning programmes

In previous chapters we have explored the various ways in which teachers can invite students to take more responsibility for what happens in the classroom and how. Courses such as the Prince's Trust *xI*<sup>22</sup> course opens up opportunities for young people to effectively decide for themselves what they want to do, what they want to learn about and how they are going to go about organising this. *xI* invites young people to engage very directly, taking responsibility for their group and shaping their learning. It can take time to create this kind of ownership and motivation within the group.

*In theory, they run it. ...it's their group, their plan, they decide. If they say, we don't want to do this, then that's their decision...*

*xI* co-ordinator, Fortrose Academy

*xI* uses a community education approach which can bring a completely new style and dynamic to the learning experience. Community education workers working in partnership with teaching staff can have a positive impact, bringing useful tools, activities and experience to build relationships, confidence, motivation and capacity in young people.

In a Save the Children project in Glasgow, two youth workers worked alongside teachers to develop a peer-led, peer-assessed approach to citizenship work. The students were invited to choose an issue of concern which they wanted to tackle. They worked in groups to research the issue and to find a way to share their findings within the school and wider community. The whole process was peer assessed. The students gained a Dynamic Youth Award, accredited by Youth Scotland, based on time spent and responsibility taken. A website has since been created to support schools in offering the award with internal accreditation as well as providing a link to the external accreditation route.

Many schools are involved in a host of similar activities to those described above. Lessons learnt through the various activities are a hugely valuable part of the school experience, handing over trust and responsibility to allow people to learn and develop for themselves. Building an environment where students are able to take risks, develop and grow in this way requires confident leadership, vision and an ability to inspire staff commitment to that vision. The final chapter looks at the evolution of some of the ideas within these schools and how the leadership teams have mobilised their staff and enabled them to happen.

## Discuss and reflect

- 'What is school about?' Use a graffiti wall to explore your different ideas.
- 'Learning experiences may come from successes or mistakes but as long as the environment is safe and secure then these experiences can be built on.' What is the relationship between risk-taking and learning?
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of linking up with partner organisations, such as youth workers, NGOs and community-based organisations. You could use the SWOTT analysis exercise below to help structure the discussion.

## Activities to try

### Graffiti wall

This is a fun way to invite people to express their thoughts and ideas about something in words or pictures. It can also be a good way of evaluating an activity and can be more popular than questionnaire type evaluation forms.

- You need a huge piece of lining paper, a big white/black board or lots of flipcharts stuck together on a wall, lots of big chunky marker pens and a few doodles and wise cracks to get the ball rolling...

(Adapted from *Tell it Like it Is*<sup>25</sup>)

### SWOTT analysis

SWOTT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats and Training. It provides a useful structure for a group to evaluate an activity or plan for a future activity.

- Participants divide into five groups and each consider one element.
- This can then evolve into a paper carousel activity where participants carousel round the different groups' ideas and comment on or add to them further.
- It is a good way to draw out a wide range of views, allowing people to express anxieties or concerns whilst presenting ways forward through strengths, opportunities and future training needs.

Example: Teachers used it to prepare for cross-departmental teacher observations.

(Adapted from *Participation, Spice it Up*<sup>26</sup>)

# Inspiring change

‘...I think it all stems from having an ethos in the school where success is encouraged and risk-taking is encouraged... I think that rubs off onto teachers, who are an amazing bunch of people, who give up an awful lot of their time taking on things that I don't think they would do if they didn't feel they were a real part of the organisation. I think that rubs off onto pupils all the way through. And I think it evolves – it doesn't just happen.’

Headteacher, Fortrose Academy

Successful participation of all in schools begins with leadership and staff: it doesn't just happen. It requires concrete support and ongoing commitment on a number of interrelated levels. This final chapter reflects on the critical role of leadership, and considers how the case study schools have worked to empower and enable staff to contribute to the quality of ethos, relationships and participation. Examples include:

- leadership and change
- support for risk-taking and innovation
- modelling culture and practice
- listening and responding to staff needs and interests.

## Leadership and change

Hurricane winds sweep across the sea tossing up twenty foot waves; a fathom below the surface turbulent waters swirl while on the ocean floor there is unruffled calm.<sup>27</sup>

It is difficult to achieve change that 'goes beyond the surface'<sup>28</sup> as it can require 'reflection on deep-seated beliefs and values'.<sup>29</sup> Schools are complex institutions influenced by the experiences, values and attitudes of all the people who spend time within them and by external cultures and structures. Goodlad<sup>30</sup> suggests that 'alike as schools may be in many ways, each has an ambience (or culture) of its own'. Cultures and sub-cultures can sometimes clash raising contradictions and tensions that need to be negotiated.<sup>31</sup> This process of negotiation can occur at all levels, between headteachers and teachers, teachers and students, students and students and so on. The case study schools have sought to address this through building a shared vision and ethos in partnership with staff, students and parents. When participation is part of the culture of the school and everyone feels that their voice and contribution is valued, respected and heard, it becomes fundamental in all aspects of school life.

Leadership has a key role in building this vision and shared ethos. The process of 'embedding'<sup>32</sup> change seems to depend largely on leadership, supporting staff to develop ownership for their practice and trusting their capacity 'to drive change and adapt teaching in the light of their expert knowledge of the contexts in which they operate'.<sup>33</sup> Without management support, embedding innovation is difficult as teachers can lack the confidence to carry through change, especially when it may appear to be in tension with the ethos of the school.<sup>34,35</sup>

The schools that took part in the study vary in leadership styles and approaches, but in all cases, leaders worked hard to support, listen to and value staff voices. They realised that, to enable staff to feel comfortable with proposed new initiatives, dialogue was essential to air concerns, build solutions and develop ownership. They recognised the importance of taking risks to support creativity and innovation. They also modelled practices they thought might be useful for staff, as well as providing resources in terms of time, finance, internal and external training and supportive materials with creative ideas for lesson plans and activities.

## Support for risk-taking and innovation

Enabling teachers to innovate and try new ideas requires a supportive environment which actively encourages people to take risk without fear, to learn from mistakes and share learning with others. In some cases it is about having the courage to take a considered risk on an idea about how to move the school forward. Investing a large amount of the staff development budget on one training programme and taking 20 teachers at a time off timetable involved risk. At the same time, it communicated a commitment to organisational learning and to building community that paid off (Oban High School case study, Chapter 1).

Another headteacher decided to use unicycling as a way of demonstrating to his staff and students how much fun you can get from trying out challenging new things. This communicated his love of learning, but also had the unexpected outcome of building relationships with students, often those who he usually saw under more negative circumstances.

You take a risk if you go unicycling in front of people ... I mean I went to a Head Teacher's Conference and said the subject was going to be unicycling, and related unicycling to being a Headteacher – you fall on your backside a lot of the time!

Headteacher, Fortrose Academy

### Modelling culture and practice

Inviting feedback from peers or colleagues on performance involves risk. But it also communicates confidence, courage and an openness to hear new ideas. Constructive feedback provides an opportunity for reflection, learning and development. By testing out and modelling new ideas, management can create an environment where teachers may feel they can 'give it a go' and tackle something new. Taking participatory methods of working from the classroom into staff meetings is a powerful way to model different ways of working.

*...it is a great belief of mine that the principles which apply to children's learning, of course apply to adult learning. Of course!*

Headteacher, Oban High School

If staff are being asked to reflect on and change their practice, then management teams must allow staff to take ownership for practice innovation. Using participatory techniques with staff provides a valuable learning experience. Staff can air views and listen to others' ideas. Such approaches may answer questions about how something can be put into practice; for example, what are the benefits or costs? It may enable staff in a supportive environment to reflect on their personal values. Overall it can provide a shared forum for exploring developments in the classroom, or in other spaces within the school.

Classroom observation can be a useful way of sharing practice; however, for some teachers this can be quite threatening. One school recognised this and provided a space where all the staff could share and air their views and concerns about observation. The paper carousel (p. 17) technique allowed everyone to have a say and be heard. As a result of this meeting, solutions were suggested and a policy for classroom observation was implemented – one which was owned by the staff.

### Listening and responding to staff needs and interests

Support for staff trying new initiatives can come in many different ways. One school offered staff volunteers a £300 research grant to encourage them to take part in an 'action research' project to develop new practice and share this with others. Enabling staff to build on their own interests to enhance the educational environment within a school can be very motivating, developing skills, confidence and opportunities.

Having the time to share and reflect on practice seems to be an essential beginning to thinking differently about what you do. Teachers who took part in interview sessions in this study commented on how rare it was, and how much they appreciated the time and space to reflect on what they and others do. This was a valuable learning experience.

All the management teams from the case study schools recognised their critical role in enabling their staff, by starting where they are and building on their strengths. By building a strong staff team, underpinned by dialogue and reflection, support and collaboration, a whole school ethos of respect and participation can prevail.

### A last note

*We are about developing the person, the individual... if they come out as half decent human beings or active global citizens, whatever the phrase is that we might use – that is what we are about.*

Depute Head, Fortrose Academy

The theme of participation encompasses many different aspects of school life. How we understand the notion of participation is crucial to how schools and their communities could operate. This booklet briefly shares how the case study schools found their own ways of expressing participation; providing food for continuing thought.

Common to all schools is that participation is enabling for people. It enables staff to deliver more on behalf of their students. It enables parents to engage with their children's schools and their learning experiences. Above all, it enables children and young people to get the most out of their time at school, to fulfil their potential and to go out into the world with the skills and confidence to make a difference for themselves and others.

*...that's what we're trying to empower these young people to do! To feel confident in the bigger world!*

Depute Head, Corseford School

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## Discuss and reflect

- ‘Building community within the staff team, making them feel more involved, valued and supported was an important first step.’ How can all school staff be supported to feel involved and valued?
  - How can a school management team encourage an ethos of participation and wider achievement when some teachers may feel that this hinders raising attainment in their subject?
- 

## Activities to try

### Cotton bud debate

During a discussion or meeting some people always like to talk more than others. This technique helps to manage that by giving everyone three chances each to contribute. It makes people think carefully about how they want to use up their chances and ensures everyone gets a chance.

- Give everyone three cotton buds (or sweets) before kicking off the discussion. Every time someone speaks they must hand over their cotton bud or put it in a hat.
- People don't need to speak, they might prefer to hand over their cotton bud to show their agreement with a point being made.

(Adapted from *Participation, Spice It Up*<sup>36</sup>)

## Useful resources

### Bored Meetings? Training for Young Decision-Makers

Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership; <http://www.layc.org.uk/eycip/publications.htm>  
 Practical training resource aimed at those working with young people involved in formal group decision-making structures. The pack aims to increase young people's meeting skills and understand the processes involved in formal meetings.

### Breathing fire into participation: The funky dragon guide: good practice guidelines on supporting groups of children and young people to participate

Funky Dragon (2002); ISBN 0 7504 3037 0

### Consulting Pupils: A Toolkit for Teachers

John MacBeath, Jean Rudduck and Kate Myers (2003); ISBN: 978-1 8574 9846 2

### Consulting Pupils: What's in it for Schools?

Julia Flutter and Jean Rudduck (2003); ISBN: 978-0 4152 6305 4

### Listening to Learners

Welsh Assembly (2007); ISBN 0 7504 8832 8 / 0 7504 8832 6  
 Primary and secondary consultation toolkits. (Special needs toolkit to follow.)

### Never Too Young: how young children can take responsibility and make decisions

Miller, J. Save the Children (1996); ISBN 1 8709 8534 6

### Participation, Spice it Up

Dynamix and Save the Children (2002); ISBN 1 8418 7062 5  
 This book describes over 40 practical activities for active participation, covering everything from getting started, gathering information, long-term planning and evaluation.

### Pupil Participation... It's our school

McMellon, C. and Greenwood, M.; Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership;  
[www.layc.org.uk/eycip/publications.htm](http://www.layc.org.uk/eycip/publications.htm)  
 This is a toolkit resource to enable pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties to participate in their school and wider community. It remains relevant to mainstream schools.

### Reaction Consultation Toolkit

Save the Children (2001); ISBN 1 8418 7040 4  
 This practical guide is designed to help practitioners consult with young people on policy issues.

### Ready for Life – Education for personal and social development in primary schools

HMIE (2007)  
[www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/Ready%20for%20Life%20\\_PSD\\_%2028.03.07.pdf](http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/Ready%20for%20Life%20_PSD_%2028.03.07.pdf)  
 This report summarises practice in primary schools across Scotland, from HMIE inspections. It discusses the importance of ethos and good relationships, highlighting pupil participation as a key feature of effective personal and social development. It suggests the need for schools to develop current practices for consulting with pupils to make them more meaningful.

There are many websites that provide general information about participation, including:

[www.LTScotland.org.uk/citizenship/about/participation/index.asp](http://www.LTScotland.org.uk/citizenship/about/participation/index.asp)  
[www.healthpromotingschools.co.uk/practitioners/schoolethos/enablingparticipation.asp](http://www.healthpromotingschools.co.uk/practitioners/schoolethos/enablingparticipation.asp)  
[www.betterbehaviourscotland.gov.uk](http://www.betterbehaviourscotland.gov.uk)  
[www.consultingpupils.co.uk](http://www.consultingpupils.co.uk)  
[www.savethechildren.org.uk](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk)  
[www.article12.org](http://www.article12.org)  
[www.sccyp.org.uk](http://www.sccyp.org.uk)  
[www.childreninscotland.org.uk](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk)  
[www.youthlink.co.uk/practicedevelopment/youthparticipation](http://www.youthlink.co.uk/practicedevelopment/youthparticipation)

## Building community and relationships

### Better Behaviour Better Learning

SEED (2001)

[www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/158381/0042908.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/158381/0042908.pdf)

This national policy document outlines the SEED's proposals for practice in promoting positive behaviour, and highlights key features of effective practice.

### Critical Skills Programme

[www.criticalskills.co.uk/](http://www.criticalskills.co.uk/)

The Critical Skills Programme is used widely in schools as a methodology for learning and teaching activities. The programme advocates participative methods, such as collaborative group-work. This website provides an introduction to the programme, and details training opportunities.

### Happy Safe and Achieving their Potential

SEED (2005)

[www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/36496/0023597.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/36496/0023597.pdf)

This national policy document outlines the responsibility of schools for the care and welfare of children and young people, and highlights key features of effective practice.

### Papers by Dr Bill Rogers about consulting learners about school discipline systems

[www.antibullying.net/documents/freshstart.doc](http://www.antibullying.net/documents/freshstart.doc) (Bill Rogers)

[www.antibullying.net/documents/studentbehaviour.doc](http://www.antibullying.net/documents/studentbehaviour.doc)

[www.antibullying.net/documents/ourbehaviourplan.doc](http://www.antibullying.net/documents/ourbehaviourplan.doc)

[www.antibullying.net/documents/framework.doc](http://www.antibullying.net/documents/framework.doc)

[www.antibullying.net/documents/behaviourmgt.doc](http://www.antibullying.net/documents/behaviourmgt.doc)

Dr. Rogers' work is widely used internationally to promote positive behaviour. It is accessible, and provides helpful, step by step guidance to schools and teachers for developing school wide and classroom strategies, which involve the pupils fully. These papers provide practical advice and suggestions, and support for possible challenges.

### Partnership with parents

[www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk/index.asp](http://www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk/index.asp)

This toolkit has been developed by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) to provide parents and staff in education authorities and schools with a practical resource to support partnership with parents in all aspects of children's learning. It includes practical methods and good practice examples of how to develop effective partnerships with parents.

### The Motivated School

Alan McLean (2003); ISBN 978 0 7619 4385 3

This work has been widely used by schools to help them to analyse the nature of relationships between teachers and learners, and barriers to involvement in learning. It describes the importance of students' motivational mindsets in influencing the way they learn, and provides practical suggestions as to how successful learning contexts can be created.

### Sharing Responsibility

Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (1995); ISBN 1 8595 5087 8

### Working With Others

Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (1998); ISBN 987 1 8595 5143 1

These early publications on approaches to participation from Learning and Teaching Scotland describe a range of features of supportive learning climates within a positive ethos. They offer practical advice for establishing such learning environments.

### Case Studies

[www.LTScotland.org.uk/citizenship/managementtoolkit/planning/primaryexamples/annestreet.asp](http://www.LTScotland.org.uk/citizenship/managementtoolkit/planning/primaryexamples/annestreet.asp)

[www.LTScotland.org.uk/citizenship/sharingpractice/primarycasestudies/philomenas/introduction.asp](http://www.LTScotland.org.uk/citizenship/sharingpractice/primarycasestudies/philomenas/introduction.asp)

These case studies outline two different approaches to developing shared school values. The reports outline steps in the development of each project, and how the statements are used in the daily life of the schools.

## Building partnership in learning

The following publications provide an excellent introduction to establishing positive classrooms learning environments. They offer a range of practical strategies for establishing classroom ethos, including classroom organisation, management and learning activities. They are widely used in Scottish schools, and recommended for CPD.

### Accelerated Learning: A User's Guide (Accelerated Learning)

Smith, A., Loyatt, M., Wise, D.; ISBN 978 1 8553 9150 5

### Active Learning: 101 Strategies to Teach any Subject

Mel Silberman (1996); ISBN 978 0205178667

### Brain Gym: Teacher's Edition

Dennison, P. (1989); ISBN: 978-0942143027

### Co-operative Learning

[www.kaganonline.com](http://www.kaganonline.com)

[www.co-operation.org](http://www.co-operation.org)

### Direct Interactive Teaching

Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (2000); ISBN 978 1 8595 5687 0

### Formative assessment in the Secondary Classroom

Shirley Clarke (2005); ISBN 978-0340887660

### Move It: Physical Movement and Learning (Accelerated Learning)

Smith, A., (2002); ISBN: 978-1855391239

### Teacher's Toolkit – Raise Classroom Achievement with Strategies for Every Learner

Paul Ginnis (2001); ISBN 978 1 8998 3676 5

### Teaching for Effective Learning

Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (1996); ISBN 978 18595 5116 5

### Unlocking Formative Assessment: Practical Strategies for Enhancing Pupils' Learning in the Primary Classroom

Shirley Clarke (2001); ISBN 978-0340801260

## Listening, consulting, feedback

### School Council Handbook for Primary Pupils

School Councils UK (2001)

### School Council Handbook for Secondary Pupils

School Councils UK (2000)

[www.schoolcouncils.org/resources](http://www.schoolcouncils.org/resources) (sample pages)

<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=PPBS-1696-2005> (freely downloadable)

School Councils UK is a helpful source of support and resources for all aspects of school councils' development. A wide range of materials are available for free download, and the handbooks provide a step by step guide to running a school council for young people.

### Second Level Student Councils in Ireland: A Study of Enablers, Barriers and Supports

The Children's Research Centre, Trinity College, on behalf of the National Children's Office (2005)

This booklet presents the findings of a study into school councils in Ireland. It provides an insight into a range of successful practices.

### The Good Council Guide: How to bring your secondary school council to life

Save the Children (2004); ISBN 1 84187 093 5

### The School Council: A children's guide

Save the Children (2000); ISBN 1 84187 014 5

These two handbooks are written in a user-friendly style, to support young people in primary and secondary schools, with running pupil councils.

**Participating in Consultation Online (PICO)** is an online survey tool used widely in Fife schools to consult with pupils about a range of issues. Developed jointly by Fife Council and the University of Dundee, it allows the creation, completion and analysis of questionnaire based surveys online, and incorporates a degree of 'intelligence' as it allows the questions presented to be determined by responses given to previous questions. Contact [ken.keighren@fife.gov.uk](mailto:ken.keighren@fife.gov.uk).

### Peer Support

The following websites provide background information about peer support schemes, and outline some effective practices. The need for training is explored, and some practical suggestions are provided.

[www.antibullying.net/buypeersupport.htm](http://www.antibullying.net/buypeersupport.htm)

### Setting up a Peer Support Scheme, Childline/NSPCC

[www.childline.org.uk/pdfs/PeerSupportBooklet.pdf](http://www.childline.org.uk/pdfs/PeerSupportBooklet.pdf)

### Every School Should Have One, Childline

[www.childline.org.uk/extra/reports-peersupport.asp](http://www.childline.org.uk/extra/reports-peersupport.asp)

[www.scottishmediation.org.uk](http://www.scottishmediation.org.uk)

## Making a Difference

### Active Citizenship in Stirling Council Schools

Dobie, T. and Wallace Gee, M. Stirling Council (2000)

This report was commissioned to ascertain the effectiveness of children and young people's involvement in school decision-making in Stirling Council schools. It provides an interesting portrait of practice and describes the work and achievements of school councils across the authority.

### Education for Citizenship: A Portrait of Current Practice in Scottish Schools and Pre-School Centres

HMIE (2006)

[www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/efcpcpl.pdf](http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/efcpcpl.pdf)

This is the first in a series of portraits by HMIE, depicting current practice in key aspects of the Scottish school curriculum. It illustrates effective practice, raises issues, and aims to stimulate reflection and debate. It also relates existing pedagogy and curricular provision to the aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence.

### Education for Citizenship in Scotland

Learning and Teaching Scotland (2002); ISBN 1 85955 759 7

This paper discusses the definition and aims of education for citizenship, and provides a framework for evaluation and development of existing practice.

### Enterprising Ideas for Secondary Schools

Strathclyde University (2007)

This publication gives details of tried and tested contexts for learning and teaching activities in the secondary school. They include planning grids, practical resources, and cross references to other curricular areas.

### Excellence Through Enterprise: National Guidance: Enterprise in Education

Learning and Teaching Scotland (2005); ISBN 978 184399 104 5

### Focusing on Enterprise in Education: A Paper for Professional Reflection

Learning and Teaching Scotland (2005); ISBN 978 184399103 8

[www.LTScotland.org.uk/enterpriseineducation](http://www.LTScotland.org.uk/enterpriseineducation)

[www.determinedtosucceed.co.uk](http://www.determinedtosucceed.co.uk)

### Young Citizens: Children as Active Citizens Around the World

Save the Children (2002); ISBN 1 84187 057 9

This teaching pack gives teachers 24 stand-alone activities that explore what citizenship means and help develop the skills needed to be an active citizen. The stories of five 'young citizens' from around the world show how children are taking action on issues they care about.

## Inspiring change

### Improving Leadership in Scottish Schools

HMIE (2000)

This document identifies ten key characteristics of effective leadership, and provides a range of case studies. It is designed to help education authorities and school managers to review and develop aspects of leadership.

### Managing Transformational Change

Highland Council, Priestley, M. (2007)

[http://hvlc.org.uk/ace/aifl/docs/A2/A2\\_Making\\_a\\_difference.pdf](http://hvlc.org.uk/ace/aifl/docs/A2/A2_Making_a_difference.pdf)

<http://hvlc.org.uk/ace/aifl/Overview.htm>

### Restorative Approaches in Scottish Schools: Transformations and Challenge

Lloyd, G., Kane, J., McCluskey, G., Riddell, S., Stead, J. and Weedon, E. Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow (2005)

[www.safersanerschools.org/library/beth06\\_lloyd.html](http://www.safersanerschools.org/library/beth06_lloyd.html)

# Design and methods of study

## Stage 1: Research and consultation

A priority on embarking on this project was to consult widely with the teaching community on which schools and practice to include and on the format the final 'resource' should take. As a result of that consultation, it was agreed to produce a DVD with a concise booklet accompanying it. The material is also available online, accessed through the Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) website ([www.LTScotland.org.uk](http://www.LTScotland.org.uk)) and supported by further options for face-to-face (such as regional, local authority or school-based) staff development opportunities.

To consult on the format of the resource and to find examples of schools that exhibited interesting practice, a number of avenues were used:

- an advert on the LTS website
- LTS citizenship co-ordinators' conference (two focus groups held and 18 questionnaires returned)
- email distribution lists
- local authority contacts
- practice reported through the media, for example TESS
- Save the Children and LTS contacts
- LTS's young person steering group including questionnaire for pupils distributed in their schools (approximately 200 questionnaires were returned).

## Stage 2: School visits, observations and interviews

Responses were followed up by phone calls. From these calls three secondary schools (rural and urban), one 3–16 school (rural), four primary schools (rural and urban), one nursery (urban) and one special school (urban) were visited. On the initial visit to these schools, conversations took place with some or all of the following: head teachers, teachers, students and parents. These 'conversations with a purpose'<sup>27</sup> explored the notions of participation and decision-making within the school and were recorded and transcribed. Some of these schools, which offered a range of settings and practice, were invited to participate in the film-making process.

## Stage 3: Filming for DVD

The filming took place in two secondary, two primary, the nursery and the special school. Some students from each of the secondary and primary schools volunteered to be part of the film-making process. These students participated in a training session before the filming. All the students filmed provided consent forms agreeing to their participation.

## Stage 4: The booklet and DVD

All the schools provided an insight into their ways of working. Taking Green's notion of 'unwrapping the ordinary'<sup>28</sup>, the findings from the interviews, focus group discussions and school observations are presented in the DVD and resource to share some stories and reflections from the schools which took part.

A steering group, consisting of headteachers, teachers, Learning and Teaching Scotland, Save the Children and Glasgow University, has been an invaluable critical friend to this process and provided useful and interesting perceptions as this resource has developed.

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