



Consultation

Curriculum & Standards

Headteachers,
Chairs of Governors, LEAs,
Parents, Pupils, Teachers

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Working together: Giving children and young people a say

Overview

Consultation on draft guidance to Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and schools (including pupil referral units) in England.

Action

Comments are welcome from schools, governors, parents, young people, Local Education Authorities, teacher unions, teachers, voluntary groups, youth groups and other interested parties.

Please send response forms, by 21 November 2003, to:
Consultation Unit, Level 1, Area B, Castle View House,
East Lane, Runcorn WA7 2GJ.



department for

education and skills

creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

Foreword from the Secretary of State



I believe that giving children and young people a say in decisions that affect them will impact positively on standards, behaviour and inclusion. Young people respond well to the challenge of responsibility as those involved in producing this document have shown.

I strongly support the principle of ensuring that our children and young people participate more effectively in democratic process. We are embarking on an ambitious programme to embed participation in all our activities with the focus on the customer. The Department published an action plan on 12 June 2002 setting out our vision and plans, which reflect the core principles on participation published by the Children and Young People's Unit for the whole of Government. We have introduced citizenship education in the school curriculum, which encourages discussion and debate and the active participation of children and young people. OFSTED's new schools inspection framework now includes a section on consulting pupils and reporting their views about their involvement in the life of the school. I want pupil participation to become part of the culture of Local Education Authorities (LEAs), schools and my Department. So I have asked my officials, from now on, to actively consider how new policies we develop encourage children and young people's participation. As the new Minister for Children, Margaret Hodge has a special interest in all of this.

But we can only see an impact if opportunities for young people to participate in decisions within the school, the LEA and the wider community are backed up with good practice. This consultation document will lead to guidance designed to provide a platform for encouraging best practice. We value your experience and views and look forward to receiving your response to this consultation and hearing how participation works in your schools/LEAs.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Ch Clarke'.

Charles Clarke

Foreword from the Young People's Advisory Group¹

“It (being involved in the young people’s advisory group) made a very big difference and I am glad to be involved.”

We as children and young people know what we want. The only way we can change things is to make sure that people who make decisions know what we think and what we want. If you don't get involved you are likely to get only what other people want. We were able to put some of our ideas in this paper and now want to know what you think about them. The only way we can know what you think is if you tell us. So come on, have a go!

“It doesn’t matter how young you are, we all have a role to play.”

Our group is made up of people from all ages. Of course we are also from different schools, backgrounds and both sexes. Because we have different experiences we will see things in a different way to each other. Knowing what other people's views are leads to making better decisions. We want to hear from you whatever your age and background, and your views will be taken seriously. We all lose if pupils do not put forward their views.

“I have learnt more about children having their say, listening to other people’s views, and realised I can put forward my views.”

“It (being involved in the young people’s advisory group) gave me a chance to get involved in changing things, people wanted to hear what you had to say.”

When you put forward your views, it is good to know that other people are willing to change things because of what you think and say. Being involved makes you understand all the different things that people who make decisions have to think about. It also shows you how to go about doing it. If you are a teacher or a pupil, get involved in this consultation and be a part of changing things.

“I thought this would be really boring, but actually I enjoyed it.”

We really enjoyed working with the DfES and the Adult Advisory Group to help draw up this paper. We thought being involved in writing the guidance would be boring but it wasn't. If you would also like to be a part of “making a difference” let us have your views and ideas.

¹ The Young People's Advisory Group worked alongside, and in equal status, to the Adult Advisory Group to help the DfES to write 'Working together: Giving children and young people a say'

1 Summary

The purpose of this consultation is to gather views on the draft document, *Working Together: Giving children and young people a say*, which follows. This consultation document sets out our proposals for guidance which Local Education Authorities (LEAs), governing bodies and schools are required to have regard to under section 176 of the Education Act 2002. It is intended to help and encourage these bodies to consider the views of children and young people and involve them when making decisions.

2 Background and Context

Our aim is to help open up opportunities for children and young people to become more active participants in their education, including involvement in planning and the evaluation of their own learning. This document aims to achieve this through helping:

- decision-makers in LEAs and schools think about how to organise and offer children and young people opportunities to develop their skills as active citizens;
- LEAs and schools to consider a variety of approaches of involving young people.

Opportunities exist in Citizenship education, Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and in other wider school activities, for example National Healthy School Standard (NHSS) and the Connexions service. OFSTED will also now give pupils opportunities to give views about their education as part of the inspection process. Section 176 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on LEAs and schools to have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State about consultation with pupils in connection with the taking of decisions affecting them.

The final version of the guidance document incorporating appropriate comments will be published in 2003/2004. It will be supported by a website.

3 How to respond

Questions appear throughout the body of the document. To give your response, please use the separate 'Consultation Response Form'. If you are using an electronic version, this is a separate file. If you are using a hard copy, it can be pulled out from the centre of the document.

Please send your completed response form to: Consultation Unit, Level 1, Area B, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn WA7 2GJ or by email to: participation.consultation@dfes.gsi.gov.uk.

Enquiries about policy issues should be addressed to:

Maxine Bailey, PSHE and Citizenship Team, Westminster Suite, Caxton House, 6-12 Tothill Street, London SW1H 9NA, 020 7273 5221, or by email to: maxine.bailey@dfes.gsi.gov.uk.

4 Additional Copies

An electronic version of this document is available to download from www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations. Hard copies are available from DfES publications (0845 6022260) by quoting reference, DfES/0492/2003. If you require a large print, Braille or audio version, please request one.

5 Plans for making results public

We will attempt to incorporate your comments but please note that it will not always be possible to do so. A summary of comments from the consultation will be available on www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations from January 2004.

Consultation

Working Together:
Giving children and
young people a say

Contents

1. What do we mean by Pupil Participation?	1
2. What are the Benefits?	2
3. Principles of Children and Young People's Participation	3
4. Principles into Practice	4
5. Role of the Governing Body	5
6. Effective Participation – A Check list	6

1 What do we mean by Pupil Participation?

1.1 This draft guidance is issued by the Secretary of State under Section 176 of the Education Act 2002², which places a duty on Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and schools to have regard to its content when taking decisions which affect pupils. The guidance supports pupils' entitlement to personal and social development³; the Statutory Order for Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4⁴; the national framework for Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) at all Key Stages and Citizenship at Key Stages 1 and 2; and the National Healthy School Standard (NHSS) principles. By pupil participation we mean adults, working in partnership with children and young people and valuing their views and encouraging them to:

- become more active participants in their education, including evaluation of their own learning;
- participate in creating, building and improving services to make them more responsive to their needs and those of the wider community;
- make a difference in their schools, neighbourhoods and communities;
- contribute to a cohesive community;
- learn from an early age to balance their rights as individuals with their responsibilities as citizens;
- develop, through the way they are involved, the knowledge, understanding and skills they will need in adult life.

1.2 This means, in practice, opening up opportunities for decision-making with children and young people as partners engaging in dialogue, conflict resolution, negotiation and compromise - all important life skills. Children and young people's personal development and our democracy will benefit from their learning about sharing power, as well as taking and sharing responsibility.

1.3 In this guidance 'decision-making' refers to both the processes and range of decisions taken by LEAs and school governing bodies in delivering services. The guidance is not aimed at diminishing the ability of decision-makers to apply established policies in cases related to individual pupils. It is, however, asking them to take account of children and young people's views when setting and revising policies.

Q1. How should we draw a distinction between involving groups of children and young people on broad policies, and decisions about the individual treatment of a young person?

Q2. What limits might there be to involvement and could these be overcome?

² Section 176, Education Act 2002

³ Section 78, Education Act 2002

⁴ Citizenship: The National Curriculum for England – Key Stages 3-4

2 What are the Benefits?

2.1 Actively involving children and young people when making decisions:

- sends a powerful message that children and young people of all ages are citizens too and should be listened to;
- supports the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – Article 12 ⁵;
- recognises children and young people as major stakeholders in society with important contributions to make in their education and how we design and deliver services;
- is a great opportunity for children and young people to see how rights go hand in hand with responsibilities.

2.2 LEAs and schools which have successfully involved children and young people have found the following benefits:

Children and Young People

- Develop new skills: debating, negotiating, group decision-making and influencing decision-makers.
- Understand how decisions are made and how to contribute to them.
- Recognise they are taken seriously, resulting in increased confidence, self-esteem and aspirations.
- Receive better services, more responsive to their needs.
- Become more motivated to get involved in their school and wider community.

“It is saying to the student body, you are the most important people in the school” (Davies, 1998)⁶.

The School

- Improved academic achievement through participative processes.
- Improved behaviour and attendance as alienation and disaffection diminish.
- A more inclusive environment.
- Enhanced curriculum provision, including PSHE.
- Contributes to meeting the NHSS.
- The creation of listening and democratic schools.

“Schools that model democratic practice are most effective in promoting civic knowledge and engagement” (Torny-Purta et al, 2001)⁷.

The LEA and the Wider Community

- Promotes democratic principles when decisions are reached taking many opinions into account.
- Takes pride in giving expression to children’s rights⁸.
- Children and young people act as citizens and contribute to community cohesion and social inclusion.
- Children and young people act as positive role models.
- Better preparation of young people for the world of work.
- Improves provision, uptake and cost effectiveness of services targeted at children and young people.

⁵ **Article 12**

1 States 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, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2 For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

⁶ Davies, L. (October 1998) School Council and Pupil Exclusions

⁷ Torny-Purta et al (2001) Citizenship and Education in twenty eight countries: IEA: The International Association for the Evaluation of Education and Achievement

⁸ Inman, S and Burke, H (2002) School Councils: an apprenticeship in democracy? Study commissioned by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers.

3 Principles of Children and Young People's Participation

3.1 Involving children and young people in decision-making should be underpinned by the following principles:

Clear and visible commitment to involving children and young people with a route map of how to make it happen.

- A public commitment to the principle and practice by Chief Education Officers, governing bodies and headteachers, understood by everyone.
- Setting out what will happen, for example in a strategic or community plan, reflecting the organisation's needs and budget.
- Setting out expectations, for example, LEAs might wish to consult children and young people about their perceptions of priorities for school improvement.

Children and young people's involvement is valued

This will include:

- Respecting and trusting children and young people.
- Considering their age, maturity and understanding.
- Making appropriate information available, timely and relevant.
- Managing expectations i.e. being clear about what is 'out-of-bounds', for practical, legal or political reasons.
- Providing clear and timely feedback on outcomes.

Children and young people have equality of opportunity to be involved

This should ensure that:

- No-one is excluded or prevented from getting involved on grounds of race, religion, culture, disability, age, ethnic origin, language, or the area in which they live.
- Special support is provided to help 'hard-to-reach' groups and those facing the greatest barriers e.g. some pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- The level of confidentiality and privacy that applies to the decision-making process is made clear to all participants.

Children and young people's participation and involvement is continually evaluated and reviewed

It is important to:

- Measure how well the plan is meeting the rationale and success criteria set out from the start.
- Involve children and young people in the evaluation process and reviewing lessons learned.

Quality standards

- Abide by agreed quality standards and codes of conduct for working with children and young people.
- Handle child protection issues in line with established standards.

Q3. Do you agree that these are the right principles that should underpin pupil participation? If not, please give alternatives and your reasons for them.

4 Principles into Practice

4.1 It is ultimately for LEAs and schools to decide how best to involve children and young people. There is no one best way of involving children and young people in decision-making processes. Approaches can be combined or used separately. For example issues for consideration by the wider community could be considered at class or school council level and views fed into wider youth forums. But for this to work well, schools and the children and young people need to be clear about what they are being asked to contribute to with clear channels for feedback. It is also important to access any practical support that may be necessary. LEAs and schools can, and do, use a variety of ways, such as councils and youth forums, peer-led work, surveys, planned consultations etc.

Young People Councils

4.2 Young people councils make important contributions to the greater involvement of children and young people in decision-making processes. There are different levels to this:

- **At the local level** – representatives on local youth forums working alongside elected councillors at meetings in council chambers as shadows or in their own right, giving the views of their peers. This helps them to understand how the system works, and ensure that their priorities inform decisions about the wider community.
- **At the school level** – elected representatives from all year groups, contribute to decisions about the running of the school and to help improve it.
- **At the class level** – the whole class or elected members of the class consider issues for the class, year group or the whole school.

4.3 It is argued that effective class/school councils have a positive impact on the general atmosphere in the school, pupils' behaviour, commitment to learning, and exclusions⁹. Such benefits come about if the council is not symbolic or manipulated¹⁰.

Circle Time

4.4 Working within agreed ground rules, using prompts to speak about any issue, children and young people listen to each other without comment or judgement. They explore concerns, develop relationships, create a sense of belonging and experience reflection. This is most commonly used with young children, but can be equally effective with older ones.

Working with Peers

4.5 Opportunities exist for children and young people to work with peers in their own, or other schools and the wider community for mutual learning. This can happen in many ways, for example:

- **Peer-support** – older pupils directly support younger pupils e.g. help with reading, or simply listening to support pastoral care provided by the school. This may involve a supportive one-to-one relationship between two pupils.

Adolescents with learning and behaviour problems who served as peer tutors in a behaviour programme, helping other pupils for on-task behaviour were both effective at doing this as far as other pupils were concerned. They made academic and social gains in their own behaviours, feeding into their behaviour across the school as a whole. (Polirstock, 1986)¹¹

⁹ Davies, L (October 1998) School Councils and Pupil Exclusions

¹⁰ Baginsky, M and Hannam, D (1999) School Councils: The View of Students and Teachers: © NSPCC

¹¹ Polirstock, S (1986) Training problematic adolescents as peer tutors: benefits for the tutor and the school at large in Techniques 2, pp204-210.

- **Peer-mediation** - when trained to mediate disagreements between peers, such as name-calling, bullying, fighting and quarrelling. The approach is usually 'no blame' so that each person comes away from the mediation with a positive 'win-win' experience and the sense that the outcome is fair to both sides.

Mediation is one approach that has proved to be helpful in addressing bullying.

"Mediation is a structured process in which a neutral third party assists voluntary participants to resolve their dispute"
(Stacey, 1996)¹².

Planned Consultations

4.6 When children and young people raise particular issues or there are particular decisions to be made, it may be appropriate to plan a consultation process. This might involve surveys, questionnaires and consultation events.

Q4. Do you agree that all children and young people should be engaged in as wide a range of decision making processes as possible? What should be excluded?

Q5. Do you agree that it is ultimately for LEAs and schools to determine when and how to secure pupil participation when making decisions?

4.7 Many schools already do many of these things successfully and imaginatively. These include:

- **South Camden Community school in Camden** – peer education project involves Bengalis, Somalis, Nigerians, Eritreans in tackling racist violence in school and taking their message to the wider community.
- **Lawrence Sheriff School in Warwickshire** – involves pupils in staff recruitment process. As an alternative to candidates teaching model lessons, elected members of the school council interview candidates and provide feedback to the Senior Management Team before they interview each candidate.
- **Sharnbrook Upper School and Community College in Bedford** – uses pupils as researchers. They collect data about specific issues and present their analysis and recommendations to Senior Management Team for action. This gives pupils a greater voice and supports and extends the school council.

4.8 Other examples and case studies on pupil participation will be provided on a website to accompany this guidance.

5 Role of the Governing Body

5.1 From an early age, pupils provide interesting insights into how their school is working for them, as recognised in OFSTED's *Inspecting Schools: Framework for Inspecting Schools*. Governing bodies, in discussion with the headteacher, staff and parents, could seek pupils' views and engage them in strategic decision-making. For example, they could invite

pupils to meetings and committees as observers (excluding confidential items) giving them the opportunity to see how a governing body works and what kinds of issues are discussed. From 1 September 2003 the governing body may also appoint pupils as 'associate members' allowing them to attend full governing body meetings and become members of governing body committees¹³.

¹² Stacey, H (1996) Mediation into Schools Does Go! An outline of the mediation process and how it can be used to promote positive relationships and effective conflict resolution in schools in Pastoral Care in Education Vol 14 No 2 June 1996 p7

¹³ See Statutory Guidance on the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2003 on the publications page of www.governor.net.co.uk

6 Effective Participation – A Checklist

6.1 Pupils could be involved in a wide range of decisions, for example setting policy, recruitment, budget, school environment etc. Addressing the following questions will help to ensure that both the process and outcomes are positive.

Consider:

What are we consulting about?

- It is important to be clear about the objectives and the boundaries. Involve children and young people in important decisions.

For example:

New recreational facilities in the community? School meals policy? Curriculum provision? Teaching and learning? Target-setting? Behaviour policy? Uniforms? Staffing? Schools must provide the National Curriculum, but can decide how to timetable and teach. Pupils could also be involved in deciding **whether** to change the school uniform and **what** the new one should be.

Whom do we consult?

- The answer to the 'what' question above will inform this, so that children and young people who will be impacted by the service can contribute to its design.

All children and young people in the LEA? In a specific part of town? In specific types of schools? Specific groups or ages? Specific classes? Consider carefully how to ensure those with special needs are involved on an equal basis. The SEN toolkit (DfES 558/2001) provides detailed advice on this. Strategies need to be in place to involve those excluded from school.

At what stage?

- This will be informed by the 'what' and 'whom' questions above.
- Getting this right will impact on the level of children and young people's commitment to the process and the amount of learning they get out of it.
- Bring them as close to the decision-maker as possible.

It may not be possible to involve children and young people at all stages of the decision-making process. However, as a general rule, it is best to involve them as early as possible

How much power do children and young people have?

- Set out clearly their role in the decision making-process. Be open about the limits to ideas and recommendations.

It is crucial to be clear about the level of control to give up to children and young people to see the process to the end. Some decisions may require greater involvement of adults than others. So identify the powers being shared as well as those being completely delegated.

Consider:

Which method, or combination of methods, is most appropriate?

- Select the method carefully to involve hard-to-reach groups and the very young.
- Involve children and young people in choosing the method where appropriate.

For example:

Youth councils/forums? School councils? Web-based intranet surveys? Videos? Questionnaires? Peer-support systems? Voting? Informal workshops? Role play? The method used will be partially determined by the answer to 'How much power do children and young people have?' Make ways of participating relevant to the group of children and young people.

Who will manage and conduct the process?

- Involving children and young people in managing the process will command their trust.
- Use existing mechanisms, e.g. youth advisory bodies, to do this.

Is it appropriate and necessary for an adult alone, or working with some children and young people to be responsible for the process?

What resources do we have to do this?

- Think about budgets and training.

Consider the financial, material and staff resources you might need. Which resources already exist within the LEA or school? What more is needed?

Do children and young people understand the decision making process?

- If children and young people are to influence decisions, they need to understand how they are made.

Do the children and young people know: who is involved in the process? Who has the final say? Who else is being consulted? What procedures have to be followed?

Are there any challenges and risks?

- Consider the organisation's needs.

Consider what might go wrong to either delay or stop the process. Establish fall-back plans. Ensure that children and young people are aware of the challenges and risks.

When?

- Flexibility is the watchword.
- Convenience for children and young people is important.
- Use what works best for you.

Think about timing and if it can be combined with anything else e.g. local elections or adult consultations. Consultation need not happen during school hours or when children and young people are likely to be engaged in social events.

What about feedback?

- Feedback needs to be timely to avoid children and young people becoming disillusioned.

Children and young people naturally want to know how their views have been taken into account, and if not, why not. So identify what has changed as a direct result of the process.

Consider:

Where do we meet?

- Consider arranging meetings on children and young people's own territory, or more comfortable settings for them.
- Convenience helps the smooth running of the process.

For example:

Accessibility and transportation in terms of distance and mobility/special needs are critical. If meetings are required consider accompanying children and young people to venues, especially those not likely to be familiar with the area.

Is it fun and interesting for children and young people?

- Keep a balance between having fun and serious work.

Ensure work is attractive so that children and young people can enjoy doing the work. If children and young people feel they are not being challenged by the process they are likely to lose trust in its importance.

What rewards for children and young people?

- Do not assume that because 'it is good for children and young people', there is no need to tell them what the rewards are.

Why should they be involved, what's in it for them? For example, sitting on the advisory committee for the local council contributes to aspects of citizenship education and can be recorded in pupils' Progress Files, or as part of the course work for the GCSE (Short course) for Citizenship studies.

Are we sharing good practice with other schools and LEAs?

- Learn from other people's mistakes and successes.

There is some excellent work taking place. It is useful to visit other schools to share good practice. There are case studies on [www](#). [to be added in final version]

Q6. Are there other key useful check points? What are they?

General Questions

Q7. What are the kinds of issues your school or LEA actively get children and young people to participate in?

pupils from primary schools, secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units. Does it contain messages appropriate to all these schools?

Q8. What have you found works in getting active participation?

Q10. There will be a website to complement the final version of this guidance. What would you like to see on the website?

Q9. This guidance is for those working with

Copies of this publication can be obtained from:

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