

# MAKING IT WORK!

**Each pupil participation forum should have their own rules (called a 'constitution') created by pupils and supported by staff.**

## Why

When setting up pupil participation forum it is vital that the council has a set of clear guidelines and rules put together in a single document. This is usually called a constitution, and helps the pupil participation forum to work effectively. The constitution can be as comprehensive or as compact as each individual pupil participation forum wants.

The constitution sets out the roles and responsibilities of the pupil participation forum, and the rules that it must follow, and needs to have in place. This provides a framework for how the forum should be run.

An effective constitution will help guide the pupil participation forum to operate in a professional manner at all times. It will help foster an inclusive approach and promote equality of opportunity for all within the school. This gives all pupils a sense of ownership and control.

The constitution should be developed by pupils with the support of the teaching staff or link teacher, and with endorsement from the Board of Governors. This approach creates a whole school involvement with each level having the opportunity to feed into the pupil participation forum's development.

# PUPILS' VOICES: MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

## Why

The list below gives a simple five-step plan to developing a constitution but remember this is just a guide. Add or subtract from the headings below as the forum sees fit when writing the constitution.

1. The first step is to create the **foundation** for the constitution in which you outline the general aims, the name, and possible mission statement of the pupil participation forum. It is important that the forum becomes known and accepted by the rest of the school population, so it may be useful to develop a logo or branding for the forum. The logo will be associated with every activity, report, poster that the forum produces, fostering a sense of identity, recognition and ownership.
2. The second step relates to **members**. Here it should be stated clearly who can be a member of the forum. It should also identify what happens if a member resigns – will they be replaced, if so, what is the process involved? It should also be stated whether or not the forum would like to have a liaison officer from the school staff, Board of Governors or the parents' council.
3. **Election** procedures need to be explained to ensure that all pupils have an equal chance at being voted on to the forum (see Insert 3). Whatever process is decided upon it must be democratic and accessible by all pupils.
4. Fourthly, **management roles and responsibilities of the forum** define what positions are held within the pupil participation forum and explains the duties each officer will have, e.g. Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, PR officer; what training is needed (see Insert 7); how will ideas and plans be presented to the principal and governors? Will the forums have a remit to liaise with other forums and outside bodies?



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5. The final section of the constitution should be dedicated to looking at the **administration / planning** of the forum and may include comments on:

- Finances / budget management;
- Frequency of meetings;
- Action planning;
- Organisation training;
- Writing minutes;
- Communication plans.

In summarising, the constitution should provide the framework to ensure the forum is:

- **educational**, enabling pupils to learn new skills in communication and decision making;
- **democratic**, open to all ensuring every pupil has a voice;
- **real**, solving real problems and making real decisions;
- **open and transparent**, working with the school management team, teachers and fellow pupils, feeding back information and decision-making details;
- **concerned** about their school and what happens in it and to it; and
- **worthwhile**, ensuring pupils understand the benefits of the forum not only on a personal basis, but also to their peers and whole school community.

## Checklist

### Have you:

1. Consulted with pupils on the constitution
2. Agreed aims and objectives for the pupil participation forum

### Tick



## PUPILS' VOICES: MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

3. Agreed a format for the constitution
4. Got support for the constitution from all levels within the school
5. Communicated the final version to everyone within the school

For further help in developing a pupil participation forum constitution, including advice on what should be included and sample constitutions, you may wish to visit the following websites:

### School Council of Ireland Online:

<http://www.studentcouncil.ie/>

### Student Voice (UK)

<http://www.studentvoice.co.uk/>

### Smart School Councils Community

<http://www.smartschoolcouncils.org.uk/>

### Pupil Voices Wales

<http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/>

### Dept. of Education, New South Wales:

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/student-support/studleadsrc/index.php>

### Dept. of Education, State of Victoria:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/schoolcouncil.aspx>

### Alberta School Council Resource Manual:

<http://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/?Effectiveness>



You can find out more about NICCY and the Pupils' Voices programme at [www.niccy.org](http://www.niccy.org), 028 9031 1616 and [participation@niccy.org](mailto:participation@niccy.org). Please contact the Communications team at NICCY if you require alternative formats of this material.