



## BULLYING

### >> SCHOOL COUNCILS

To give pupils a voice in how their school is run NICCY is asking the government to make school councils a statutory requirement in line with other European countries. School councils, however, will only be effective if there is a genuine sharing in decision making processes and real and informed engagement with regards to listening to the opinions of pupils. These principles underpin Article 12 of the UNCRC (which gives pupils a right to be consulted on any decision affecting their lives) and the philosophy of citizenship education.

A useful way of determining the extent to which pupils are engaged in real consultation is to evaluate where on the ladder of pupils' participation you would place your school.

#### LADDER OF PUPILS' PARTICIPATION

**4. Pupils as fully active participants:** *pupils and teachers jointly initiate enquiry; pupils play an active role in decision making; together with teachers they jointly plan action in light of discussions and review the impact of the interventions*

**3. Pupils as researchers:** *Pupils are involved in enquiry and have an active role in decision making*

**2. Pupils as active participants:** *Pupils are taking some role in decision making but teachers initiate enquiry and interpret pupils concerns*

**1. Listening to pupils:** *Teachers respond to pupils suggestions but pupils are not involved in these discussions, there may be no feedback to pupils*

**0. Pupils not consulted:** *non participation*

*Idea taken from 'Communicating...' (2001) ESRC*



#### Establishing a School Council

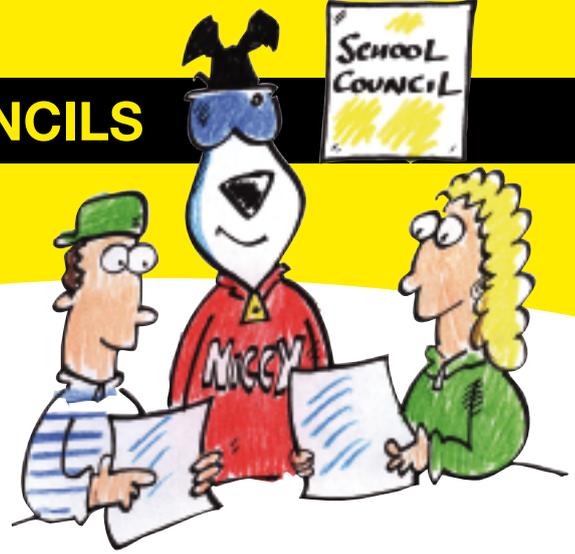
Classes could be encouraged to have short, weekly meetings during form time or PSHE to enable pupils to raise issues of concern. Pupils can then either volunteer themselves or a vote could be taken as to who should represent these concerns at the school council meeting. Depending on the size of the school, a representative from each class or each year group should note these issues and (if possible) suggestions for resolving them, for presentation to the school council.

This forum would not only provide pupils with a platform to voice their views on issues of concern, but it would promote pupils' self confidence, self esteem, listening and problem solving skills, as well as providing pupils with the opportunity to take on new responsibilities and develop their competence in public speaking. An effective school council would also give pupils a sense of ownership and responsibility towards policy making and in so doing, improve the morale of the school community.



## BULLYING

# >> SCHOOL COUNCILS



### The School Council Brief

The NSPCC recommends that school councils should:

- have a constitution to clarify its role and function
- have support from the majority of teachers
- provide opportunities for all pupils' views to be heard
- provide feedback to pupils on decisions agreed
- have a dedicated budget and opportunities to fundraise
- maintain links with parents and governing bodies
- have a wide-ranging agenda reflecting the concerns of both children and teachers
- ensure that pupils and teachers receive appropriate training

### The Role of the School Council in Anti-Bullying Campaigns

During anti-bullying week, the school council could organise a series of events to highlight the school's proactive involvement in various anti-bullying campaigns. For example, school councils might want to consider showcasing special events to mark 'Blue Friday' such as:

- Having a non-uniform day where everyone has to wear the colour blue
- Encouraging staff and pupils to form a human chain around the school and inviting the local press to write an article on this initiative
- Coordinating the making of blue anti-bullying wrist bands using coloured wool/thread and laminated card with anti-bullying messages printed on them (idea from Christchurch CE Primary School, Chelsea)

Pupils could also be encouraged to make presentations to the school council on whether the policy they helped design has helped reduce the number of bullying incidents occurring in the school. The school council could also take the lead on researching pupils' opinions on how to record bullying incidents, also whether it is on a report card, or in a diary. They could organise advertising campaigns to remind pupils who witness bullying incidents to keep a record of what they see going on which could include comments on **where** and **when** the incident/s took place and **who** was present so that they can give a reliable account of **what** actually happened and to **whom**.

### Further Information

- >> More information on setting up a school council is available from the website of School Councils UK at [www.schoolcouncils.org](http://www.schoolcouncils.org) or [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)
- >> The Primary and Secondary DIY resource packs available from [www.schoolcouncils.org](http://www.schoolcouncils.org) provides further information on issues such as running elections and training class council representatives.
- >> NICCY will be producing guidance to support schools in establishing and maintaining a schools council. This guidance is due to be published in February 2007 on the NICCY website at [www.niccy.org](http://www.niccy.org)