

COMMIT TO IT!

The pupil participation forum must have the right amount of time, space and budget to make sure it has an active and high profile role when decisions are being taken in school.

Why

The pupil participation forum needs to be treated like any other department within the school structure. It needs the appropriate amount of time for meetings and a permanent place to hold meetings, which will be recognised within the school. This visibility within the school will go some way to embedding the forum within the heart of the school, and gaining the respect and space it needs to grow and develop. It also needs an appropriate budget to carry out its functions.

How

Senior management need to provide the space and time for the forum within the school day.

At the start of the forum's development process, the link teacher(s) should negotiate with the senior management team, the appropriate amount of time allocated to the pupils for the promotion and election stage of the forum. The senior management could indicate their level of support for the forum by securing a permanent space for the forum to meet.

Once the election is complete, the forum members need to negotiate time to promote their role within the school. This can be done in a number of ways, such as assemblies, news sheets, staff meetings, Board of Governors meetings, Parent Council meetings, display boards and pupil participation forum badges.

PUPILS' VOICES: MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

A budget for the pupil participation forum is important as it gives pupils the responsibility to purchase basic resources for the day to day running of the forum. It also gives pupils the opportunity to develop financial management skills, and gives the forum a degree of independence within the school. The pupil participation forum budget could be boosted by having a fundraising day within the school.

If managed properly, a pupil participation forum can have a significant influence in many aspects of school life including:

- Developing ways to share information with their peers on issues that are of concern, e.g. school meals, voluntary work, bullying issues, drug awareness;
- Assisting the school in implementing legislation e.g. The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003;
- Feeding into the school curriculum;
- Helping make decisions on school organisation, e.g. canteen, community involvement, school management committee;
- Highlighting and solving real issues in their school, e.g. identify problems which teachers may not be aware of (such as bullying in particular areas of the playground for example);
- Awarding certificates for citizenship and improving the spirit of the school;
- Raising awareness of and providing a forum for discussion about school policies and priorities such as anti-racism, anti-violence and complaints procedures;
- Developing pupil welfare initiatives in the school to work towards improving the physical and social environment of the school;



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- Organising social activities for pupils, e.g. discos, sporting and debating competitions including fundraising for specific purposes;
- Developing a support programme for younger pupils; and
- Improving the school environment, happier learners equal more effective learning.

Checklist

Have you:

1. Provided an appropriate amount of time for forum meetings
2. Provided an appropriate permanent space to hold meetings
3. Provided a filing cabinet to store information
4. Provided access to a computer and printer for writing up minutes of meetings
5. Provided access to a photocopier
6. Provided an appropriate budget to purchase resources if required

Tick

PUPILS' VOICES: MAKING A DIFFERENCE!



For further information in setting up your pupil participation forum and identifying roles within it, 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/studentsupport/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
- 028 9031 1616
- participation@niccy.org



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