

# FROM TOP TO BOTTOM!

## PUPILS' VOICES: MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

**In keeping with best practice, the Board of Governors should discuss key issues with the pupil participation forum. This can help when looking at any issues involving pupils.**

### Why

Children and young people have the right to have their opinions considered when decisions are being made that affect their lives.

This will also help the school do what it has to according to law, and help comply with the UNCRC (see Insert 1).

The main principles drawn from the UNCRC regarding children's participation (Article 12) are:

- The right for all children to express their views;
- The right to express their views freely;
- The right to be heard in all matters affecting them; and
- The right to have their views taken seriously in accordance with their age and maturity.

### How

To create **best** practice, senior management need to create an environment that empowers pupils to participate at Board of Governors meetings in a meaningful way.

One of the key areas in which the Board of Governors can involve the pupil participation forum, is through

the School Development Plan. This gives the opportunity for pupils to express their views on the whole school's development. Input into the School Development Plan needs the appropriate amount of time allocated, so that the pupil participation forum can give all pupils the opportunity to have their opinions heard.

Involving pupils early in the process ensures that pupils' views are placed at the centre of the School Development Planning process, and are not simply added in at the end.

Legislation says that pupils must be consulted in the development of key policies (see Insert 2), in areas which directly affect them, such as the anti-bullying and discipline policies. The Board of Governors could develop creative ways of discussing key issues with pupils in less formal ways. These creative methods could be developed in partnership with the pupil participation forum and rolled out across the whole school.

Including the forum in this process creates a sense of ownership and makes the policies more relevant to the pupils.

To support this, DE has developed a pupil participation circular – specifically for Principals and Boards of Governors - which provides guidance on how to encourage pupil participation in decision-making in schools.



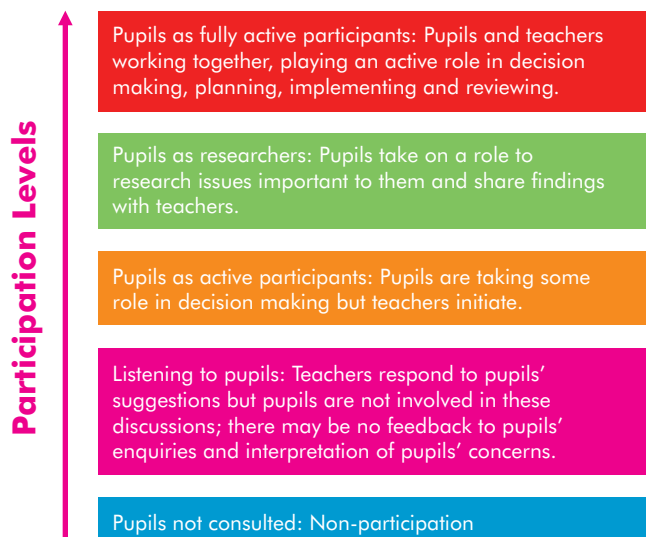
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The circular outlines the range of benefits that pupil participation can bring not only for pupils, but for schools and the wider community; explains how successful participation can be achieved; highlights a number of key issues which schools need to consider to ensure that pupil engagement is meaningful and effective, and signposts schools to other sources of help and support.

The circular seeks to assist schools in identifying and establishing the most effective methods of participation, which best suits the needs of their pupils, and which allow children and young people to have a real say in issues which impact on them and the wider school community.

As in all forms of participation with children and young people, there are different levels of involvement.

## Where is your school on the journey?



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.

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## Checklist

### Have you:

- |  | Tick                     |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Involved the pupil participation forum in the early stages of discussion            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Provided the pupil participation forum with information on key issues               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Kept jargon to a minimum  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Adapted any meetings to meet pupils' needs, including meeting within the school day | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. A process that will guarantee that pupils views would be listened to                | <input type="checkbox"/> |

For further information on how the Board of Governors and the senior management team can liaise with, work with, and develop a framework to include pupils in the school business, you may wish to visit the following websites:

### Department of Education's (NI) Pupil participation circular:

[www.deni.gov.uk/articles/school-councils-and-pupil-participation](http://www.deni.gov.uk/articles/school-councils-and-pupil-participation)

### Department of Education's (NI) Every School A Good School policy:

<https://www.deni.gov.uk/publications/every-school-good-school-policy-school-improvement>

### NCB NI Participation Support Programme for Schools:

<http://www.ncb.org.uk/who-we-are/northern-ireland>

### Student Voice (UK)

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