

Beyond Tokenism –

promoting effective consultation and
a participatory ethos in schools

Hilton Dunblane Hydro

ANTI-BULLYING
NETWORK

THOS
network

December 2003



ORGANISATION

Kilninver Primary School, Oban

FOCUS

**Children Should be Seen and Heard: the work of the
Senior Pupil Forum**

Can you describe briefly any initiatives or projects in place that illustrate the focus of our conference i.e. Collective Participation?

Each class has a class meeting organised and chaired by a senior (P7) pupil, to consult on issues raised by pupils through suggestion folders, at assemblies and by the Head Pupils. These class meetings also give all pupils the chance to give their opinions on policies, events, changes etc that directly affect them in their day to day experiences at school. The Senior Pupil Forum is a group of P7 pupils who meet following the class meetings to discuss the points made at class meetings and to decide next steps. The Head Pupils meet with the Headteacher to discuss these points and other issues brought up by pupils, and how best to advance them. This is not a 'them and us' situation, but rather a collegiate approach with both HT and pupils working together in support of each other. Staff are kept informed of pupil issues through consultation by pupils and being issued with the minutes of meetings for discussion. Staff are fully involved when a proposal for changes in school policy has been proposed by pupils.

How these initiatives are being monitored and evaluated?

These initiatives are monitored at staff meetings, to ascertain staff views on the processes, and are regularly reviewed by the pupils during their meetings. HT and Head Pupils review progress at their meetings.

What are some of the biggest challenges faced by teachers and young people or members of your organisation, in implementing the initiatives or projects?

Accessing time as the perceived demands of the formal curriculum can take precedence. Teachers should see follow up projects as a chance for real life integrated learning experiences. Also, not all adults (parents, teachers, volunteers etc) believe in the right of children to have their views taken seriously in matters that affect them, and do not see things the way children do. It is a real challenge for us adults when children don't agree or are not happy with us!

CONTACT INFORMATION

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What has worked well?

The feeling of responsibility and 'ownership' that senior pupils have, in almost all cases, has had a positive effect on their learning and behaviour in the classroom. The various training experiences that the senior pupils have had has had a direct effect on peer support, resulting a very low incidence of bullying over the years at the school.

What did not work & lessons learned?

Initially, the demands of the 'Head Pupil' position led to some pupils feeling under pressure. Now, close liaison with parents and a negotiation with pupil and parent of the duties of the post take place prior to the pupil's 'term of office'. All pupils want to be the 'Head Pupils' - but as in all areas, differentiation is required!

The early development of the Senior Pupil Forum steamed ahead without all members of the school community on board! Consultation and communication are vital at all stages if all adults are to embrace the concept.

Future plans?

A major next step is to develop to full at local level a senior primary pupil conference where reps from local school councils come together to discuss issues and make recommendations to the education directorate. This took place two years ago on a pilot level involving three schools with great success.

Another next step is to develop the class meetings, particularly from P4 to P6 so they are more autonomous eg chaired and minuted by pupils from these class groups and with less teacher supervision.

Contact information

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for information on participation initiatives, including S1 peer mentoring of P7s, S3 work experience in the primary, S3 as S1 peer mentor trainers, P6/7 Citizenship award etc.



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