

# Pupil Participation

## 1. What is pupil participation?

- Introduction
- Effective Education
- Context
- Principles
- A Whole School Ethos
- The challenge of participation

## 2. Whole school approaches

- Circle time
- School Council
- Assessment for learning

## 3. Pupil participation at review meetings

- Annual Reviews
- To enable a child to participate in the decision making process adults need to.....;
- Children need information so they can work towards.....;
- Children should be enabled in order to participate
- How to conduct the IEP Review

## 4. Getting started with pupil participation

- The way forward checklist
- Resources for pupil participation

## **Appendices**

### 1. Pupil Participation checklist.

## 1. What is Pupil Participation?

### Introduction

'Pupil Participation' is given prominence in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (Chapter 3 ) and in the Special Educational Needs Toolkit (Section 4: Enabling Participation). Participation is important for all pupils , regardless of age and ability.

*'Very young children and those with severe communication difficulties for example may present a significant challenge for education, health and other professional. But the principle of seeking and taking account of the ascertainable views of the child is an important one'.*

SEN Code of Practice 3:3

Pupil involvement should be regarded as important for two reasons:

Principle- Children have the right to be heard. They should always be encouraged to participate in decision-making about provision to meet their special educational need.

Practice – Children have important and relevant information. Their support is crucial to the effective implementation of any individual education plan.

### The Context

Pupil participation is part of the Inclusion agenda and the Government's commitment to 'learning to listen' to ALL children and young people. Although Section 4 of the SEN Toolkit concentrates on how pupils with special educational needs can be enabled to participate in decisions about their learning and development, it places a great deal of emphasis on the need for a whole school approach, ethos, and culture which enable all pupils to have their voices heard. This is in line with The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989):

*'Children who are capable of forming views, have a right to receive and make known information to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account in any matters*

*affecting them. The views of the child should be given due weight according to the age, maturity, and capability of the child.'*

In the DfEs 'Working together giving children and Young People a say'(2004) Pupil

### Principles of Pupil Participation

- Everyone must commit themselves to the challenge of ensuring pupil participation
- Everyone must recognise the legitimate interests of the other partners in decision making
- There has to be a commitment to the long term involvement of pupils
- Pupils need training and encouragement to help them become actively involved
- Teachers and parents need to learn how to involve the pupil
- There has to be a determination on all sides to make pupil participation work.

### SEN Toolkit Section 4: 'Enabling Pupil Participation'

participation is defined as adults working with children and young people to develop ways of making sure that their views are heard and valued, as well as encouraging them to become more active partners in their education, including evaluation of their own learning.

### Effective Education

Listening to pupils views about their education leads to a better understanding of more appropriate and effective processes and provision. Research into effective schools shows that when pupils have an active role in the life of the school and when they are given a shared responsibility for their own learning the self-esteem of pupils is raised considerably.

### A Whole School Ethos

Schools should be warm welcoming and open in order to make a difference as to how school is experienced by all pupils.

Every effort should be made to enable access for all pupils to all activities that make up the whole life of the school, both formal and informal, inside and out of school hours and within their local communities.

Pupils will be encouraged to have a greater sense of commitment to their school and their education if the school ensures:

- A positive and supportive atmosphere
- Robust anti-bullying strategies
- Open access to help with school work

Support for access to the whole school environment.

In turn this will have a positive impact on raising achievement.

### **The Challenge of Participation.**

Pupil Participation can raise challenging questions around the balance of power in schools. Schools should start from a realistic point and then develop pupil participation in small stages as their collective confidence, trust and skills increase. Schools undertaking this journey should work towards a culture where children share power and responsibility for decision making. This coupled with an understanding of their right to be involved in all aspects of school life should allow pupils to be effectively involved in school.

## **2. Whole School Approaches to Pupil Participation**

The ethos, organisation and culture of a school should encourage and support pupil participation. Activities such as Circle Time can help pupils, even very young pupils, to feel valued and comfortable in expressing their views. School and class councils can also enable pupils to have their voices heard and to take part in group decision-making processes in a constructive way.

### **Circle Time**

- Requires regular dedicated time (preferably daily)
- Staff training on using circle time

ensures consistency throughout school

- Has lasting effects
- Can be put into practice in small groups or whole class groups
- When pupils are familiar with the way it is done they can manage it
- All children should participate
- Emotional Literacy compliments Circle Time and teaches children how to articulate and therefore participate fully
- Can pre-empt development of a school council.

### **School Council**

- Staff training is vital
- Children need to be trained and advised
- In class pre-meetings should allow for all children sharing ideas
- Outcomes involve all children
- If all school staff are involved it becomes more democratic
- 'Quality time' is needed for all meetings
- Feedback should be given to whole classes, parents and governors
- As many children as possible should be given the opportunity at some time, to be on the schools council
- All age groups should be involved
- Process should focus on children's qualities rather than ability to articulate

### **Assessment for Learning and Individual Education plans**

- Schools should involve pupils in their own target setting
- Pupils should evaluate their own progress
- Time should be made to discuss targets with pupils and allow time for pupil to respond
- The most effective targets are the ones that children have had an input in

- Always recognise the value of different learning styles (children and teacher)
- Clarifies how to improve
- Connects learning across the whole curriculum

### 3. Pupil Participation in Review Meetings

#### Annual Reviews

“The pupils views should be recorded as part of the statutory review process and other assessment reviews, including the transitional reviews”.

#### To enable a child to participate in decision making adults need to:

- Provide an appropriate environment;
- Give very clear explanations about what is going to happen;
- Be clear about confidentiality and explain why there is a need to talk to parents and other professionals;
- Recognise the potential stress of assessment and review arrangements and do their best ensure that the pupil understands the role and contribution of any other professionals from the educational psychology service, child health, social services, connexions etc who may be involved;
- Agree and make a list of things to do together;
- Give the child/young person the best opportunity to demonstrate their achievements and understanding in a variety of contexts e.g. showing work, watching activities;
- Learn how to listen carefully to the child's needs and views and allow expression in any way which makes good sense to them;
- Incorporate the above into an agreed framework(e.g. plan-do- review cycle, letter, report);
- Always end any session properly and comfortably ensuring the child/young person leaves feeling secure in the knowledge that all has gone well.

#### Children Need information so that they can work towards:

- Understanding the importance of information;
- Expressing their feelings;
- Participating in discussions;
- Indicating their choices.

#### Children should be enabled and encouraged to participate in all decision-making processes that occur in education including:

- Setting learning targets and contributing to Individual Education Plans
- Discussions about choice of schools;
- Contributing to the assessment of their needs;
- Contributing to the annual review;
- Being involved in transition planning.

All pupils need to be part of these processes, to know they are listened to and that their views are valued.

#### How to conduct the Individual Education Plan Review

##### BEFORE

1. Work out some targets before the meeting
  - Look at any recent assessments, the pupils strengths and evidence of any preferred learning style.
  - Plan some SMART targets-these can be modified at the meeting to take what best motivates the pupil into account.
2. Setting up the materials and the environment
  - If you are writing them directly onto a computer programme (IEP Writer) or the Wakefield IEP template. You can change the wording to make it more child- friendly. The IEP can be printed and therefore readily available.
  - If you prefer to hand write the Wakefield form can still be used and photocopy for the child.
  - Put out some of the child's work as evidence for your discussion on progress/difficulties.
  - Make sure that the environment is quiet and private.

## DURING

3. Explaining what the session is all about
  - Reassure the child by talking about what you are going to do. They may be apprehensive and feel they have done something wrong.
  - Praise the child for any progress made (be positive)
  - Find out more about their views. Questions asked should be balanced between academic and social.
  - Find out what they would like to get better at. Targets will be achieved if they are motivated.
  - Discuss anything that the child finds difficult.
4. Writing the IEP together
  - Take one target at a time.
  - Negotiate the targets with the child. This will make sure that the child perceives the targets created as achievable and relevant to them.
  - Try to get the pupil to refine their targets to make them more specific so that they are measurable.
  - Ask them what they need to do to achieve the target.
  - Discuss and make it clear who will help the child and when (if possible).
  - Try to use their words as much as possible, this creates a stronger sense of ownership.
  - Put in a review date and explain that you will meet again to talk about how the child has got on and whether any changes need to be made.

## AFTER

5. Involving Parents
  - Invite parents/carers to discuss the plan. The child may even want to explain it.
  - Talk to parents/carers about how they support their child in order to meet or achieve the targets. Plans involving parents stand a good chance of being achieved.
  - Get everyone to sign the IEP. It will then feel like everyone is coming together to support the pupil.

## 5. Getting started with Pupil Participation

“Getting started on the journey of participation requires careful planning, as well as a willingness to challenge existing norms and values and to take meaningful risks. Partnership is a vital element, enabling children, young people and adults to work things out together and discuss differences, even if it means disagreeing occasionally. This process also provides excellent opportunities to build respect for each other.”  
Healthy Schools

### The Way Forward: Checklist for action

1. Complete the Pupil Participation Checklist to identify current levels of participation, to find out what children, young people and adults think about it and what further developments are needed.

2. Draw up a Pupil Participation Action Plan and involve all staff. You may want to involve others such as SENSS teacher or Educational Psychologist. Don't forget to consult governors, parents and pupils.

3. Seek advice and support on setting up a school council and setting up circle time. (Educational Psychology may be able to assist)

4. Get started and remember to keep talking, review regularly, monitor and evaluate, progress, enjoy learning from mistakes, celebrate success and as you develop more confidence, push the boundaries further.

5. Finally- show OFSTED your work! They will look very favourably on school initiatives that seek to involve pupils and listen to and act upon their views.

Useful resources:

Schools Council UK [www.schoolscouncil.org](http://www.schoolscouncil.org)

Schools Council UK has been helping schools develop into caring communities,

working with teachers and pupils in primary, secondary and special schools for more than 10 years. Schools Council UK which is supported by the DfES and accredited as a TA Headlamp Trainer, also works in partnership with LEA's.

Circle Time [www.circle-time.co.uk](http://www.circle-time.co.uk)

Quality Circle Time from Jenny Moseley Consultants

Circle Time has been developed by Jenny Moseley over the past 16 years as a whole school approach to enhancing self-esteem and positive behaviour. The Circle process enables young people to experience their own individuality and find ways of valuing the contributions of others that may be different.

Healthy Schools [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk)

The National Healthy Schools Standard is jointly funded by the DfES and the Department of Health. The overall aim is to help schools become healthy and effective by providing an environment that is conducive to learning and that encourages pupils to achieve. It is part of the governments drive to reduce health inequalities, promote social inclusion and raise educational standards through school improvement.

National Children's Bureau [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)

NCB promotes the interest and well being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives. It advocates the participation of children and young people in all matters affecting them and challenges disadvantage in childhood

Having a say, making a change [www.nasen.org.uk](http://www.nasen.org.uk) NASEN

CD Rom provides flexible resource of materials devised by an Educational Psychologist that can be personalised by individual settings/needs. Single use about £19:00 multiple user £29:00.

Whose voice is it anyway? [www.diseed.org.uk](http://www.diseed.org.uk) Alliance for Inclusive Education

Account by a disabled young person of her experiences in researching how disabled young people voice their opinions and choices and whether or not they are listened to.

Pupil Friendly IEP's [www.luckyduck.co.uk](http://www.luckyduck.co.uk) Lucky Duck Publishing

Practical tips and guidance for writing IEP's by an Educational Psychologist. Primary aged 6-11. CD Rom of IEP formats.

I'll Go First [www.the-children's-society.org.uk](http://www.the-children's-society.org.uk) The Children's Society

Pack to support participation from pupils with communication difficulties. Includes pictures and symbols £60:00.

'Empowering children and young people' [www.savethechildren.org.uk](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk) Save the Children

A training manual for professionals and organisations who work with children in a range of settings.

Consulting Pupils: A Toolkit for Teachers [www.pearsonpublishing.co.uk](http://www.pearsonpublishing.co.uk) Pearson Publishing

Includes examples of a range of manageable consultation strategies that are writing based, talk based and for people who have difficulty writing or are shy about talking, image based approaches to consultation.