



HANSARD
SOCIETY

HeadsUp Forum

www.headsup.org.uk

'Get in there... How should you be involved in school management?'
(November 22nd - December 10th 2004)

A platform providing students with a secure and structured space to discuss their experiences and perspectives of pupil participation.

'Get in there... How should you be involved in school management?' was a debate focussing on the pupil participation agenda, the Government's efforts to develop the agenda, schools' efforts to implement it and the perspectives of the young people it impacts upon.

This debate was selected to provide students with opportunity to reflect on their involvement in the democratic process at a personal, local, community and national level. It sought to scrutinise the Government's guidance on pupil participation and community cohesion published in 'Working Together - Giving children and young people a say' (April 2004).

Pupil participation is nothing new but there is a concerted effort underway to ensure it becomes embedded in school life. Academic research has demonstrated a wide range of benefits arising from pupils' participation in school management, including rates of pupil retention, standard of academic results and levels of student satisfaction.

The Government see improving pupil participation as important for boosting the standard of schools, education and democracy in the UK. But how do pupils view their opportunities to get involved in school management and the quality of results when they do?

This forum was a valuable opportunity for students from a range of schools to reflect on a democratic process that they experience daily and how that echoes the dynamics of wider society. Over its course the debate touched on:

- students' awareness of opportunities to get involved in school management
- students' experiences of participation at their school
- their perceptions of the benefits that come from participation

The debate involved students from 5 schools around England. They were between the ages of 11 and 16. Two schools had taken part in previous Forums but the rest participated for the first time. Every school made multiple visits over the duration of the debate and the number of student posts totalled 67.

The objective of the HeadsUp project is not simply to facilitate peer-to-peer debate but to also encourage the involvement of those elected representatives interested in informing their decision-making. This debate received endorsement from the Minister for Schools, the Shadow Minister for Children and Young People and key stakeholder organisations such as SchoolCouncils UK and the Carnegie Young People Initiative. These individuals and organisations will shortly be responding to students' contributions and findings.

This report summarises the debate that took place and includes key posts from students. After reading, the Forum participants and the Hansard Society would like to invite interested parties, particularly parliamentarians and government, to respond.

Please note... *It has been the practice in previous HeadsUp Forum reports to accompany highlighted posts with the names of their authors. However, in this Forum some schools chose not to register students as individuals, rather students posted under their teacher's name. As we have been unable to individually credit some posts, we have taken the decision not to credit any. Posts are available in their entirety and in sequence in the forum transcripts.*

'Get in there... How should you be involved in school management?'

Key Findings

For those taking part in this HeadsUp debate, the question of whether students should be involved in school management was straightforward. They regarded pupil participation as a very good thing that should be encouraged wherever possible:

"I think involving the pupils is a great idea because it means that it is more their school, and they can feel more comfortable in the environment... It makes people feel they belong."

Most of the participants had directly experienced pupil participation at their schools. Posts that spoke positively of these experiences suggested that a good range of participation structures were in place and that these were managing to have an impact on school life:

"At our school we have loads of opportunities to get involved in the running of the school. We have school councils-where the tutor groups reps meet, and pass on suggestions to the year council. They met every fortnight and they pass things to the head, who make a decision on the subject. If we campaign we can get things. Like recently we got a school disco which was great,except we had to share with the lower year (not so great)"

None of the students specifically mentioned the DfES pupil participation guidance, *Working Together*, which was published in April 2004 (a copy was made available in the student notes). However, some participants did speak of noticeable improvements to participation structures over the course of the last year:

"Our school has always had a school council. More recently it has become more active and involves more pupils' opinions. I suppose that the change is quite recent, but pupils have always been involved with what goes on in the school, although this year is much better"

There were a number of participating students who held positions as student representatives. From their experiences of the participating in school

decision-making, they were positive about the skills that they had developed and what students could achieve:

"I am one of our Tutor Reps, and also one of the year reps. It is our jobs to bring forward what people want. In my school, the pupils are listened to, and its great! The chairman of the council takes important issues directly to the head, and he decides what to do. Usually, solutions to problems involve the pupils doing something, and this involves pupils again."

But not all experiences of pupil participation were as glowing, even where participation structures were in place:

"My experiences with school councils aren't great, as both the state schools I've been to before my current school ran the council mainly for show. As far as I can remember, the most we ever managed to get was a water fountain"

There was some significant dissatisfaction with the diversity of representation in school management structures and the quality of interaction between student representatives and the remainder of the student body:

"Our group thought:

Important decisions are made behind closed doors. These decisions are being made by the govenors, teachers, headteacher and the school council. But what the school council does is not widely known to the school."

Frustration was not limited to those who felt excluded from decision-making and pupil participation. Some participants who had been directly involved in school management were critical of what they observed and, on occasion, the motives of those were involved:

"I was a student rep for two years. I got bored of it easily, the tutor moaned and it took up my wednesdays. i stopped this year when someone took my position, in a way i was kind of annoyed but that was just because i liked the power. We din't realyy make the decisions though, as I've heard that our head refuses to take on comments"

Forum participants acknowledged that there were limits to how many students could reasonably be drawn into decision-making. However, there was a feeling amongst some participants that it was a 'particular' type of student who got involved in pupil participation and that others were precluded:

"I believe that if any student wants to participate in a council meeting, then they should. I know that classrooms vote for a couple of people to represent them, but if someone wants to join in a debate at a council meeting, they have every right to do so."

Over the course of the deliberation, a broad range of concerns about pupil participation structures emerged. Harassment of student representatives, absenteeism from meetings, poor understanding of the scope of decision-making and a lack of knowledge on which to make informed choices, were highlighted as barriers to effective pupil participation.

The participants also found it difficult to generate some solutions to the problems they perceived. This would suggest that where *Working Together* has aided teachers and school managers in implementing pupil participation structures, similar guidance for pupils would help overcome confusions and limitations, encouraging more representative and visible school decision-making.

A discussion-space was set up where the participants could put forward suggestions of areas of their school life over which, they believed, students should exercise more influence. Different schools highlighted many of the same areas including rules on uniform, timetabling, volume of homework, coordinating school trips and determining discipline policy.

Some participants came up with suggestions that were based on experiences in individual schools and some of these suggestions were more contentious:

"Our group came up with the following list of suggestions. The teacher explained that they were controversial!"

1 Less lessons and a longer lunch break - because we need a longer time to socialise and this will reduce the stress

2 No homework - we have enough to do in school, let alone out of school

3 A smoking room - as students should be allowed to smoke, it is up to them

4 teachers should wear school uniform"

Earlier in the year, David Miliband MP, former Minister for School Standards, told a meeting of head teachers that he would recommend that all schools keep all pupils on school grounds over lunchtime. The Minister reasoned that such a move would impact on truancy and improve relations between schools and their communities.

The forum participants were not very encouraged by this prospect. A number of arguments were put forward for allowing students out at lunch:

"We don't think kids should stay in school at lunch because fights start because people are bored. There isn't much to do. People like to go to Tesco's and McDonalds because it's cheaper and more enjoyable, plus not everyone likes school food."

The link with truancy was disputed, complaints were made about availability of facilities at lunchtimes and the students redirected some of the blame for poor school-community relations at the community:

"I think putting signs on the windows of shops to restrict students going in during the day is harsh. It seems kind of like the 'No Blacks' signs of the 50's and earlier. Seems kind of, well not racist of course, (we need a new word) kind of 'age-ist'."

However, in the spirit of pupil participation, the participants suggested that school management discuss the matter directly with students. In this way, compromises could be reached to suit the needs of all parties:

"Aren't we all supposed to be equal? I think if a certain group of people want to be able to go out at lunchtimes and their current school laws don't allow it, they can talk to their rep. and see if they can get the council's permission"

However, some participants were of the belief that the interests of different members of the school community could not be consolidated. They argued that pupil participation structures, such as school councils, should be run without the direct participation of teachers:

"I can definitely say that our councils are a good idea. They are now run without teachers present-in most ways a good act i believe, as teachers do influence what is put forward. So if you thought of something really important the teacher could simply say- No, it's not possible. But anythings possible!"

Head teachers were subject to a number of criticisms by participants who saw the commitment of senior staff to pupil participation as insincere:

“I think it's hypocritical of school heads to initiate a school council and then give themselves the final say in everything”

Yet, the majority of students disagreed. They were supportive of the potential for student/teacher collaboration in pupil participation exercises. They accepted it as vital and beneficial. Teachers, they reasoned, could pass on skills to students and also help to ensure that action points are carried through and, where possible, realised:

“I think that in a school council meeting teachers should participate as well as students, because that's more equal and it shows the kids that we should be on equal terms with the teachers. School councils not only give kids a chance to run the school(apparently), but they also help prepare kids to be participant members of a democratic society. I think that teachers not taking part in a council\school meeting only shows the kids that they are not being taken seriously”

Many of the participants had positive experiences of working with teachers as part of the decision-making process at their school. Yet, whilst acknowledging the benefit of cooperation to students, the young people taking part were also eager to emphasise how it can help teachers improve their understanding and interaction with pupils:

“I think that pupil should be able to be involved with anything that happens in a school. I think that one of the most important things that teachers should listen to is how pupils perceive and react to things such as school rules and homework. If pupils get involved, then teachers can be sure that pupils are happy, and feel that the rules are fair. This is one way to make the school experience more enjoyable.”

Summing Up

In April 2004, the DfES published guidance on how schools can best involve students in the decision-making process. The quality of pupil participation is now being measured in school inspections and it was apparent (from the observations of the participants) that a range of formal and informal structures were being employed to involve students in school management.

In some instances, however, participants expressed frustration with pupil participation. They identified problems with converting deliberation into action, collaborating with teachers, keeping the remainder of the school

community informed about decisions and a basic comprehension of the scope of pupil participation. This would suggest that the publication of guidance for students would improve the quality and pervasiveness of pupil participation.

Yet, in the main, the students were supportive of efforts to encourage their shared responsibility in addressing key issues in the school community. Many spoke of good participative opportunities and a sense of empowerment that came with being involved.

Perhaps the most interesting finding that can be drawn from this HeadsUp forum is that the students recognised that pupil participation was not only about improving the lot of students but rather it was about strengthening the school community by making it more democratic. Interaction and collaboration between students and teachers was seen as crucial to the success of pupil participation and the quality of decision-making. This stands as an important lesson to be taken on board by all who work with young people, be they teachers or parliamentarians.

Ross Ferguson

New Media Manager, Hansard Society

December 16th, 2004

'Get in there... How should you be involved in school management?'

Forum Transcripts

1. What kinds of 'pupil participation' are taking place in your school?

22/11/2004 12:26:00

masterzen

Subject: To start with...

I'd like to hear if you've ever taken part in things like class or school councils, elections or putting together a school magazine.

Or about opportunities that are there, that you aren't taking up.

I'd also like to hear if there aren't any opportunities for pupil participation at your school. Do you think that's a problem?

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

22/11/2004 19:02:00

littles

Subject: Loads of opportunites.

At our school we have loads of opportunites to get invovled in the running of the school. We have school councils-were the tutor groups reps meet, and pass on suggestions to the years council. They met every fortnight and they pass things to the head, who make a decision on the subject. If we campaign we can get things. Like recently we got a school disco which was great,except we had to share with the lower year (not so great) Now we've got a school radio and tons of new stuff to get invovled in!

Rank: 3

Key?: 0

22/11/2004 19:04:00

littles

Subject: Loads of opportunites.

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Rank: 1

Key?: 0

22/11/2004 19:16:00

littles

Subject: loads

at our school we parcticularly run it so, it's a really good thing. We're getting a new headteacher soon so it might change, although i doubt it

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

23/11/2004 15:58:00

ellies

Subject: In my school...

I am one of our Tutor Reps, and also one of the year reps. It is our jobs to bring forward what people want. In my school, the pupils are listened to, and its great! The chairman of the council takes important issues directly to the head, and he decides what to do.

Usually, solutions to problems involve the pupils doing something, and this involves pupils

Rank: 3

Key?: 0

23/11/2004 16:22:00

ellies

Subject: I doubt it...

Surely a new headteacher would keep the same rules? You said you run the school ... surely that can't be changed?

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

23/11/2004 16:31:00

biged

Subject: Experience

Have you always had such a positive experience? Or is this consultation something that has only just recently happened?

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

23/11/2004 16:40:00

ellies

Subject: ...

Our school has always had a school council. More recently it has become more active and involves more pupils opinions. Also, our school has a "voice" policy that means that everyone is entitled to voice an opinion, and make their opinions make a difference. I suppose that the change is quite recent, but pupils have always been involved with what goes on in the school, although this year is much better.

Rank: 3

Key?: 0

23/11/2004 16:48:00

biged

Subject: Working Together

It sounds like your school has really taken on the guidance sent out to all schools from the DfES called 'Working Together'.

I wonder, has anyone else had similar postitive experiences?

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

25/11/2004 14:00:00

eranny70

Subject: My school's council

My experiences with school councils aren't great, as both the state schools I've been to before my current school ran the council mainly for show. As far as I can remember, the most we ever managed to get was a water fountain for a particularly hot summer. But my current school is a democratic 'open' school where there is a meeting 3 times a week that most of our students(110 or so, not much really) and staff attend, though it's not compulsory. We have a chairman and a secretary both students, and anyone in the school can bring up cases concerning anything. Some cases are harrasment cases, in which case the meeting would fine the 'bully' appropriately. Most cases thogh are about changing the current laws or adding new ones if an individual believes it is necessary. We take votes by a show of hands. Everyone can vote, so a 5 year old pupil has the same influence on the meeting as out head mistress.
(oops, bit of a longish post there)

Rank: 3

Key?: 0

25/11/2004 14:37:00

masterzen

Subject: Students working with Teachers

Do you think that students and teachers can work together to make decisions?

Or should their be seperate meetings for each?

What's your opinion or experience?

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

25/11/2004 15:47:00

littles

Subject: To eranny70

I think your school has a great idea going on there. I especially like the idea of fining the bully. I will be suggesting that to my council rep.

I can definently say that our councils are a good idea. They are now run without teachers present-in most ways a good act i believe, as teachers do influence what is put forward. So if you thought of something really important the teacher could simply say- No, it's not possible. But anythings possible!

One thing i can say is we wouldn't be able to have meetings with the whole school present- there are 1500 of us! Plus being a comprehensive school, many students

Rank: 2

Key?: 0

25/11/2004 19:56:00

eranny70

Subject: Re: Zen's Question

I think that in a school council meeting teachers should participate as well as students, because that's more equal and it shows the kids that we should be on equal terms with the teachers. School councils not only give kids a chance to run the school(apparently), but they also help prepare kids to be participant members of a democratic society. I think that teachers not taking part in a council\school meeting only shows the kids that they are not being taken seriously, as there is usually only one or two staff in a meeting. if a group of staff members sat in at a meeting and offered their ideas, opinions and votes, it would show that no one has more or less rights because of age difference, and that everyone is equal. The way it is now seems as if a school council's a 'charade' to benfit the students

Rank: 4

Key?: 0

04/12/2004 18:56:00

peacemaker

Subject: School Council

Our head department are good at listening to our views. Every form group has 2 council

reps who go to council meetings, and this way every age group is represented. Quite a few teachers attend too. We have managed to get some uniform rules relaxed, but the skirts - trousers war is still raging! Our school is a girls only grammar, and in some ways it is a bit old-fashioned. By putting our points across, we hope to get what we want. Lately in English we have been learning about communicating our ideas to others in speech and

Rank: 3

Key?: 0

07/12/2004 13:12:00

littles

Subject: To peacemaker.

How about approaching steadily. Do you have to wear skirts all year round? If so how about suggesting a separate summer and winter uniform. Skirts for the summer and trousers for the winter. If that doesn't work, have you tried a petition? My year made one to get a disco, and we got it.

Take the suffragettes and suffragists (womens rights protesters) one tried non violent protests ie. protests and pilgrimages whilst the other apparently more modern way were violent with hunger strikes, bombs and one person Emily Davidson was killed when she stepped onto the track. which did better? Peaceful.

I quote from a top suffragist Emily Pankhurst

"Our method is like an iceberg. Slow and steady, but unstoppable."

Rank: 3

Key?: 0

07/12/2004 13:43:00

repA

Subject: Our school's participation

Our group listed the following:

1. Homework club
2. Sports club
3. Youth Forum
4. Youth Club
5. Class reps

The homework club is good for pupils that don't have privacy in their own homes or if they don't have a computer.

The sports clubs are good to find out who has good abilities to make a team, which can be fun.

The Youth Club has good facilities.

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

07/12/2004 13:45:00

chilli

Subject: Enough?

You've listed the types of participation on offer at your school.

Are these enough, do you think?

Or does there need to more options?

And are the structures effective enough? Do they get things done?

If not, why not?

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

07/12/2004 13:48:00

glitzy-gals

Subject: Taking part in our school

These are the things our group listed about ways we take part:

1. School council, but it is not very active in the school community.
2. School Youth Forum, at the moment in the process of building a sensory garden for the Aspen 2, a special needs unit at the school.
3. Homework club, a good opportunity to have individual help with homework

Rank: 2

Key?: 0

07/12/2004 15:32:00

the rebels

Subject: closed doors

Our group thought:

Important decisions are made behind closed doors. These decisions are being made by the governors, teachers, headteacher and the school council. But what the school council does is not widely known to the school.

To improve these we should; get people on the council who will listen and work with the students. Get the Head to be able to listen to ordinary, usual students around the school.

Rank: 2

Key?: 0

09/12/2004 13:02:00

eranny70

Subject: Re:Behind Closed Doors

I think a good way to let the rest of the school know what's been going on in the council meetings is for every council rep. to announce what's been carried\dropped\talked about in the meetings. And maybe to post it on a noticeboard as well.

Rank: 2

Key?: 0

09/12/2004 13:08:00

eranny70

Subject: Hypocrisy

I think it's hypocritical of school heads to initiate a school council and then give themselves the final say in everything. I think it would work better if they said to the students right at the start of each year what they won't be able to influence, and then give them free reign about everything else. For example, if a Head said they can't influence school toilets and curriculum, then the students should still be able to change their uniforms, without the Head saying no after they passed a new change.

Rank: 3

Key?: 0

09/12/2004 13:19:00

groupf

Subject: our participation

My group wrote that children take part in school in the following:

1. formal - school council
2. informal - friends

3. youth club
4. litter duty - each form must do it as part of a rota
5. Duke of Edinburgh's Award

Rank: 3

Key?: 0

09/12/2004 13:23:00

chilli

Subject: Informal vs formal

Sounds like your school has both formal and informal ways for young people to be involved and have their voices heard.

Do you think there should be me formal or informal routes for young people to have a say in school matters? Does it matter as long as your voices are heard?

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

09/12/2004 13:45:00

slowsnail

Subject: a teacher's comment

Sorry to be an adult commenting on a young person's website, I just needed to make a comment.

The recent posts from various groups of young people come from a citizenship day activity I helped run with year 10 students. During the four sessions I ran a common problem was a sense of powerlessness from the students, especially about how to increase their power and participation.

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

10/12/2004 14:32:00

eranny70

Subject: Power to the Pupils

I think the best way to let pupils have more power in their school is to let them have more power to change the things that let them express themselves. For example, I think students should have the right to wear what they want and to choose what they want to learn. If you build on from that, students will become more responsible and then you could give them a chance to control the school rules. In fact, the more I think about it, the main rules in most schools are rules against ways of expression.

Rank: 3

Key?: 0

10/12/2004 18:06:00

justice

Subject: Well done!

Thanks for taking part in this forum.

It was a bit quiet compared to usual but those of you who did post made some quality contributions. So be proud of yourselves!

Next steps... we will write up a summary of the debate and then get on to those MPs, Ministers and influential groups who promised a response. We'll keep you posted on the progress.

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

2. What do you see as the benefits of students getting involved in school decision-making?

22/11/2004 14:35:00

masterzen

Subject: Research has been done...
... explaining the benefits of pupil participation.

You are a student. So what benefits do you see coming from students getting involved in school decision-making?

Perhaps you see potential for problems. Like what?

Rank: 1 Key?: 0

23/11/2004 16:46:00

ellies

Subject: Involving pupils is good

I think involving the pupils is a great idea because it means that it is more their school, and they can feel more comfortable in the environment. I am on the school council, and I think its good to be able to say that the new water fountain was your idea, and you helped raise money for that new bench etc. It makes people feel they belong.

Rank: 2 Key?: 0

23/11/2004 19:31:00

littles

Subject: Importance

I think that the school that you go to is only just benefitting from the advantages of student participation. I was a student rep for two years. I got bored of it easily, the tutor moaned and it took up my wednesdays. i stopped this year when someone took my position, in a way i was kind of annoyed but that was just because i liked the power. We din't realyy make the decisions though, as I've heard that our head refuses to take on comments about some things like the toilets. Now that needs sorting out...

Rank: 4 Key?: 0

25/11/2004 20:09:00

eranny70

Subject: Pros/Cons

I can think of quite a few reasons for pupil participation benefiting the school, but the cons of it aren't unavoidable. For example, if a student was abusing the council meeting or harrassing the Chairman etc. he should maybe get fined a litter pickup, or get banned from the next meeting. Another possibilty is that soon people would get bored of the meetings, especially if the meetings are long or tedious, or if the things being brought up are petty(though never to the person bringing them up). There's no practical solution to absentism, but the only way we've found to work here is to explain that if people do not attend the meetings, then the meetings will not be able to run, and there will be no

Rank: 3 Key?: 0

28/11/2004 01:12:00

eranny70

Subject: Rights! Rights! Rights!

The Convention on the Rights of the Child says that we have a right to take part in the

decision-making over stuff that affects us. What is being seen as our benefits should actually be our RIGHT. When the British Government signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it was supposed to give us every right that has been stated. It

Rank: 1 Key?: 0

07/12/2004 13:26:00

repD

Subject: what we want from decision-

We had a group discussion that ended up writing:

We should be able to make decisions at school as we attend this school.

We want to be able to go out at lunch.

We want to be able to wear what we want.

Rank: 1 Key?: 0

07/12/2004 13:54:00

mightyofthepen

Subject: A thought diagram

Our group in discussing this created a thought diagram that is listed below:

1. Stand-up for something you believe in, to make students participate, but not everything should be discussed with students.
2. It is about having a say, to have an opinion, everyone is entitled to have their say.
3. It is a chance to learn more skills.
4. To do something you want to do, it is about people getting involved.
5. Are you responsible for making certain decisions? Decisions should be made by certain people.
6. It allows people to make a decision at any age, when you want, you have the power to vote, pupils should participate.

Rank: 3 Key?: 0

07/12/2004 15:24:00

traters

Subject: Views of my group

1. Some people will join in but others will do nothing.

2. Have no knowledge on which to make a choice.

Rank: 1 Key?: 0

09/12/2004 13:12:00

eranny70

Subject: Participation

I believe that if any student wants to participate in a council meeting, then they should. I know that classrooms vote for a couple of people to represent them, but if someone wants to join in a debate at a council meeting, they have every right to do so.

Rank: 1 Key?: 0

09/12/2004 13:35:00

grouph

Subject: Benefits for us

My group decided these are the benefits:

1. it makes us make our decisions.
2. no one can tell them that they're wrong (only politely not arguing).
3. people would do something about it BUT they don't (it's all talk and no action)
4. To tell about problems and difficult situations and see if they can be sorted.
5. To choose what we want

Rank: 3

Key?: 0

10/12/2004 18:10:00

justice

Subject: Well done!

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Next steps... we will write up a summary of the debate and then get on to those MPs, Ministers and influential groups who promised a response. We'll keep you posted on the progress.

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

3. What areas of school life do you think need the involvement of students?

22/11/2004 14:37:00

masterzen

Subject: Schools are complicated places

I think it would fair to say that students know their schools better than anyone else.

What aspect(s) of school life do you think can benefit most from 'pupil participation'?

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

23/11/2004 13:22:00

littles

Subject: Toilets

Now normally, we have a very good School council, and it is open for any of our suggestions. expect one category. Toilets. We are not allowed to campaign for decent toilets, the excuse being "the caretaker is working on it." From the depleted stocks of much needed loo paper and the fact that the cleaners will not clean, and of course the fact that many smell of smoke (I wonder why?) pupils need to be free to express their views on the subject, to enable us to have a better, healthier more desirable pleasure of going to the loo.

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

23/11/2004 13:22:00

littles

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Rank: 2

Key?: 0

23/11/2004 19:37:00

littles

Subject: Yes but...

Ye sbut those are just small things. When it comes down to it, it's the big things that need changing like the amount of homework we get. Sometimes that can be masses of it. Like Tomorrow night I have got 5 pieces of homework. We were promised that we would get 4 pieces a night. that is too many, no matter what sets I may be in. Thats the sort of things that need changing. Things that make a difference.

Rank: 2

Key?: 0

26/11/2004 18:37:00

ellies

Subject: All areas of school need

I think that anything that affects a students school experience should be allowed some influence from students. Obviously some issues, such as staff employment and time spent at school are beyond the control of the students, but apart from matters only for senior management, I think that pupil should be able to be involved with anything that happens in a school.

I think that one of the most important things that teachers should listen to is how pupils percieve and react to things such as school rules and homework. If pupils get involved, then teachers can be sure that pupils are happy, and feel that the rules are fair. This is

Rank: 2

Key?: 0

28/11/2004 01:00:00

eranny70

Subject: Powers Given To Councils

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on Article 12 "Every child should have the right to express their views and take part in decisions about their lives(from education to sex)." In my school we have control over EVERYTHING(including the toilets and the timetable!) except laws on alchohol, drugs etc.

Most school councils don't give their kids decisions over their education, they give them a forum to express their views, which can just as easily be done through a teacher. We should HAVE the right to decisions. But we aren't giving it.

Rank: 3

Key?: 0

07/12/2004 13:01:00

littles

Subject: Benefits

I can't see reasons why any school should not be allowed to shw their views, and i do

think that it is important. Although I have come to the conclusion (after much thought) that there can be too much pupil participation, and the new rules and laws that start to be introduced could get out of hand with pupils demanding new rules over things like drugs and homework. Although I don't like homework, I do think it is important to put the things

Rank: 1 Key?: 0

07/12/2004 13:34:00

repC

Subject: What our group wants to decide

Our group came up with the following list of suggestions. The teacher explained that they were controversial!

1 Less lessons and a longer lunch break - because we need a longer time to socialise and this will reduce the stress

2 No homework - we have enough to do in school, let alone out of school

3 A smoking room - as students should be allowed to smoke, it is up to them

4 teachers should wear school uniform as we have to, and the same amount of jewellery, OR we should be able to wear our own clothes

5 A longer weekend, have a four day school week

6 We should be able to use mobile phones if there is an emergency

7 We should be able to choose the headteacher

Rank: 2 Key?: 0

07/12/2004 15:34:00

brrom

Subject: Some of our issues

We wrote the following:

To be able to play video games at lunchtime.

When someone is bullied it should be discussed immediately.

Rank: 1 Key?: 0

08/12/2004 18:26:00

ellies

Subject: To RepC

What methods of pupil participation could you make use of to try and get some of the things you want? In my opinion it is easy to list the things you want, but what you want will only happen if you do something about it, won't it?

Have you got a school council that you could take part in - surely that would get more

Rank: 2 Key?: 0

09/12/2004 13:21:00

groupf

Subject: Things we want to change about

My group want to change:

1. have a smoking room for students
2. child representatives
3. respect people's religions, colour, race, language, views and the way they dress
4. wear our own clothes at school

Rank: 3

Key?: 0

09/12/2004 13:26:00

eranny70

Subject: RepC

I like some of your ideas, but if everything should be equal (like teachers wearing uniforms etc.) why should you get a longer weekend and not all the other working people in this country?

I agree about the smoking thing. I'm not a smoker myself, but I think that people should have their decision over their own lives. Same with drugs and sex.

I think choosing your own clothes is a great way to express yourselves. I wear political shirts/badges and no-one can make me take them off. But I think school uniforms nowadays are there to help stop bullying. If everyone could wear what they want, the rich kids would be wearing expensive clothes while a lot of the poorer kids would be wearing cheap stuff. Which you can see will lead to bullying.

I think instead of having no homework, you should be able to decide on your own lessons. I'm in a school where everyone decides their timetable and they can miss out on lessons they chose (though that's stupid if you chose subjects you like). I don't take maths or physics or chemistry, but I enjoy biology and Literature, so I took them, and I haven't missed one lesson that I took. AND I do all the homework I get. I think it's completely pointless to educate someone on something they don't want to learn. But if you let someone CHOOSE what they want to learn they'll be more enthusiastic about it.

09/12/2004 13:29:00

groupg

Subject: Pow!

My group thought the following:

1. should be involved in decision-making about where we go on school trips.
2. about food in the canteens
3. to pick who you want to be headteacher
4. to be able to choose what facilities we have in school
5. more things to do at lunchtime
6. have the right to drink other drinks than water
7. have a choice to change the way of school life
8. Students should be able to choose fair punishments for other students
9. students can be able to make the rules for the school

Rank: 3

Key?: 0

10/12/2004 18:11:00

justice

Subject: Well done!

Thanks for taking part in this forum.

It was a bit quiet compared to usual but those of you who did post made some quality contributions. So be proud of yourselves!

Next steps... we will write up a summary of the debate and then get on to those MPs, Ministers and influential groups who promised a response. We'll keep you posted on the progress.

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

4. Lunchtime Scenario

30/11/2004 10:43:00

chilli

Subject: Opportunity for a spot of pupil

For starters do you want to be kept in school at lunchtime? What are the benefits? Are there any disadvantages?

If you are kept in, what sort of activities or facilities should you have access to?

Is this an area of school life in which the students could be put 'in charge'? What do you

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

01/12/2004 14:25:00

eranny70

Subject: Lunchtimes

I don't think it's important to keep pupils in school during their lunch hour.

If the government is worried about truancy, then locking the students in hardly seems the right thing to do. But students going for a walk or to eat a kebab during their lunch hour doesn't seem like such a bad idea to me.

Rank: 2

Key?: 0

01/12/2004 14:38:00

gruff

Subject: Public

Do you think that the general public are happy to see young people out and about at lunch time?

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

02/12/2004 18:01:00

eranny70

Subject: Re: Public

I think if the public are intimidated by a group of teenagers even after that new(horrible) Anti-Social Behaviour Act then it's their problem. I don't see kids staying indoors because some other kids got bullied. Bad things happen and people should face it. Most groups of teenagers hanging out round parks and Highstreets don't want anything to do with other

Rank: 2

Key?: 0

02/12/2004 18:42:00

eranny70

Subject: Restricting School Kids

I think putting signs on the windows of shops to restrict students going in during the day is harsh. It seems kind of like the 'No Blacks' signs of the 50's and earlier. Seems kind of, well not racist of course, (we need a new word) kind of 'age-ist'.

Rank: 2

Key?: 0

04/12/2004 18:49:00

peacemaker

Subject: Free Periods

At my school Year 11s and sixth formers are allowed out of school in their free periods, and they don't seem to get up to much. However, other schools in our area have been breaking into our school, stealing things and writing graffiti on our walls when they get off school grounds. I think it depends on the school - teachers and pupils need to decide whether the pupils are responsible enough.

Rank: 2

Key?: 0

06/12/2004 16:12:00

ellies

Subject: Lunchtime

I don't think that whether pupils are in or out of school affects truancy that much - in my school if people don't want to come to school they don't come in the morning. However, the freedom for years 10 and 11 at lunch time does have ill effect because lower years also are able to walk out of school every lunchtime. Because the other years leave school at lunchtime, no one stops younger years. I think that this is one problem with the rules, because this does increase the number of people out in town at lunch time. I don't think there is a problem with the amounts of young people in my area because there are no

Rank: 2

Key?: 0

07/12/2004 12:53:00

littles

Subject: Rescriptions

I believe that children should be allowed out of school at lunchtimes, but with rescriptions for example it should be a luxury, so say you have 10 points on your card. If you lose to many points than you are not allowed to go out at lunchtimes that week. You could monitors or teachers at the gates checking people cards before they go out. This may sound like a bit of a harsh scheme but I think it would help prevent truancy, as you find out who is truanting.

In the worst areas you could have random police checks for cigarettes, drugs and

Rank: 2

Key?: 0

07/12/2004 13:39:00

repB

Subject: ideas from our group

We don't think kids should stay in school at lunch because fights start because people are bored. There isn't much to do. People like to go to Tesco's and McDonalds because it's cheaper and more enjoyable, plus not everyone likes school food.

They should send groups of 3-6 people. More people if it's a young group. But not years 7-8. They have to be back by 1:45. They are not allowed out of the town. If they are not back the relevant punishment will be given. Parents will have to give permission.

Rank: 2

Key?: 0

07/12/2004 13:57:00

mightyofthepen

Subject: What we believe about

Our group wrote:

we believe that at lunchtimes you should be able to go out because some students may

feel a little remorse from not being able to go out. People (students) would rebel from not going out at lunch. When you are told not to do something you automatically do it.

Rank: 1 Key?: 0

07/12/2004 13:59:00

gruff

Subject: Some grounds?

The claim is that students being out at lunchtimes cause agro with the wider community. What's your take on this?

What could students do to convince their community that the majority of them are peaceable and respectful?

Rank: 1 Key?: 0

07/12/2004 14:58:00

glitzy-gals

Subject: Our groups views

We should be able to leave the school at lunch because there is not a lot to do when you stay in school, we have got the youth wing but it is getting boring...

Rank: 1 Key?: 0

07/12/2004 15:03:00

biged

Subject: Explain

Can you explain what you mean by the 'youth wing'?

Rank: 1 Key?: 0

07/12/2004 15:27:00

we dn't care

Subject: What we think

1. We should be able to go to the shops in groups and come back in the groups on time for the bell.

2. We would have to be back for registration.

Rank: 2 Key?: 0

09/12/2004 13:23:00

groupf

Subject: we should be allowed out

My group believes that:

Children over the age of 13, with parent's permission, should be allowed out of school sites at lunch times.

Rank: 1 Key?: 0

09/12/2004 13:26:00

biged

Subject: Children over 13

Why children over 13 and not younger?

Why do you want to be allowed out lunchtime?

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

09/12/2004 13:38:00

eranny70

Subject: Children over 13

Yeah, why just 13?

Why not at any age? Aren't we all supposed to be equal? I think if a certain group of people want to be able to go out at lunchtimes and their current school laws don't allow it, they can talk to their rep. and see if they can get the council's permission for their whole class to be able to go out at lunchtimes(not together obviously).

Rank: 1

Key?: 0

10/12/2004 16:10:00

justice

Subject: Well done!

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Rank: 1

Key?: 0

