

Rogerstone Primary School

PUPIL PARTICIPATION POLICY

Participation is a process, not an event and empowerment is the outcome.

(Crowley, A. 2004)

OVERALL PRINCIPLES

Rogerstone Primary School values the views of all its members. This policy outlines how learning at Rogerstone Primary School is enhanced by exploring the thoughts and feelings of pupils within the school. Pupil Voice is embedded in all aspects of school life. We provide children with opportunities to contribute to school improvement because we believe listening to learners is fundamental to their wellbeing.

Our school aspires to enhance each child's self-esteem; providing a safe and secure environment in which they feel confident to take risks and strive to reach their full potential. Through recognising and celebrating achievement, we encourage every child to view themselves as a successful individual.

Our school ethos and the positive relationships established within our school community promote the value of learning and create a desire for children to become involved in our school development.

Rogerstone Primary School believes:

- Every child has an entitlement to personal, social and intellectual development and must be given an opportunity to achieve his/her potential in learning.
- Every child is unique in terms of characteristics, interest, abilities, motivation and learning needs.

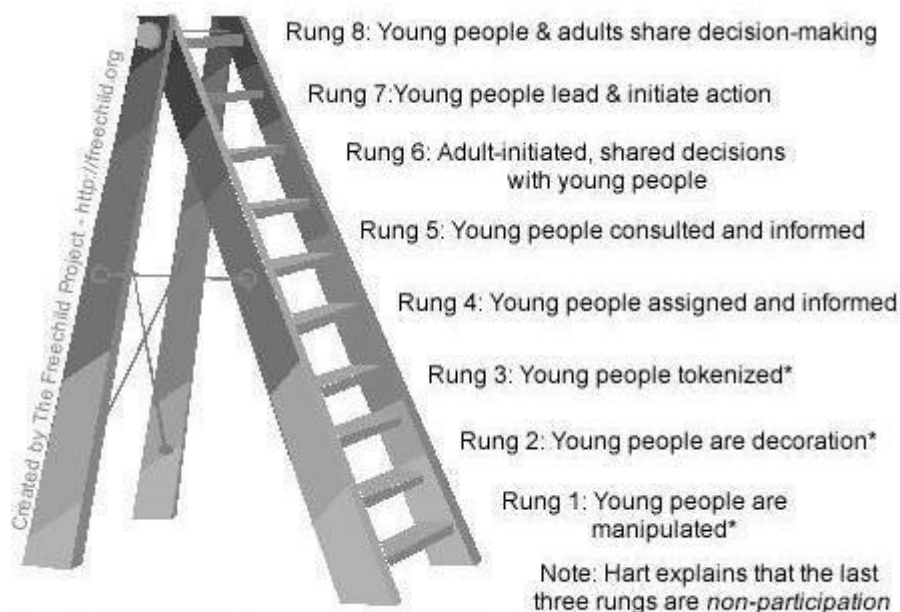
POLICY CONTEXT

Traditionally, children have had very little say in shaping their own educational experience. However, the importance of children's rights and their relevance to

education has been increasingly recognised. This has led to a range of legalisation that has emphasised the importance of listening to children and involving them in decision-making. Within education, systems are being developed to consult with children about school life, learning targets and behaviour.

Involving all children is challenging both in principle and in practice. Yet, aside from any legal requirements; research and practice indicate that there are real benefits to be gained from pupil participation. Participation helps education to develop to meet changing needs. It can give children influence and an increased choice over the provision offered. It helps empower them, giving a sense of self efficacy, which raises self esteem. This is important for all children especially young people with additional educational needs. Ultimately, pupil participation can enhance the democratic process, enabling children to become active, responsible citizens.

Involvement of children and young people can easily become 'tokenistic'. Indeed Hart (1992) illustrates participation in the way of rungs on a ladder, stating the lower rungs as 'non-participatory', and building to effective, meaningful involvement (see diagram). There is clearly a need for all staff to find ways to communicate effectively with a range of children. Participation is only meaningful within the context of an inclusive school where all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils need to experience a wide social circle and to encounter a broad range of peers with different strengths and perspectives. The success of participation, like the success of inclusion, depends upon the involvement of all teachers and staff working with a sense of common purpose to support the learning needs of all children.



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

CORE PRINCIPLES OF OUR POLICY

- **Entitlement:** Children have a right to participate and to be listened to.
- **Empowerment:** All children need to feel that they are valued and important and can make a difference. Being consulted and allowed to make choices from an early age helps to develop emotional growth and self-awareness. Directly involving pupils in their education enhances their engagement and promotes active learning. This expands their horizons and increases the choices open to them about their future. It helps to ensure that the education they receive is relevant to their needs.
- **Equal opportunities:** Consulting effectively with pupils is challenging for staff, particularly when communication with younger children, those with significant learning difficulties and those who have become disengaged from education for a number of reasons. In order to make this a meaningful task, attention must be paid to language so that young people understand what is available and can make informed choices.
- **Raising Attainment:** Pupil participation can help to raise academic standards. Careful consideration should be given to pupils' groupings to ensure that those with learning, emotional, social or behavioural difficulties do not feel marginalised or demotivated.
- **Protection:** Promoting pupil participation is an important aid to their self protection. Apart from parents and carers, it is staff in schools that are best placed to notice early signs of distress and symptoms of abuse. A recurrent theme of successive inquiries into abuse has been the failure to listen to children.
- **Democracy:** Involving pupils in decisions about their learning and the educational environment will help to prepare them for making important choices as adults. Giving more power to pupils can lead to more motivated and engaged children and less staff/pupil contact. Representative democracy is strengthened as young people gain greater skills in communication, listening, negotiation, and peaceful conflict resolution.

- Respect: Pupil Participation can only flourish in an environment where teachers and other staff have a shared sense of responsibility for supporting and learning from one another and where young people are encouraged to build collaborative relationships with their peers.

PUPIL PARTICIPATION AIMS

Rogerstone Primary School believes that we should:

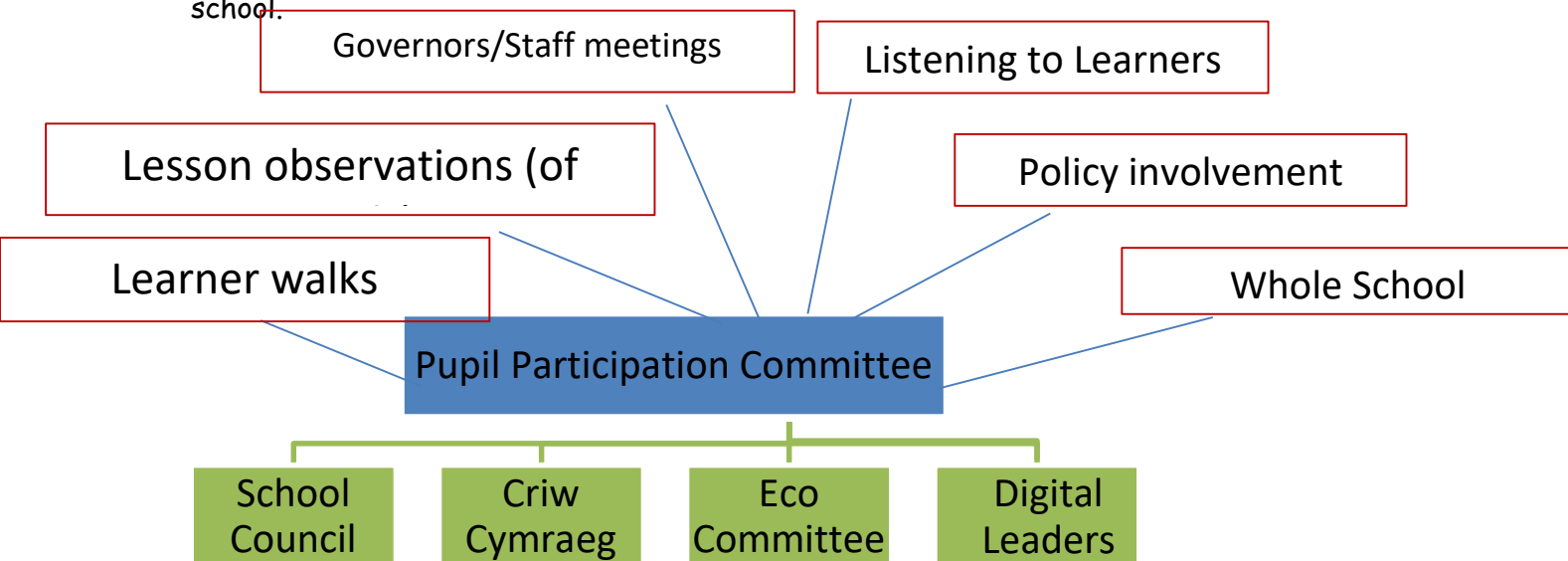
- Regard the involvement of pupils in decisions about their education as essential to good practise.
- Foster a whole school ethos in which all pupils are valued and encouraged to express their opinions, and take decisions from an early age.
- Create structures and mechanisms for listening to pupils and responding to their views, and monitor their effectiveness.
- Develop constructive alliances between pupils based upon tolerance and respect of individual differences.
- Recognise that pupil participation can only become a reality in an environment where all staff are valued and involved in decisions affecting the school community. Relationships between adults should act as the model for the desired relationships between young people.
- Carefully prepare pupils when attending reviews so that they can fully participate, offering facilitation for those less able to cope with meetings.
- Create a positive climate where children and parents are made to feel welcome.
- Act as an empathic guide and advocate for the child equipping him/her with skills to respect different opinions and diverse cultures. This includes learning how to negotiate with others, and to make compromises when appropriate.

Pupils who participate in decision-making enjoy enhanced self-esteem and motivation, gain important personal, social and organisational skills, and become familiar with group and democratic processes. At the organisational level, pupil involvement in decision-making leads to better relationships, more relevant and effective policies, and better learning. In the best scenarios, pupils and adults work together as partners to ensure that their school provides the best possible learning environment for all. Pupils have an important part to play in helping their school to improve in every aspect of school life.

(Pupil Voice Wales Website, 2010)

IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE PUPIL PARTICIPATION POLICY

The following diagram illustrates how pupil participation will be implemented within school.



Pupil Participation Committee

The Committee will consist of representatives from each of the five pupil groups, who will meet fortnightly/ weekly to discuss pupil participation tasks and action. They will be key in instrumenting the policy and ensuring that pupil views are considered throughout the school.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

We are committed at Rogerstone Primary to embedding pupil voice in all aspects of our school life. We provide children with opportunities to contribute to school improvement because we believe pupil participation is fundamental to children's wellbeing and development as successful individuals and to the success of our school. Through pupil participation we encourage all pupils to think about their rights and responsibilities and those of others.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people a comprehensive set of rights. It sets out in detail what every child needs to have a safe, happy and fulfilled childhood regardless of their sex, religion, social origin, and where and to whom they were born.

The Convention gives children and young people over 40 substantive rights, including the right to:

- special protection measures and assistance
- access to services such as education and healthcare
- develop their personalities, abilities and talents to the fullest potential
- grow up in an environment of happiness, love and understanding
- be informed about and participate in achieving their rights in an accessible and active manner.

At Rogerstone Primary School we are committed to the UNCRC and to its implementation. We aim to ensure that pupils are aware of their rights and encourage the children to recognise and value their own rights and the rights of others. We believe our pupils are treated fairly and with respect; we strive to support children in overcoming challenges and give them the confidence to reach their full potential, in a safe and secure environment.

The Welsh Government's approach to children and young people's participation is based on the principles enshrined in the UNCRC. The National Children and Young People's

Participation Standards for Wales have been developed to improve the process of children and young people's participation in decision-making.

The seven standards are:

1. **Information** - which is easy for children and young people to understand
2. **It's Your Choice** - enough information and time to make an informed choice
3. **No Discrimination** - every child and young person has the same chance to participate.
4. **Respect** - your opinion will be taken seriously
5. **You get something out of it** - you will enjoy the experience
6. **Feedback** - you will find out what difference your opinion has made
7. **Improving how we work** - adults will ask you how they can improve how they work for the future.

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