**Pupil Voice**

**Underpinning Principles**

The involvement of pupils in all appropriate aspects of school life is central to our ongoing development as a learning community. In particular, pupil involvement, consultation and responsibility is essential in the development of all pupils as Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors.

This Policy therefore has a direct bearing on our approach to Learning and Teaching, formal and informal pupil consultation, Inclusion, Promoting Positive Behaviour, etc. It affects and reflects a wide range of activity by pupils and staff alike, for example

* learning and teaching in the classroom
* the House system
* Pupil Support
* extra-curricular activities

Involvement of pupils clearly presupposes consultation, in the classroom or in any of the activities listed above. Consultation also takes place in more structured forms – further examples of these are given later in this document.

Regarding consultation, the following principles underpin the policy:

* the requirement to listen to and consult with all children/young people
* the right of children to express the views that they have and for their views to be listened to in anything that affects them (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; Article 12) (Children Scotland Act 1995)
* due regard to be given to the child’s view about their own education including children with additional support needs - [The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004]
* the School is firmly committed to ensuring consultation with young people in order to meet the articles in the UN Convention on Rights of the Child (1989), Children Scotland Act (1995), Human Rights (1948) and sections detailed within this document from the Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc Act (2000)
* the right to freedom of expression, to hold views and to impart information and ideas (Human Rights Act, Article 10)
* the right of children to participate in and be consulted about the school development planning process (Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc Act (2000), (Section 6)

**What is pupil participation?**

Pupil participation is about all the different ways you can get your voice heard and take part in making decisions in the school.

Pupil participation should happen in lots of ways in the school.

Some of these might be:

* Giving your opinion about what and the way you learn;
* Being asked your views through consultations, questionnaires, focus groups, suggestion boxes;
* Groups such as the House Council, Pupil Council, Eco-committee;
* Making sure that everyone has a chance to participate;

Research suggests that developing children and young people’s participation in decision-making has benefits for individuals, organisations and communities. Children and young people 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 case scenarios, pupils and adults work together as partners to ensure that their school provides the best possible learning environment for all. Children and young people are involved in their own learning, and feel that they have a stake in their learning community.

Developing more effective pupil participation can lead to:

* Improved pupil engagement, well-being, behaviour and learning;
* Better pupil - staff and pupil-pupil relationships;
* Better whole-school policies and procedures, based on the real needs of pupils;
* More inclusive communities, where all pupils are encouraged and supported to participate, not just those who are most confident and articulate;
* Increased opportunities for pupils to develop personal and social skills, and to have those skills recognised and accredited should they so wish

Participation is a process rather than an event, with varying degrees of involvement from being consulted on a predetermined issue to young people choosing their agenda, making their own decisions and taking them forward.

Pupil participationis about developing a culture in schools where all children and young people have a voice and have the opportunity to play an active role in decisions that affect their learning and well-being.

Pupils should be provided with opportunities to:

* develop appropriate skills whereby they can express opinions, reflect on experiences and influence the decision making process
* develop skills of reflective thought empowering pupils to empathise with others, to appreciate different points of view and to solve problems
* develop a sense of responsible citizenship within the school and the wider community

**Pupil Voice in Airdrie Academy**

At Airdrie Academy we care about what the pupils think and take time to listen to their views. Pupil Voice is engaged in many ways in classrooms and throughout the school such as: Pupil Council, House Councils, Pupil Leaders in S6, student voice questionnaires and focus groups, use of student voice in lessons to enhance learning. At Airdrie Academy we value young people and give them ownership of their learning and opportunities to make a difference.

Pupil Voice in Airdrie Academy should take various forms:

* House Council and Pupil Council
* Pupil Consultation e.g. Focus Groups, Questionnaires etc
* Pupil Leaders – School Captains, House Captains and Prefects
* Subject consultation

House Council and Pupil Council

One of the main ways of engaging with pupils is through the Pupil Council. Each Tutor class elects a representative to participate in their House Council. House Councils discuss issues raised and agree what should be put on the Agenda for the Pupil Council. The Pupil Council is made up of the School Captains plus representatives of the four Houses. Following the Pupil Council feedback is provided to the House Council, Tutor classes and also each House via Assemblies (see Appendix 2).

Pupil Consultation

Information about pupil views and experiences are gathered in various ways. Questionnaires are used on an annual basis where a cross-section of pupils in each year group are surveyed using the HMIe pupil Questionnaire. Focus Groups also meet with the SMT for Pupil Learning conversations. These give the SMT an opportunity to engage with pupils and to seek their views on Learning and Teaching. The results of all of the above feed into the school Self Evaluation Report and then into the School Improvement Plan

Pupil Leaders

The school appoints School Captains, Vice Captains, House Captains, Vice Captains and Prefects each year. These are appointed following an application and interview process. The Pupil Leadership Team meet on a regular basis to discuss House and Whole School events.

Subject Consultation

PTs or an allocated member of the faculty should meet “learning teams” each term. Learning teams should consist of around 6 pupils. Pupils should represent a mixture of year groups and abilities. Faculties should include pupils from the range of subjects within their faculty or they may wish to have a learning team for each subject. Meetings should take place during tutor time to avoid disruption to lessons. Pupils can only be involved in one learning team within the school to ensure a variety of pupil voices are being heard.

The aims of the meetings are;

1. To identify pupils opinions of good practice within the faculty/department.
2. To identify what changes can be made to improve pupil experience and learning within the faculty/department.
3. To evaluate whether changes are being made and if they have been effective within the faculty/department.

A suggested question sheet can be used for subject consultation meetings, however faculties can adapt this to make it more specific to their subject(s). Minutes of the meeting should be recorded. The meeting should also be discussed at DM’s to allow pupils opinion of good practice to be shared with staff and pupils suggestions discussed. Staff should then look at ways to implement pupil suggestions and then review. (see Appendix A)

**Departmental Pupil Conversation Appendix A**

**Choosing pupils**

* Faculties/departments should choose 10-12 pupils as part of their Learning Team
* Pupils should be across year groups, ability range and teachers
* Where possible, the Learning Team should be consistent throughout the session

**What is the purpose of asking pupils for their point of view?**

* They have a unique insight into the classroom dynamic.
* They are on the receiving end of what teachers deliver
  + good/ bad/ skilful/ unorganised/ inspirational
* If you want to know how good your ‘product/ service’ is.. ask the customers !

**What can subject departments gain?**

* An insight into how they deliver their lessons
  + good practice
  + areas that need developed
* What is being done elsewhere that works?
* Showing a willingness to be open and engaging with pupils.
* Cumulatively, part of a whole school ethos that should improve respect between pupils and teachers and should ultimately have an impact on standards of behaviour.

**What do pupils gain out of it?**

* They feel part of the process instead of on the receiving end of the process of teaching
* The opportunity to have their views and ideas listened to and enacted.
* Feeling included in the whole school decision making process.

**Implementation**

Pupils could be spoken to near the end of a term. Meetings will take place during Tutor Time. Their views can then be discussed at the DM closest to the end of term with a view to implementing any ideas in the next term.

There should be a broad range of years as the focus is on the teaching/ classroom ethos/ progress rather than on specific content.

**Possible questions to be used by departments**

**Thinking only of your time in ‘ X ‘ department..**

* What do you most enjoy about your learning when in class?
* What is done well by the teachers that helps you learn?
* What would you suggest to teachers about how they teach that would help you to learn better?
* If you could make any changes, what would you do to help all pupils learn better?

**Thinking of all your classes across all the subjects in the whole school**..

* What could teachers in this department show other teachers around the school that would benefit everyone’s learning?
* What is done elsewhere in the school that teachers in this department should consider trying too?

Using the scale 1-5..

1 – Far less

2 – A little bit less

3 – About the same

4 – A little bit more

5 – Far more

**How do you feel you are progressing in this subject compared to**

* last year?
* your other subjects this year?