

Pembrokeshire County Council



CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS

INVOLVING PUPILS IN EVALUATING AND IMPROVING LEARNING POLICY FOR SCHOOLS

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Involving Pupils in Evaluating and Improving Learning

A Model Policy for Schools

1 Rationale

Our school believes that involving pupils in their learning is at the heart of how we define effective education. For learning to be effective, children and young people need to be actively involved in this process, so that they are motivated, engaged and able to develop as independent learners. Pupil participation should therefore be something which all pupils experience at classroom level. Our school is committed to encouraging pupils to become co-constructors of the curriculum and active partners in developing effective teaching and learning approaches.

2 Aims

Our school aims to create a purposeful partnership between pupils and staff, which promotes better learning through:

- Developing independent transferable skills;
- Creating an ethos of cooperation and collaboration;
- Supporting creative and positive attitudes to learning;
- Giving a sense of ownership and a deeper understanding of learning; and
- Developing assessment capable learners.

3 The Benefits

Our school recognises that the benefits of involving pupils in their learning include:

- Learners being fully informed of what they know and what their next step is;
- Increased motivation of pupils;
- Better engagement of pupils; and
- Improved learning outcomes for pupils.

Ensuring our pupils are assessment capable learners is the most important thing we can do to raise pupils' achievement. Assessment capable learners are pupils who:

- Know about their learning and can plan their next learning steps with a teacher (or a peer);
- Are active in their learning;
- Understand the assessment tools being used and what their results mean;

- Understand the learning intentions of each lesson;
- Use success criteria to know if pupils have achieved the learning intentions;
- Can peer assess against success criteria and give feedback based on criteria;
- Can set goals, then self monitor their progress;
- Can answer: Where am I going? How am I going? Where to next? and
- Are able to track their progress using rubrics and/or exemplars.

4 The Research

Background

Evidence of the benefits of actively involving pupils in their learning can be found in the findings of a network of six research projects carried out for the Welsh Government by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) in 2009, entitled: *“Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning”*. The research findings indicate that children and young people benefit from being allowed to play a more active role in their own learning, with genuine participation being almost synonymous with being engaged. In order for this to be effective, however, teachers need to identify and focus on key skills that learners need to take control of their own learning, be willing to ‘let go’ and give more autonomy to the learner. Researchers established that there are levels of consultation and participation within learning:

- Stage 1:** Listening to learners - pupils are a source of data. Teachers respond to this data, but are not involved in discussion of it.
- Stage 2:** Learners are active participants - teachers initiate enquiry and interpret the data, but pupils are taking some role in decision-making.
- Stage 3:** Learners as researchers - pupils are involved in enquiry and have an active role in decision-making.
- Stage 4:** Learners as fully active participants and co-researchers - pupils play an active role in decision-making. Together with teachers, they jointly plan action in the light of data and review the impact of the intervention.

This research indicated that, ‘if teachers go further than consulting learners ... and actually engage them as co-researchers in the consultation process; and if pupils and students feel they matter in school and that their views are respected, pupils are more likely to commit themselves to learning.’

A further research paper was produced in 2010 by the TLRP entitled: *“Improving Learning by Taking Account of Learners’ Perspectives”*. Key findings from this research included the following:

- Involving learners as active partners in shaping their learning experiences and environment reaps benefits in terms of learner engagement, self-esteem, confidence and skills; and

- When embedded in the school effectively, the emergence of a clearer learner voice should support an agenda for change, in which pupils feel they play an active part. This active involvement can then become part of a more inclusive framework for school self-evaluation.

Current Research

More recently in February 2015, Professor Graham Donaldson CB has undertaken an *'Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales'*. In his chapter on 'Pedagogy', he discusses how 'good teaching and learning encourages children and young people to take increasing responsibility for their own learning'. He explains how 'children need to be able to stand back and observe their own process of learning and identify how it can be improved' in order to become capable learners. He explains how children can be 'active participants in the learning process' developing 'an understanding of how to learn and how to create the best conditions for their own learning'. Donaldson cites Hattie's research on *Visible Learning* to extol the benefits of involving the pupils in planning and evaluating their learning, and the effectiveness of cooperative learning. The characteristics of visible learners need to be explicitly taught.

What is a visible learner?

A visible learner is a pupil who:

- Can be their own teacher;
- Can articulate what they are learning and why;
- Can talk about how they are learning – the strategies they are using to learn;
- Can articulate their next learning steps;
- Can use self-regulation strategies;
- Is assessment capable;
- Seeks, is resilient and aspires to challenge;
- Can set mastery goals;
- Asks questions;
- Sees errors as opportunities and is comfortable saying that they don't know and/or need help;
- Positively supports their peers' learning;
- Knows what to do when they don't know what to do;
- Actively seeks feedback;
- Has metacognitive skills and can talk about these (systematic, planning, memory, abstract thinking, critical thinking, problem solving etc).

5 How Pupils Can Be Involved

Our school has developed a range of classroom approaches which aim to include all pupils in the process of learning. These approaches encompass what pupils learn, how they learn and why they learn. It is also important to get feedback from the pupils and to use it to adjust what will be done to make it more effective.

The following approaches are used:

This will be individual to each school and could include for example the following:

- Assessment for Learning (AFL) strategies such as peer marking, self evaluation, setting of success criteria and higher order questioning;
- Learner voice groups;
- Pupil Professional Learning Communities (a group of pupils working with staff to review a curriculum area);
- Enquiry based learning, including pupils as researchers, such as Philosophy for Children which improves pupils' critical thinking skills and their ability to work co-operatively;
- Encouraging pupils to gain increased independence as learners by taking responsibility for their own learning through such methods as John Hattie's Visible Learning and 8 Mind Frames where 'teachers see learning through the eyes of pupils and help them to become their own teachers';
- Circle time;
- Transfer of skills between subject areas and key stages;
- Involving pupils in the self-evaluation of subjects, departments, teaching and learning policy;
- Co-construction of lessons through such strategies as consulting pupils in the planning stage and giving pupils opportunities to research topics; getting feedback from pupils through questionnaires on learning and through direct conversations with pupils about lessons;
- Attitudinal surveys such as 'Pupil Attitude to School and Self' (PASS)
- Opportunities for pupils to contribute their own understanding, interests and needs so that their expertise is utilised;
- Collaborative learning, which involves pupils working with teachers and sharing understanding with their peers;
- Developing pupils' ability to reflect on their learning and develop meta-cognitive skills.

6 Developing a whole school approach

Our school encourages a whole school approach to involving pupils in deciding what and how they learn and in evaluating their learning and planning for improvement. We ensure that all staff understand the benefits of involving pupils in evaluating and improving learning, and are clear about their role in

supporting this strategy. We make sure our pupils are given appropriate support and training, enabling them to work as partners with staff in developing effective teaching and learning approaches.

7 Monitoring and Evaluation

The school understands that Estyn's 2010 Common Inspection Framework includes an increased focus on the importance of learners as active agents in their own learning and that this aspect of pupil participation is inspected under Section 1.2.2 of this framework. Estyn inspectors will consider whether pupils' views about what and how they learn are taken seriously; how pupils discuss the topics to be covered and help to plan schemes of work and activities; and whether pupils make choices about how and what they learn.

The school also recognises that pupil's involvement in evaluating and improving learning needs to be meaningful and effective.

The school will therefore regularly evaluate the processes for involving pupils in evaluating and improving learning against the National Participation Standards, as part of the school's self evaluation process.

The school will ensure that any self evaluation reports to the governing body include an explanation of how the views of the learner have been taken into account in the process.

8 References

Pupil Voice Wales website - www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk

Hattie, J (2009) *Visible Learning: a Synthesis of over 800 Meta-analyses relating to achievement*, Routledge.

Donaldson, G D (2015) *Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*, February 2015.

9 Appendices

Appendix 1 Case Study: Lamphey Primary School – Pupil Involvement in the Self Evaluation Process and 'Non-Negotiables' Policy

Appendix 2 Case Study: Ysgol y Preseli – Pupil Voice in the Departmental Review Process

Appendix 3 Case Study: Pembroke Dock Community School – A Visible Learning School

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April 2015

APPENDIX 1

CASE STUDY: LAMPHEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Pupil involvement in the school's self evaluation process and 'non-negotiables' policy

The link teacher for the School Council and the Headteacher met with the School Council and Ambassadors to introduce them to and explain what our Self Evaluation document is. The School Council are represented by two pupils from each year group from Reception to Year 6. The Super Ambassadors are two Year 6 pupils who have been elected through a whole-school ballot. We explained that this was an opportunity for the pupils to be involved in decisions and issues that affect them as a school. We initially focussed on the teaching and learning section, gathering the children's views on aspects of learning such as how well they think they are doing, how do they know this, what would help them to move their learning forward. The pupils were very open and honest and said they felt this process was enabling their voices to be listened to and acted upon.

We then fed this information back to the staff, discussing what aspects the children felt were working well and their suggestions for possible changes to make. The children felt that the various AfL strategies we use are enabling them to identify strengths and areas for development in their learning. AfL strategies, which they identified as working particularly well, include 'Two Stars and a Wish', 'Chat Buddy Checklists', 'Lollipop Sticks', 'Phone a Friend' and 'Temporary Targets'. Following on from this they felt that having more time to read and respond to teachers' and peers' comments/marking would further improve this. This became an area for development for us and is having a very positive impact on learning and teaching. Our marking and AfL policies have been amended to reflect this.

"When my teacher marks my work it gives me a target to work on in the next lesson. This really helps me." Hannah, Year 5

"It made me feel valued being able to know what teachers think and having a say in this when looking at the Non-Negotiables Policy." Charlotte, Year 6, School Ambassador

"I like finding out what I can do to improve my work. It makes me feel clever and proud of my work." Ella, Year 2

In Lamphey Primary School we have devised a Non-Negotiables Policy. This is a policy which defines the ethos of our school and sets out principles which we all follow in relation to general behaviour, the classroom environment, lessons, standards, marking and inclusion. The staff at Lamphey Primary School felt that it was important for the children's opinions to be included in this, and so we formed a PLC comprising of a pupil representative from each class and a link teacher. The PLC reviewed the Non-Negotiables Policy and added some key

principles of their own, such as 'We always speak quietly and calmly to the children at all times' and 'Corridor displays should celebrate standards achieved'. This policy will be reviewed and amended accordingly by staff and pupils on a yearly basis.

APPENDIX 2

CASE STUDY: YSGOL Y PRESELI

Pupil Voice in the Departmental Review Process

Background:

As part of Ysgol y Preseli's robust self evaluation processes all departments are reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team within an 18 month cycle. This departmental review process involves lesson observations of all of the teaching staff within the department, a thorough review of departmental documentation and policies, book scrutiny and pupil voice. The sample of pupils involved (three pupils from each teaching group) are representative of all of the Key Stages. Pupil progress data is used to ensure that pupils across the range of the ability spectrum are chosen as part of the pupil voice sample. Careful consideration is given to ensure that the sample reflects gender equality and also includes pupils eligible for Free School Meals and MAT pupils. The structure of the pupil voice questionnaire is mainly based on the Estyn pupil voice questionnaire used during the inspection process. Pupils complete the questionnaire in a computer suite on an individual basis during a designated time slot (normally during a registration period) within the two week review period. The statements introduced require pupils to respond accordingly and they are given multiple choice responses, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Pupils are also given the opportunity to provide written comments based on each question. The session is supervised and managed by a member of the SLT.

The pupil responses are integrated into the final monitoring report written by the Departmental Line Manager and are represented in graphical form. The Head of Department is also given an opportunity to peruse the pupil comments. Following the post review feedback session, which includes the line manager, the designated link governor and all members of the department, the Head of Department is required to structure an action plan based on the recommendations outlined in the final report.

Since September 2014, due to the need for the school to address issues regarding reducing the boy/girl gap in attainment, the departmental review process has also included a focus group discussion, which involves interviewing selected groups of boys. This question and answer session chaired by a member of the SLT enables the pupils to share views and opinions regarding teaching and learning within departments

Changes implemented by departments due to the Pupil Voice Surveys:

Mathematics:

- Whilst completing the Departmental Review Questionnaire 20% of the Key Stage 3 Pupils were not happy with the quality of learning resources. Consequently, the Head of Department presented a costed action plan to the Headteacher to seek additional funding to improve the resources used by teachers and pupils. The additional funding was secured and was used to purchase and to provide more effective learning resources for pupils.
- 10% of the pupils mentioned that the Department did not encourage pupils to make connections between mathematics and everyday life. As a consequence, the teaching team focused on areas within the departmental schemes of work to identify areas where clear references could be made.
- The department has also responded to the challenge of utilising digital learning technology to promote learning via the use of iPads.
- 50% of the pupils also requested that a Mathematics Lunchtime Club be established. The department has also responded to this request and the club is flourishing.

Welsh:

Following the Welsh Department's review by the SLT during October 2014. The following areas were highlighted by pupils as key issues that required action.

- 50% of the pupils did not feel that the Welsh Department offered enough in terms of extra curricular opportunities.
- 23% of the pupils did not feel that the Welsh lessons were interesting.
- 26% of the pupils felt that the the homework set did not help them to understand or improve their work.

The department has responded to the pupil voice questionnaire by implementing the following strategies and changes:

- (i) Under the guidance of the school's 'Welsh Committee' which is run by pupils from Year 12 any individual from Key Stage 3 can attend a range of lunchtime clubs to develop their linguistic skills in Welsh. The sessions include:
 - Clwb Clecs: pupils are encouraged to discuss issues in the news/media/sport and develop their public speaking skills and their ability to express opinions.

- Creative Writing Club: pupils are encouraged to develop creative writing skills and are given guidance by external visitors, eg: poets, writers.
 - Rapping/Beat Boxing Club: experts like Ed Holden have worked with pupils to encourage pupils to understand that Welsh can also be the "language of the street".
- (ii) Pupils in Year 9 have now been consulted regarding the content and choice of texts introduced in KS3. The department has created a reading group made up of boys to proof read new texts, in order to seek their opinion regarding their suitability and relevance. As a result, the department has already purchased a set of novels based on the recommendations made by this group.
- (iii) The department has now introduced a specific booklet in Year 7 to support pupils in terms of completing their homework. The booklet enables pupils to focus on the 5 golden rules of grammar. These booklets will be introduced to pupils in Years 8 and 9 next year.
- (iv) The department has introduced a homework club 'Camu Mlaen', where support is available to any pupil having difficulties in terms of completing home work. Pupils are given access to laptops and iPads during these sessions.

History:

- The Boys' focus group mentioned that the Year 9 History programme of study focusing on the Industrial Revolution was uninspiring. In response the History Department introduced 'Jack the Ripper' as a case study for societal change during the late nineteenth century. The unit of work has received a positive response.
- The Key Stage 3 boys interviewed also mentioned that the number of worksheets introduced during History lessons meant that they found it difficult to keep their work organised. As a result, the teachers in the History Department have developed booklets for each unit of work and the boys have responded positively to this development.

Drama:

- 10% of the KS4/KS5 pupils mentioned that the homework set was not helpful in terms of promoting their understanding of the subject. The department has re-structured all of the home learning tasks to ensure that pupils are always aware of the relevance of the work set.

Digital Developments (Under the Guidance of the School's Digital Leader):

During April 2014, 160 pupils from Year 9 were asked to complete an on-line questionnaire as part of the Wisekids Generation 2000 review. The purpose of the survey was to gain an insight into Year 9 pupils' digital media habits and to assess their level of digital literacy. The pupil responses were analysed and the findings have led to the following actions being implemented:

- 62% of the pupils stated that they would like the school to provide lessons based on how to use using social messaging apps safely – eg: Messenger/KIK/BBM/ Snapchat. The PSE units of work in KS3 now include specific learning units based on this request.
- 54% of pupils requested that the school provide more help and support regarding how to deal with Cyberbullying. Consequently, the Year 7 and 8 PSE learning schemes of work have a strong focus on the issue of Cyberbullying.

In addition

- 88% of pupils agreed with the statement *'I would like the school to allow me to use my own device (ie: mobile/tablet) during lessons for research and note taking purposes'*.
- 84% of pupils agreed with the statement *'I would like the school to have an effective WI-FI system to enable me to use my own device'*.
- 82% of the pupils agreed with the statement *'I would like the teachers to make better use of digital technology and the internet to make the lessons more interesting'*.

In response to the survey, during September 2014 the school introduced a 'Bring your Own Device' strategy and policy which would be applicable to pupils studying in the Sixth Form. Pupils and parents were provided with information regarding how to connect to the school's WI-FI and how using their own digital device could be beneficial to their learning in school. In March 2015 the parents of pupils in Years 10 and 11 were informed of the school's intention to implement the policy and strategy into Key Stage 4. PSE lessons have been used to educate and inform pupils of how the strategy will affect them, and of the expectations regarding acceptable use. Pupils in Key Stage 4 will have access to the school WI-FI from April 2015 onwards.

These developments have all stemmed from an initial Pupil Voice survey and the school is committed to creating a stimulating and relevant learning environment with an emphasis on e-safety.

APPENDIX 3

CASE STUDY: PEMBROKE DOCK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

A Visible Learning School

“Visible teaching and learning occurs when learning is the explicit goal, when it is appropriately challenging, when the teacher and student both (in their various ways) seek to ascertain whether and to what degree the challenging goal is attained, when there is deliberate practice aimed at attaining mastery of the goal, when there is feedback given and sought, and when there are active, passionate and engaging people (teacher, student and peers) participating in the act of learning.” (John Hattie 2014)

At Pembroke Dock Community School we are working towards becoming a Visible Learning School. The Visible Learning development model is based upon the principles developed by John Hattie’s research. It is a process of gathering, analysing, interpreting and using information about pupils’ progress and achievement to improve teaching and learning.

Pupils take ownership of their own learning. They know where they are on the skills continuum and what their next steps are. Using their Steps to Success booklets, they can track their own progress. The pupils know what to do when they come across something they don’t know and have strategies to progress with their learning. Pupils seek feedback and respond to it and, more importantly, they give feedback to staff about their teaching. Pupils are active in their learning and are assessment capable.

Assessment Capable Learners can ask and find the answers to:

Where am I going?
How am I going there?
Where to next?

These questions correspond to notions of feed up, feedback and feed forward. The four feedback levels are:

- 1 Task and product level
- 2 Process level
- 3 Self-regulation or conditional level
- 4 Self level.

Pupils can employ a range of meta-cognitive strategies developed through a shared language of learning. Pupils see learning as hard work, have a growth mindset and a desire to succeed.

Visible Learning Pupils:

- **Understand learning intentions**
- **Know and are challenged by the success criteria**
- **Develop a range of learning strategies**
- **Know when they are not progressing**
- **Seek feedback**
- **Visibly teach themselves.**