

**Pembrokeshire County Council
Cyngor Sir Penfro**



Children and Schools

**INVOLVING PUPILS IN STAFF
APPOINTMENTS POLICY FOR
SCHOOLS**

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INVOLVING PUPILS IN STAFF APPOINTMENTS A MODEL POLICY FOR SCHOOLS

1.0 Rationale – Why involve pupils in staff appointments?

Our school is committed to developing effective pupil participation, as outlined in our school's Pupil Participation Policy. We recognise that children and young people have a right – as stated in Article 12 of the UNCRC – to be involved in making decisions that affect their lives, and the right to an education (Articles 28 and 29). The extent to which pupils are involved in decision making needs to be across the whole workings of the school including the appointment of staff. Pupils are uniquely placed to contribute views about the effectiveness of both teaching and non-teaching roles in terms of the candidates' manner and their approach to working with them and giving them support. As recipients of learning, they are also well placed to contribute views about the effectiveness of teaching candidates' approach to teaching and classroom management techniques. Involving pupils in staff appointments can give clear benefits to the school, pupils and the candidates themselves and should be seen as a routine part of the appointment process for all staff. It is also cited as good practice in the Local Authority mandatory Safer Recruitment training for managers in school.

2.0 Benefits for the school

Through involving pupils in staff appointments the school will:

- Gain an added perspective on the candidate – in particular how he/she relates to pupils;
- Better understand what skills and qualities pupils look for in an effective teacher, teaching assistant and other support roles;
- Send a positive and powerful message to candidates that pupils' input is valued and taken seriously;
- Help to develop stronger working relationships between staff and young people;
- Develop more inclusive and effective recruitment and selection processes;
- Show our commitment to pupil participation in a meaningful way.

3.0 Benefits for the pupils

Through being involved in the interviewing process, pupils:

- Gain confidence and self-esteem;
- Feel that they are valued and that their opinion counts;
- Develop a sense of belonging and ownership;
- Acquire important knowledge and skills – e.g. about the interview process and what principles this is governed by; about how to carry out a fair and effective interview;
- Improve their communication and team-working skills;
- Learn something about what makes a good teacher, teaching assistant, administrative support; caretaker etc.

- Feel they can make a difference.

In order for these benefits to be felt, our school will ensure that the pupils' role in the staff appointment process is meaningful and that their involvement is **NOT** used in a tick-box fashion. We understand that there could be prejudicial effects if children and young people feel that they have been manipulated or ignored.

4.0 Benefits for the candidates

Pupils' involvement means that candidates will:

- Have a better understanding of the school's commitment to pupil participation and how we value it and take it seriously;
- Have a better understanding that how they interact with pupils is a crucial part of the job they are applying for;
- Be afforded the opportunity to give a truer reflection of their character and how they would interact with pupils in practice;
- Have a positive sense of endorsement from pupils once they have been selected and appointed.

5.0 The Process

The process of involving pupils in staff appointments needs to be clear and consistent. It is important to ensure that standards of fairness and consistency are maintained and that the process is safe and positive for all involved. Our school will ensure that the process is planned carefully with appropriate consideration given to how pupils are involved in each of the following stages:

5.1 Planning

It is important to remember that, however pupils are involved in the appointment and selection process, it is the governors who have ultimate responsibility for the recruitment and selection of staff. **Tasker Milward** has set up a system for involving pupils which is utilised for all appointments of staff. This system is clearly understood by staff, governors and pupils and regularly monitored and reviewed.

The level and extent of pupil involvement will vary depending on the nature of the role being appointed and the age of the pupils involved. Foundation Phase and lower Key Stage 2 pupils should have opportunities to be involved in the process. However certain elements of the process may need to be adapted to ensure that they are age appropriate and that the experience is meaningful and worthwhile.

Teaching appointments

1. A pupil panel is appointed to conduct a parallel interview with candidates and give feedback to the formal interview panel.
2. Shortlisted candidates are asked to teach a lesson and feedback is collected from the pupils in the class.

3. Pupils are chosen by their HoY. The school attempts to involve as many students as possible in the process so it is not limited to school council members.

Non-teaching appointments

1. A pupil panel is appointed to conduct a parallel interview with candidates and give feedback to the formal interview panel.

The school ensures that practice is considered in line with the National Participation Standards.

Prospective candidates will be informed that pupils are involved in the selection process, so as to help them in preparing their application.

The named member of staff will ensure that the safeguarding of the pupils is paramount throughout the process.

5.2 Training

The school ensures that everyone involved in the recruitment and selection of staff has information, support and training to ensure the process is confidential, fair and consistent and has due regard for equal opportunities. The named member of the senior leadership team with responsibility for pupil participation is responsible for supporting the pupils involved throughout the process. This senior member of staff will ensure that the pupils have the necessary information and training to undertake their role effectively. The information and training needs to be accessible to the pupils in an age appropriate manner.

Training is important so that members of the pupil panel:

- Have the information and skills required to play a meaningful and effective role in the process;
- Are aware of key principles which need to be adhered to when interviewing and selecting candidates for a post;
- Have a positive experience and gain confidence and important life skills.

Key elements to include in the training for the pupil panel are:

- An explanation of job descriptions and person specifications (including essential and desirable skills);
- Clarification of the selection and interviewing process - as well as the scope and limits of pupils' involvement in this;
- Necessary principles that have to be adhered to as part of the appointment process, and their implications for practice (i.e. openness, fairness, confidentiality, equal opportunities);
- Some understanding of employment law (for older pupils);
- First impressions and countering bias (especially where internal candidates are involved);
- Listening skills;
- Interviewing and question techniques - e.g. how to ask questions in order to gain the required information from a candidate;

- How to use recording and score sheets and how to record comments and opinions in a clear and appropriate manner;
- Making decisions as a group;
- Giving and receiving feedback in an appropriate way.

NB Some useful training materials/activities are available in "The Recruitment Pack" produced by Save the Children, Scotland. This is downloadable at: www.savethechildren.org.uk/scotland.

5.3 Drawing up the Job Description and Person Specification

Pupils would **not** normally be involved in drawing up the job description unless a new role is being created where pupils' input may be beneficial.

The pupil panel will draw up their person specification from a pupil perspective. Their ideas need to reflect the requirement of the job as described in the job description and ensure that due regard is paid to equal opportunities. The training of pupils needs to ensure they understand that the person specification will form the basis for their questions asked at interview. For teaching appointments, the pupils' insight into particular aspects of the role such as classroom management, teaching styles and rewards and sanctions will provide useful and relevant information.

5.4 Short listing

Pupils will **not** be involved in the short listing process. Logically, if pupils are to be involved in the short listing process, candidates should be informed in advance and tailor their applications to the age of the pupils, and this would be impractical. Also where internal candidates are rejected at this stage, it is easier for everyone if pupils are not involved in that decision. However, part of the training of pupils should include what happens at the short listing stage and the reasons that pupils are not involved in this part of the process to ensure that they don't feel disempowered.

5.5 Interviewing

Pupils will be consulted following the demonstration lesson or interactive task with pupils using a clear set of criteria. Pupils on the panel will be supported to prepare for the interview process and how it is conducted by the senior named member of staff. E.g. deciding who will ask which question, going through the method for recording.

In order for the interview process to be a positive, open, fair and safe experience for candidates and pupils, the following aspects are taken into account:

- **Openness** – the candidate will know beforehand what is expected of them so that they can prepare. As well as knowing the brief for the demonstration lesson or activity with pupils, they will also be told the age range and number of pupils who will be on the interview panel and how the pupils' views will feed into the decision making process. Pupils write the questions for each interview and they are not given to candidates before hand.

- **Fairness** – pupils will ask the same questions of all the candidates and have an agreed scoring system. All the pupils' questions will be based on the pupils' Person Specification. Pupils will be trained to understand that they need to disregard any prior knowledge of candidates and base their scoring/feedback solely on the answers to the agreed questions.
- **Safety** – the senior named member of staff ensures that the process is fair and that child protection procedures are observed. All pupils on the panel are trained in the importance of maintaining confidentiality and understanding that they must not discuss any of the candidates with anyone not involved in the selection process. The school has an agreement protocol in respect of confidentiality which all pupils involved are asked to sign.
- **Positive experience** – the senior named member of staff acts as a 'mentor' to the pupils on the panel, supporting the pupils through every stage to ensure that the experience is safe and positive for them. This senior member of staff will be present at the interview to give any advice or reassurance that the pupils require. They will only intervene if fairness is being compromised or if the pupils need support. The pupil panel will be large enough for pupils to feel confident and be able to represent pupil voice but not so large that candidates feel intimidated. The pupil chair of the panel should be supported to make each candidate welcome and ensure that the panel stick to the agreed questions and avoid any 'trick' questions.

5.6 Feedback to the Adult Panel

All pupils feedback to the interview panel. Candidates are ranked in order of preference and their strengths and weaknesses are noted. The pupil feedback forms part of the discussion over who is appointed to each post. Pupils are told the outcome of the interview.

Pupils are informed at the planning stage how their views are fed into the process to ensure there is no disillusionment later on.

Feedback to candidates is undertaken by the adult managing the recruitment process. Pupils are told that they must not discuss the process with candidates. This reinforces the fact that it is the governing body which is responsible for appointments and they are not handing over their power to pupils.

The main adult panel will let the pupil panel know the final decision. Where this does not agree with the recommendation from the pupils, the adult panel will give a brief explanation of factors which were taken into account.

5.7 Induction

Pupils are involved in the induction of new staff. The specific pupils involved will depend on the role of the new staff member. Pupils will help to identify how they can help a new member of staff settle into their new role. They will consider what the new member of staff needs to know, who they need to meet and how they can contribute to this process.

6 Evaluation against the National Participation Standards

The school recognises that pupil's involvement in staff appointments needs to be meaningful and effective. The school will therefore regularly evaluate the processes for involving pupils in staff appointments against the National Participation Standards, as part of the school's self evaluation process.

The following checklist helps the school to incorporate the National Participation Standards into our practice:

National Participation Standard	What this means for the effective involvement of pupils in staff appointments
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils receive the information they require in a timely manner and in an accessible format so that they understand the processes involved, and are able to participate in interviewing and selection in a meaningful and effective way. • Pupils receive training which enables them to understand the selection and interviewing processes, and their role in it.
It's your choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils have a choice as to whether they wish to be involved in the interviewing and selection processes or not.
No Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible, a cross-section of pupils is involved in the interviewing and selection process, not just a select group. This can happen through the demonstration lesson/interactive task with pupils and/or through ensuring a cross-section of pupils is represented on the pupil panel in terms of age, gender, background, ability and additional needs.
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are clear about the scope and limitations of their role. • Adults listen to pupils' views and take them into account.
You get something out of it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils gain an understanding of the interview and selection process and the principles it must adhere to. • Pupils are supported in gaining skills to help them in fulfilling their

National Participation Standard	What this means for the effective involvement of pupils in staff appointments
	role effectively (through staff support and training).
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are informed of the impact of their involvement. • Where the outcome of the interview differs from that recommended by the pupils, other factors taken into account are clarified.
Improving how we work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone involved in the interviewing and selection process (including the pupil panel) is able to feed in their thoughts about how things went, so as to improve practice in the future.

7 Interviews Involving Internal Candidates

Particular sensitivities are involved where internal candidates are to be interviewed. It is important that all concerned - both the pupil panel and candidates - understand that they should under no circumstances discuss the interview process with anyone else outside the interview itself, either before, during or after the recruitment and selection process. Any questions which candidates may have about the process should be directed to the named adult contact.

Members of the pupil panel and candidates should understand that all decisions are based on the candidate's response to agreed common questions and evidence of how they meet the person specification as evidenced during the interview, and should in no circumstances be influenced by what is known about them outside the interview situation. Where internal candidates are involved, it will be important to include something in the training for the pupil panel about first impressions, impartiality and countering bias.

Where internal candidates are involved, particular care should be taken in selecting members of the pupil panel, as it's important that judgement isn't clouded by any positive or negative bias due to experiences outside the interview process.

Offering the successful candidate the post, giving feedback to candidates on the interview process, or telling them they have been unsuccessful should always be undertaken by an adult. This is particularly important where a candidate is known to the young people involved.

8 References

'The Recruitment Pack' – Save the Children Scotland
www.savethechildren.org.uk/scotland

Pupil Voice Wales - www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk

*Kathy Young-Powell System Leader for Participation and Rights
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