**HAVING YOUR SAY**

## >> EVERYONE GETTING INVOLVED!

**This simply means that, preferably, everyone in the school should agree to the idea of a school council, before it is set-up. This includes the principal, pupils, board members, teaching and non-teaching staff and parents.**

### Why

The whole school should agree that the council is important. Everyone within the school community needs to value and support the council in order for it to be successful. There needs to be a sense of ownership from the whole school, so the council can draw vital support from each year of the school and from staff. This is important as the school council, at different times throughout its development, will need specific training on issues, which may be delivered from within the school.

### How

It is vital that both the pupils and the staff play an active role in developing the school council. The list below helps identify possible steps.

Usually a named teacher works with the school council and is the link person between pupils, staff and management. The school should demonstrate its commitment to the process by ensuring the link teacher has direct access to senior management.

- Attend pupil meetings to discuss school councils e.g. class meetings, year meetings and assemblies
- Talk informally to groups of pupils in the playground
- Ask pupils what they would like to see happening in the school council
- Listen to their ideas, suggestions and concerns
- Encourage pupils to conduct a survey to determine their feelings on various issues

- Organise visits to other schools who have a council up and running to share learning and examples of good practice

Pupils and/or link teacher could ask to speak to the principal or at a Board of Governors meeting about setting up a school council. However, before this happens, they need to:

- Be clear about what they want to achieve
- Have prepared an action plan. This should be written and clearly stated in as few words as possible and for example could include ideas like:
  - Starting with one year group evaluate and build on learning, then roll out to other year groups
  - Starting with a small number of achievable activities and gradually increase to a larger number of initiatives or those that are more complex
  - Recommending that the council should be part of the School Development Plan
  - Discussing the results of any pupil survey
  - Discussing the need for a budget to support the development of the school council
  - Listening to the principal's advice and/or suggestions

If managed and run well, experience in other schools shows that school councils can have, over time, a positive impact on the whole school environment.

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Among these impacts may be:

- Pupils helping resolve conflicts amongst their peers
- Positive peer leadership helping develop responsibility. Teachers and pupils can work together and share responsibility for maintaining good behaviour
- Instances of disruptive behaviour, e.g. vandalism and bullying may be reduced. This may have a positive impact on teacher-pupil relationships and the school environment
- Improved communication between pupils and teachers, senior management and governors
- The identification of shared goals between the pupils and the adult population of the school

## Checklist

| Have you: | Tick |
|---|---|
| 1. Consulted pupils on the need for and support of a school council | [ ] |
| 2. Consulted staff and governors on the need for and support of a school council | [ ] |
| 3. Agreed strategies on building support for the school council from within the whole school community | [ ] |
| 4. Agreement for the school council | [ ] |
| 5. Full support from the whole school community | [ ] |
| 6. Drawn up an action plan as part of the School Development Plan | [ ] |

For further information and support on how to get started in developing your school council, finding out how pupils can play a participative role within the school and how to get support from everyone within the school, you may wish to visit the following websites:

School Councils UK:
www.schoolcouncils.org

School Council of Ireland Online:
www.studentcouncil.ie

Participation for Schools:
www.participationforschools.org.uk

Hear by Right, National Youth Agency:
www.nya.org.uk

Association for Citizenship Teaching:
www.teachingcitizenship.co.uk

CBBC Newsround (for primary schools):
www.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews

School Councils Wales:
www.schoolcouncilswales.org.uk

Dept. of Education, New South Wales:
www.schools.nsw.edu.au

Dept. of Education, State of Victoria:
www.education.vic.gov.au

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