Key Stage One

participation and school councils toolkit

taking part and helping our school

Di Clay

school councils UK
www.schoolcouncils.org

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ISBN 0 9535639 6 0

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School Councils UK (SCUK) is an independent charity that promotes and facilitates effective structures for pupil participation in every school. SCUK's vision is of young people as decision-makers, stakeholders and partners in their schools and communities. Having worked with staff and pupils in all types of schools for well over ten years, SCUK is recognised as the UK's most experienced training and support agency in the field of school and class councils.

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Registered charity number 1028799

Contents

Acknowledgements *5*

KS1 pupil councils in action *6*

Introducing the KS1 toolkit *10*
Positive change through pupil councils *10*
What will you find in the toolkit *12*

Pupil councils and school achievement *13*

module 1

Building on our own foundations *18*

Circle time and oracy skills: the foundation for pupil councils *21*

Circle time *22*

Listen, think, discuss *24*
INSET session 1 The basic building blocks *25*
Lesson plan 1 What do I think? *27*
Lesson plan 2 What do you think? *28*

module 2

Preparation in the classroom *29*

Developing pupil skills *30*

A discussion action plan: from *self* to *group* to *class* *32*

Class meetings: class councils *33*
INSET session 2 Getting ready *36*
Lesson plan 3 How do I choose? *38*
Lesson plan 4 What could we do? *39*
Lesson plan 5 Discussing and finding the best decision *40*

module 3

Pupil council structures in school systems *41*

Pathways to participation *42*

School council constitution *43*

School council election procedure *47*

School council effectiveness *49*
INSET session 3 Participation through pupil councils *53*
Lesson plan 6 Having a meeting *55*

module 4

Roles and responsibilities *57*

The role of the link teacher *58*

The role of all class teachers *61*
INSET session 4 Teachers playing their part *64*
INSET session 5 Making an action plan *65*
Lesson plan 7 What is a school council? *66*
Lesson plan 8 Agendas, minutes and class councils *68*

Resources *71*

department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

innovation

The DfES Innovation Unit acts as a catalyst for change in the school sector by enabling all stakeholders to work together on learning challenges facing the system. We draw on expertise within and beyond the education sector. Our aim is to see a self-improving system, where strategic innovation improves teaching, raises standards and makes learning personal and powerful for every student. Keep in touch with our work via our website www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/innovation-unit and join our lively online community. We look forward to welcoming you.

Acknowledgments

School Councils UK is grateful to the following schools for welcoming the author's visits to see their successful school councils in action with KS1 pupils:

- Glebe Infant School, Rayleigh, Essex (referred to in the toolkit as Glebe)
- Kingmoor Infant School, Carlisle, Cumbria (referred to in the toolkit as Kingmoor)
- Tavistock Infant School, Fleet, Hampshire (referred to in the toolkit as Tavistock)

Pupils at Damson Wood Infant School, Solihull, interviewed candidates as part of the appointment process for a new teacher. This experience is used in the toolkit. The INSET and lesson plans were piloted by:

- Glebe Infant School, Rayleigh, Essex
- Newlaithes Infant School, Carlisle, Cumbria
- Powers Hall Infant School, Witham, Essex

All at School Councils UK are extremely grateful to the following people for organising the pilot in their schools and for all their helpful and constructive feedback:

- Claire Edwards, who was deputy head of Glebe Infant School and is now head of Powers Hall Infant School, for her contributions to the text and images, which provide firsthand examples of pupil council experiences
- Monica Dimmock, head of Glebe Infant School, for providing the materials from which the images have been taken
- Jan Massey, head of Newlaithes Infant School, for her thorough and constructive written evaluation of the INSET and pupil training.

Thanks are also due to Debbie Ellis, Lorna Farrington and Sem Simkins for contributing ideas for activities.

All of their feedback and professional advice has been taken into account when writing the toolkit. However, we accept full responsibility for any errors of fact or judgement.

School Councils UK gratefully acknowledges the financial support from the DfES Innovation Unit which made this publication possible.

Finally, the toolkit has been a creative collaboration between the author and the editor. School Councils UK is very grateful for Judith Stone’s incisive discernment and attention to detail that has been essential in writing as well as in editing the text.

KS1 pupil councils in action

Class council

Tuesday

In Glebe Infant School the class 3 council meeting is being held at 9am this Tuesday morning.

During the week, class members have written their suggestions on post-it notes and stuck them up on the class council agenda board. They chose whether or not to write their name on their own post-it.

The class teacher helped the chairperson and secretary to sort the post-its into the best order for the meeting. Then the chairperson and secretary used them to write the agenda.

Last week's chairperson chose the chairperson for this morning; the chairperson chose a secretary. (A list of chairpersons and secretaries is kept inside the minutes book to check that everyone has a turn if they want to.)

The chairperson sits on the teacher's chair with the secretary next to them. The other children sit in a circle. (In some other classes the children sit in a group on the carpet.) The teacher sits outside the group but within eye contact of the chairperson in case they need any support.

The meeting is about to start and the timer has been set for 15 minutes.

The chairperson says that the meeting is open. The first item on the agenda is *Choosing a pet for the classroom*. The secretary reads this out and the chairperson asks who wants to say something.

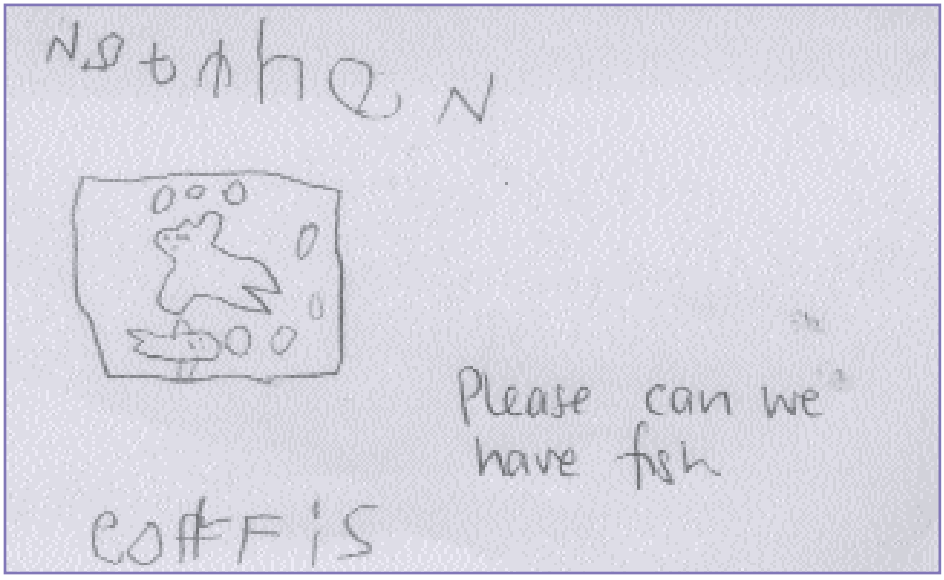
Members of the class discuss different possibilities, including a gerbil, a hamster and a goldfish. They don't all agree on a favourite so they vote to decide which pet to choose. The chairperson asks first who agrees that they should ask for a goldfish and then who disagrees. They count the votes and the secretary writes down the result in the minutes book.

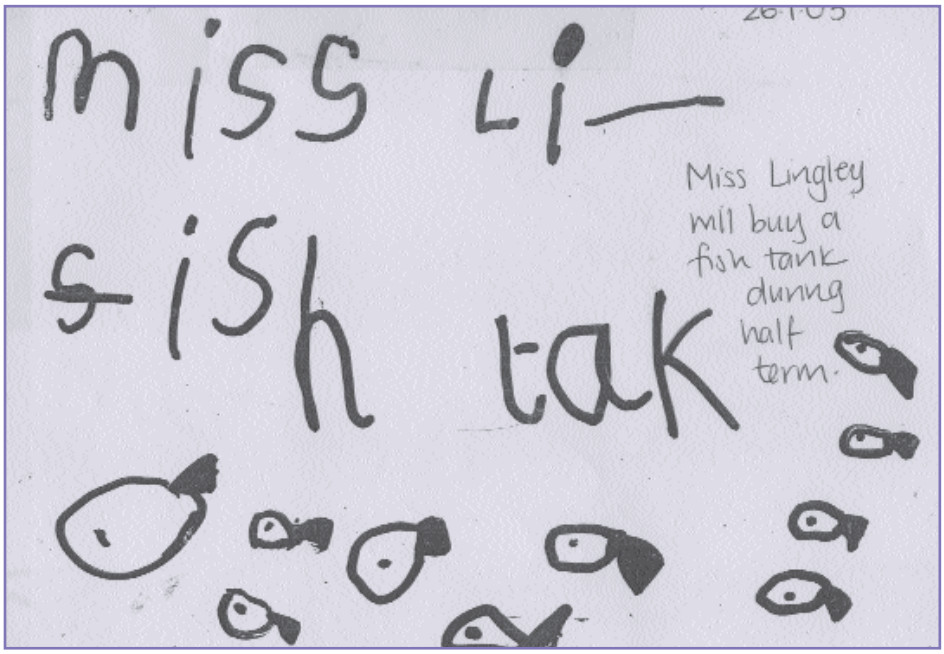
Every class meeting agenda includes a slot for the school councillors elected by the class. They report what happened at the last school council meeting and tell the class council what the school council is asking them to discuss. Today the school council has written a letter asking about ideas for colours for the playbus in the playground.

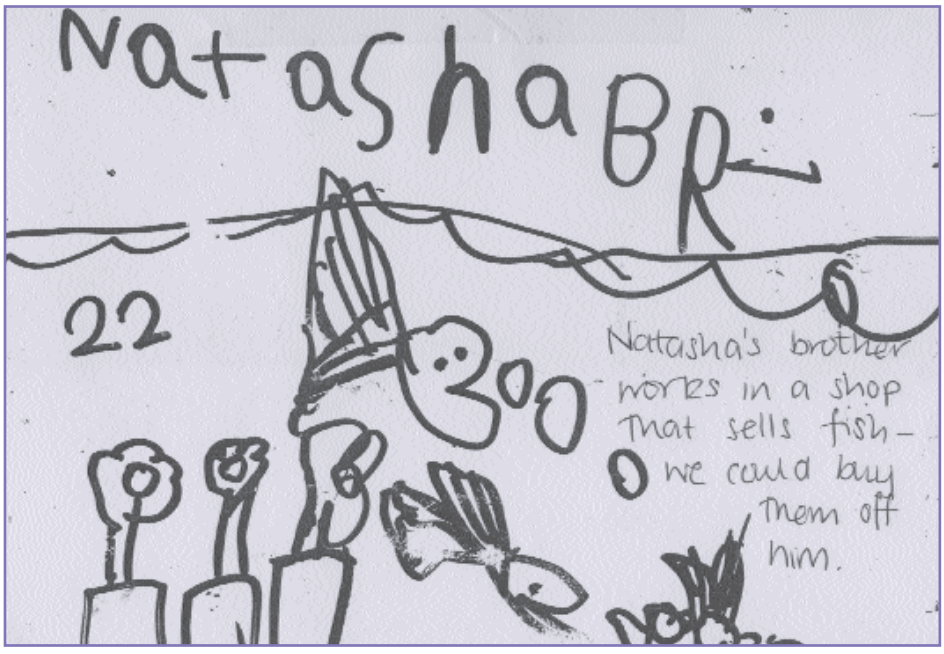
When the 15 minutes is up, the chairperson closes the meeting and thanks everyone for taking part.

The secretary writes the minutes in an exercise book. The date and the names of the chairperson and the secretary are at the top of the page, with notes to remind everyone what was discussed and decided. Spelling or presentation is not always perfect and some children may draw pictures instead of writing notes.

(Sometimes the class teacher adds some notes after the meeting to ensure that the key points are clear.)


Please can we have fish


Miss Lingley will buy a fish tank during half term.


22
Natasha's brother works in a shop that sells fish - we could buy them off him.

School council

Thursday

The Glebe school council meets every Thursday. This week it is meeting during the afternoon. (It varies from meeting to meeting so that the children do not miss the same lesson each time.)

The meeting is being held in the staff room. The school councillors elected the chairperson and secretary at the beginning of term. They sit in a special place on two chairs that are set a little apart from the others. The link teacher sits slightly outside the school council circle but near enough to the chairperson and secretary to be able to give support if they need it.

The secretary asks the school councillors to sign in when they arrive by ticking their name on the attendance record. If a council member is not at the meeting, the secretary notes the reason for their absence.

The chairperson opens the meeting and asks the school councillors what they want to discuss, getting them to take turns to speak. This system ensures that issues raised in classes throughout the school can be discussed by the school council.

Each school councillor has brought their class council minutes book with them to the school council meeting so that they can ask the council to discuss anything that was raised in their class council meeting. In response to the issue raised at the last school council meeting, class 3 wants to tell the meeting about their choice of colour for the bus in the playground. Class 4 raises a different issue about problems with the friendship post not being used properly in the playground.

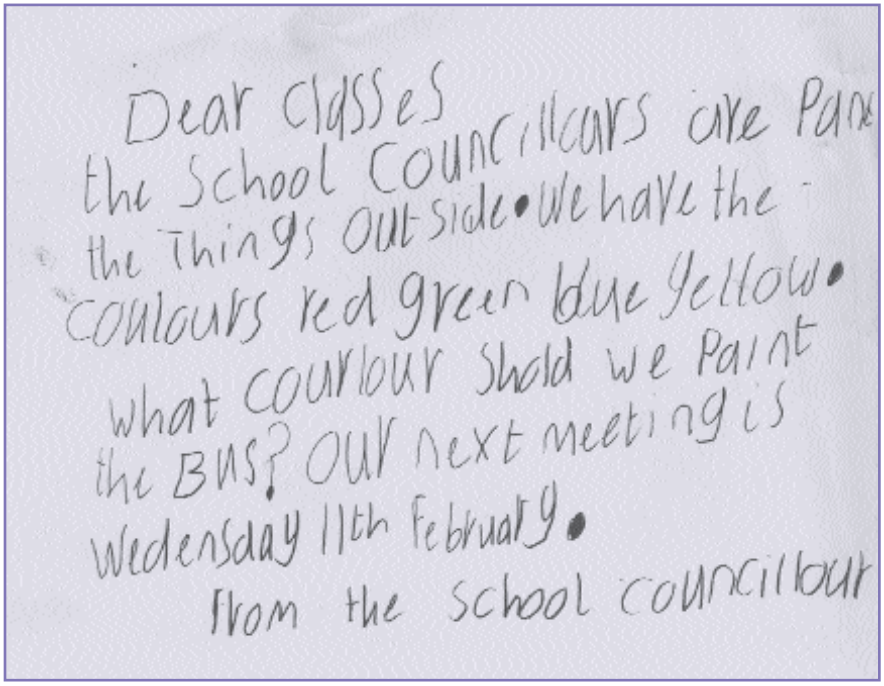
The secretary makes notes of what is said.

The classes suggest different colours for the bus, but most of them want it to be red, so the council decides on this colour. Everyone will tell their own class about the decision.

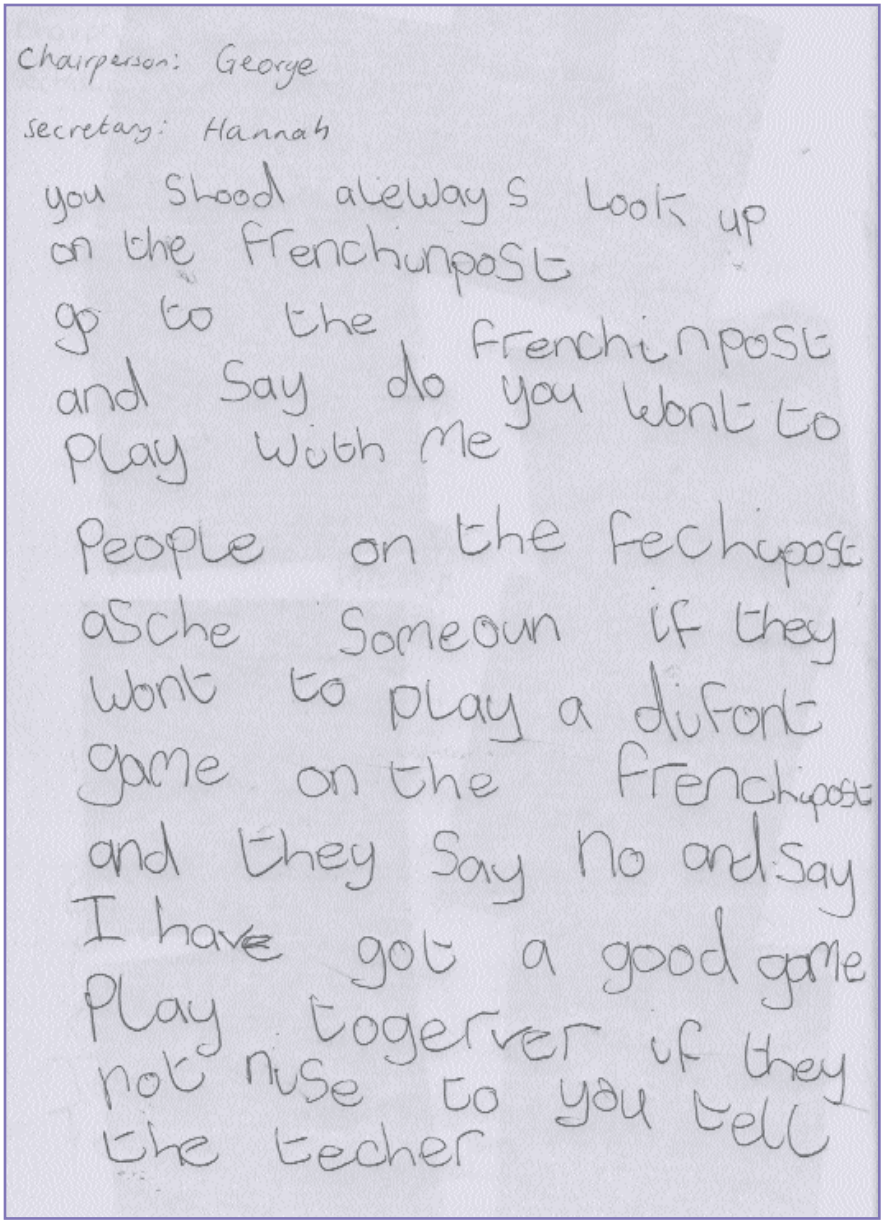
When they discuss the friendship post, someone suggests that some children don't understand what it is for. They discuss how the friendship post should be used and then the secretary volunteers to write out instructions to send to every class. Everyone thinks this is a good idea and the secretary says she will do that and bring it to the next meeting for everyone to see before it is photocopied and sent to all the classes.

The school council has a lever-arch file that includes minutes of meetings and letters that the school council has written or received. This file is displayed in the school entrance lobby where everyone can look at it, next to photographs of all the school councillors.

At the end the chairperson formally closes the meeting and thanks everyone for coming.



Dear classes
the School Councillors are Pain
the Things outside. We have the
coulours red green blue yellow.
what courlour Shold we Paint
the BUS? our next meeting is
Wedensday 11th February.
From the School councillour



Chairperson: George

Secretary: Hannah

you Shood aleways look up
on the frenchinpost
go to the frenchinpost
and Say do you wont to
play with me

People on the fechipost
aSche Someoun if they
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game on the frenchipost
and they Say no and Say
I have got a good game
Play togerver if they
not nuse to you tell
the techer

Introducing the KS1 toolkit

Positive change through pupil councils

> Young children need genuine opportunities to experience active citizenship. Taking real decisions through co-operation and teamwork provide the most influential experiences and can help to counteract a culture of 'learned helplessness'.
>
> Annabelle Dixon[1]
> Member of Crick Committee *(Education for Citizenship) (Primary)* 1997–98

This toolkit is based on firsthand experience of school councils for Key Stage One (KS1) pupils. It aims to inspire and facilitate the development of pupil-led councils appropriate to the age of the children – giving them an opportunity to experience genuine empowerment rather than learning to act as if they were unable to make informed decisions for themselves, always needing others to do and decide things for them.

The whole ethos of a school can change when schools value and nurture pupils' contribution and enable them to participate in school decision-making. A spirit of co-operation develops between pupils and teachers.

Pupil councils contribute to positive changes in the life of every child in the school. All pupils develop their listening and discussion skills as the processes are practised across the curriculum. Involving pupils in real issues through class and school councils helps them to develop important life-skills that promote positive mental health and social welfare – emotional literacy, critical and moral reasoning, self-esteem, self-awareness, communication skills, relationship skills and assertiveness.

Developing these life-skills has a positive impact on pupil behaviour. When children can contribute their views, and know that these will be listened to and taken into account, they do not feel the need to seek attention in other less appropriate ways.

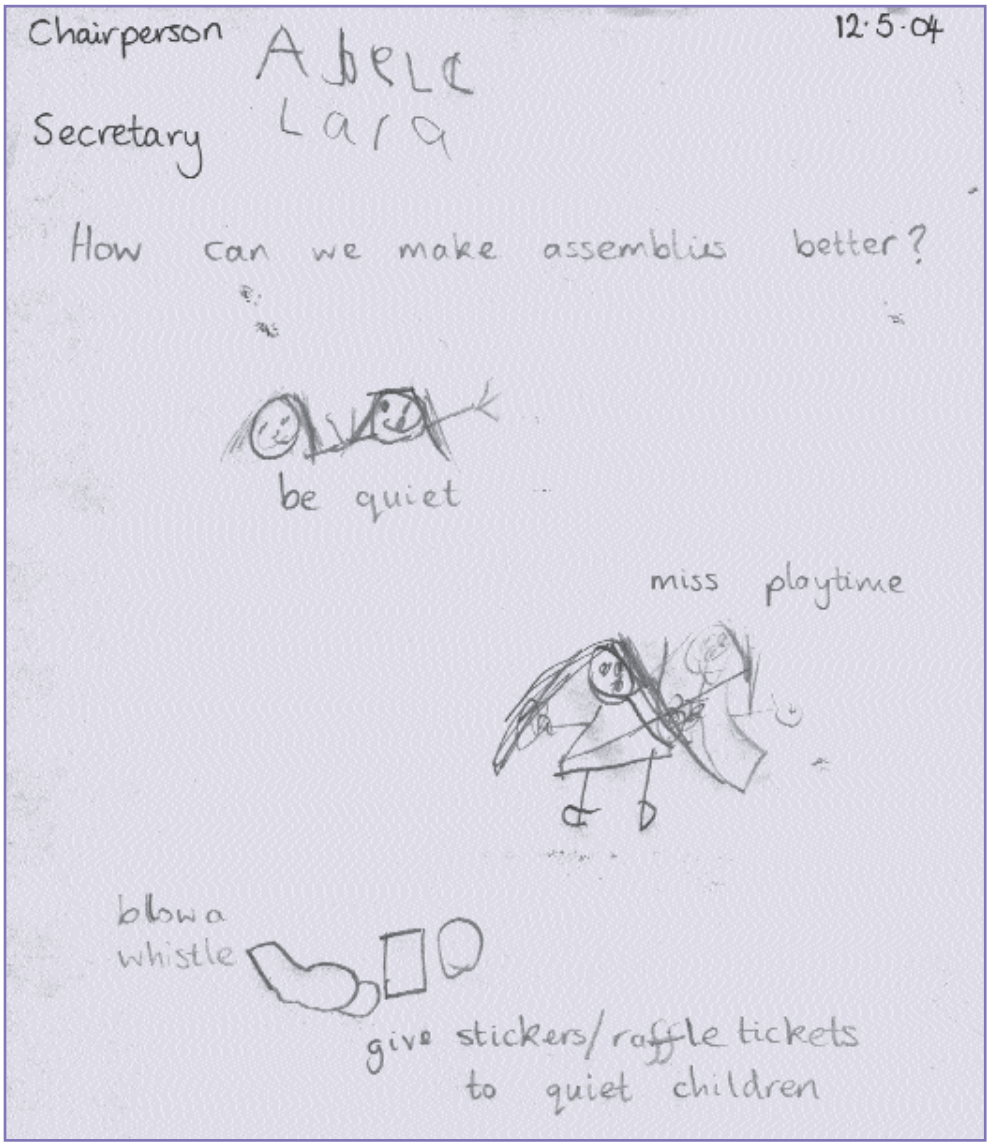
Setting up a system of pupil councils is usually a matter of tweaking the good practice that schools already have in place. Many KS1 and 2 schools have developed strategies that enable children to express their feelings, voice their opinions and find solutions to everyday problems. Circle time is an obvious example of this.

Both circle time and class councils have a valuable part to play in the classroom; their distinctive advantages are discussed on page 31. Therefore a school that runs circle time twice a week might choose to convert one of those sessions to class council time instead. Individual schools using this book will work out the most effective approach to take, according to their own priorities and timetable pressures.

Some teachers have concerns about setting up pupil councils with KS1 children. They suggest that it is unreasonable to expect six year olds to take responsibility and to share in decision-making that affects classroom and school practices.

1 Annabelle Dixon had more than 30 years experience as a KS1 teacher.

However, headteachers who make the decision to set up a KS1 school council with some scepticism soon become convinced that their school has greatly improved through this process of pupil participation. By taking part in class and school councils, young children learn co-operative and responsible behaviour, establishing a pattern for the rest of their school lives.



Some reasons for setting up a KS1 school council

- **A school is a community; pupil councils help to make this community harmonious and good to live in.**
- **School councils enable pupils to make a positive contribution to the school environment and ethos.**
- **Every child learns to listen to others and to recognise themselves as a worthwhile individual with a right to be heard.**
- **Children learn self-confidence and social skills.**
- **From a young age, children are challenged to be responsible for their behaviour towards each other and towards their teachers and helpers.**
- **Contributing to their class and school community allows children to grow in self-esteem.**
- **Every child learns from their own experience how to contribute to society as a whole and what it means to be an active citizen.**

What will you find in the toolkit

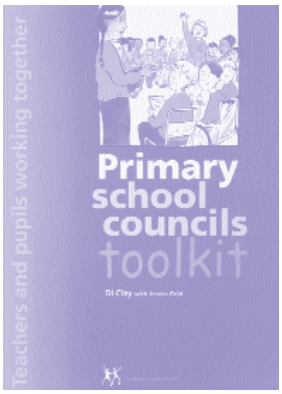
The toolkit is a resource for teachers who want to set up or improve peer-led pupil councils. It offers a step-by-step guide to the structures and processes that will help your pupil councils to be successful. The toolkit consists of four modules:

1 Circle Time and oracy skills: the foundation for pupil councils
2 Preparation in the classroom
3 Pupil council structures in school systems
4 Roles and responsibilities

Each module includes:

- INSET sessions for staff
- handouts for staff
- lesson plans for pupils

The resources section on page 71 includes all the materials you need for the lessons and for setting up and running your school council. These resources are also available on the School Councils UK website www.schoolcouncils.org/resources/ks1



Further useful and relevant resources are available in the *Primary school councils toolkit*, published in 2000 and available from School Councils UK. The two publications make good companions for primary schools because the primary toolkit is aimed at Key Stage 2 and includes more substantial ideas for training school council members, mediation training, and developing charters for behaviour as well as helping children to understand the concepts underpinning the value of pupil councils. The Key Stage 1 toolkit focuses more on the early training necessary for the development of listening and discussion skills for all pupils in primary schools and how these skills can permeate and enhance all classroom discussion activities.

The toolkit is addressed to the senior management of the school because the success of a school council depends upon it being a whole-school initiative that has the full support of the school leadership. The headteacher might, however, delegate responsibility for the training to another member of staff (or to a governor).

Every class teacher will use the lesson plans as part of a whole-school pupil training programme, adapting activities where necessary according to the age of their pupils. During the training, class teachers will build their own collections of handouts and lesson plans.

Pupil councils and school achievement

Foundation stage curriculum

The foundation stage profile was introduced into schools in 2002–03. The profile has 13 summary scales covering six areas of learning, which need to be completed for each child receiving government-funded education by the end of their time in the foundation stage.

The areas of learning include:

- personal, social and emotional development
- communication, language and literacy
- knowledge and understanding of the world.

The relevance of pupil councils to KS1 children can be seen from these points from the foundation stage profile:

- Confident to try new activities, initiate ideas and speak in a familiar group.
- Builds relationships through gesture and talk.
- Understands that there need to be agreed values and codes of behaviour for groups of people, including adults and children, to work together harmoniously.
- Understands that s/he can expect others to treat her or his needs, views, cultures and beliefs with respect.
- Takes into account the ideas of others.
- Considers the consequences of words and actions for self and others.
- Understands what is right, what is wrong and why.

For more information about the Foundation Stage, see www.qca.org.uk

Key Stage One National Curriculum

The National Curriculum for PSHE and Citizenship for Key Stage One pupils consists of non-statutory guidance that schools may use to develop their own schemes of work.

The following edited examples for PSHE are clearly linked to the way pupils contribute their ideas and discuss issues:

- take and share responsibility (for example, for their own behaviour; by helping to make classroom rules and following them)
- feel positive about themselves (for example, by having their achievements recognised and by being given positive feedback about themselves)
- take part in discussions
- make real choices (for example, between healthy options in school meals)
- meet and talk with people (for example, with outside visitors such as religious leaders, police officers, the school nurse)
- develop relationships through work and play
- consider social and moral dilemmas that they come across in everyday life (for example, aggressive behaviour, questions of fairness, right and wrong, simple political issues, use of money, simple environmental issues)
- ask for help.

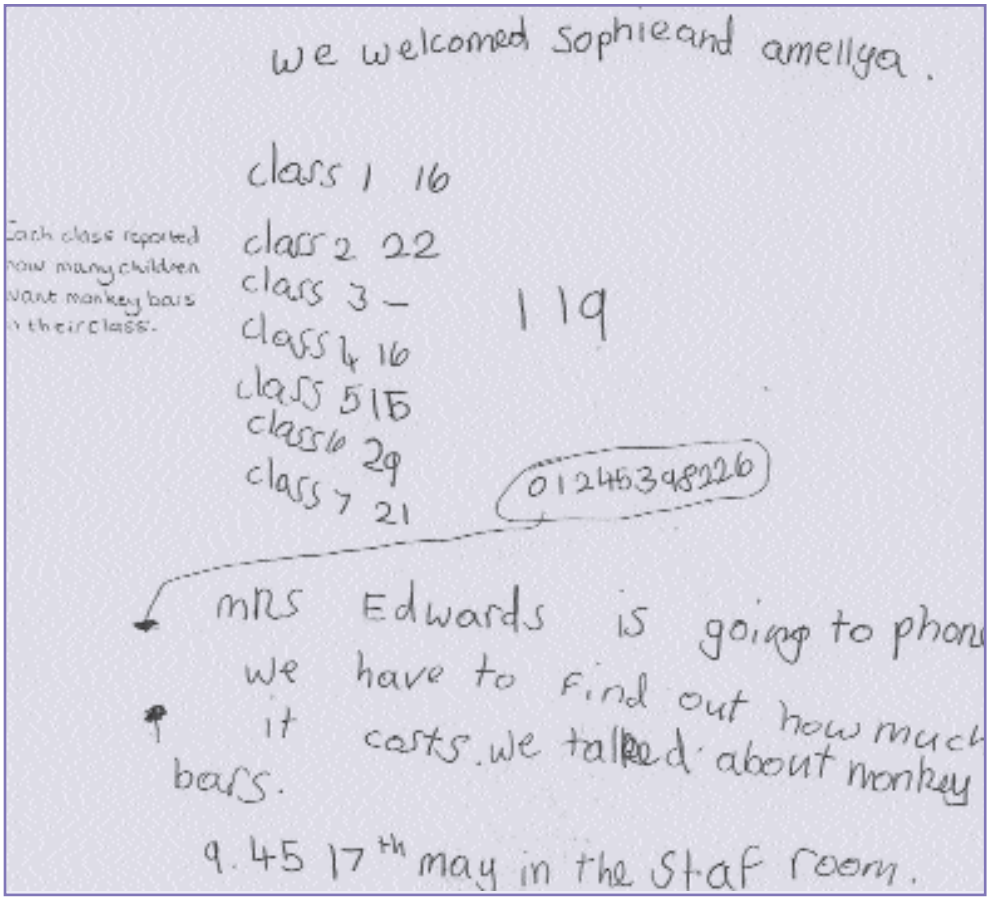
For further information about the Key Stage One National Curriculum, see National Curriculum online at www.nc.uk.net

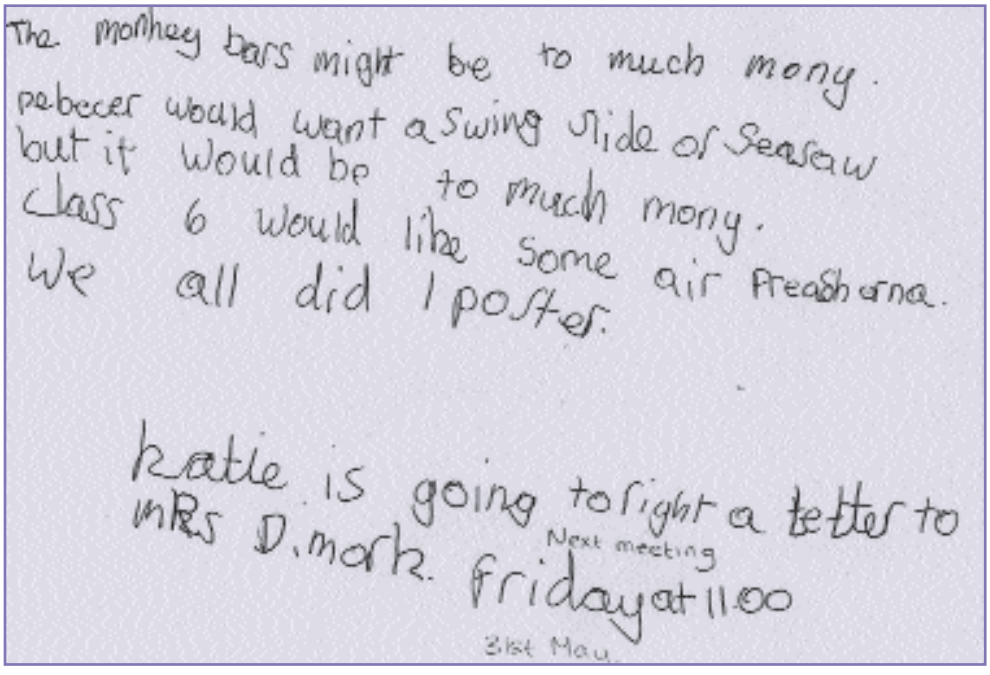
Ofsted reports

Ofsted inspectors recognise the important contribution made by school councils in KS1 schools.

The Ofsted report for Glebe says:

> School and class councils give pupils a strong sense of partnership in the school.





> The school and class councils are very effective and make a very good contribution to citizenship. The pupils have a very responsible attitude and willingly talk about developments in the school and the areas they are seeking to develop further.
>
> The school council has elected representatives chosen from each class council. The council has a number of achievements to its credit, including the purchase of playground equipment. This was a complex project for them. Having decided on the objective, the school council wrote to parents asking for support for a toy sale. They organised and publicised the toy sale. They selected the equipment they could afford from a catalogue and sent off the purchase order. On its arrival, they unpacked it and checked that it was what they ordered.
>
> (March 2003)

The Ofsted report for Tavistock says:

> Although they are so young, the school nevertheless gives its pupils an opportunity to play a part in the development of the school. In circle time and assemblies, and through their representatives on the School Council and questionnaires, the pupils enthusiastically suggest ways in which school life can be improved. Over the last three years, attendance has improved year on year. Parents say that the reason for this very good attendance is because their children like coming to school.
>
> The teams typify the corporate planning and shared management style of the school that involves all parties, including the pupils, in the development of the school. Because all are invited to be part of development planning, the school expects everyone to take some responsibility in implementing decisions.
>
> (June 2000)

Excellence and enjoyment – a strategy for primary schools

The Primary Strategy, published in 2003, has given schools greater freedom to develop the curriculum to suit the needs of their pupils; they can decide how to arrange learning in the school day. Schools can therefore choose to spend longer, for example, teaching PSHE within a week than teaching geography. These decisions need to be made at Leadership Team level and should support the ethos of the school.

The Primary National Strategy objectives for each term in Year 1 correspond with these skills:

- speaking
- listening
- group discussions and interactions.

The Citizenship Curriculum Unit 1 *Taking Part* gives the following vocabulary to introduce to KS1 pupils:

- *consider, think, ideas* (thinking skills)
- *listen, talk, discuss, debate, opinion* (communication skills)
- *decide, like, dislike, choice, right, wrong, agree, disagree, voting* (decision-making skills).

During Key Stage 1, pupils learn about themselves as developing individuals and members of their communities, building on their own experiences and on early learning goals for personal, social and emotional development. They learn the basic rules and skills for keeping themselves healthy and safe and for behaving well. They

have opportunities to show they can take some responsibility for themselves and their environment. They begin to learn about their own and other people's feelings and are becoming aware of the views, needs and rights of other children and older people. As members of a class and school community, they learn social skills such as how to share, take turns, play, help others, resolve simple arguments and resist bullying. They begin to take an active part in the life of their school and its neighbourhood.[2]

For further information about the Primary Strategy, see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary

National Healthy School Standard

The National Healthy School Standard is jointly funded by the Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Health as part of the government's drive to reduce health inequalities, promote social inclusion and raise educational standards. In order to achieve Advanced Healthy School status, schools must demonstrate achievement against 10 key objectives many of which relate to the development of the pupil voice within schools.

For more information on the National Healthy School Standard, see www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk

eg

Glebe achieved Advanced Healthy School status in June 2002. Members of the school council took the assessment team on a tour of the school and enjoyed showing them the whole school in great detail. The timetable for the assessment day had been arranged so that PSHE lessons and class council meetings were seen in each age group throughout the school and one member of the team attended a school council meeting. Glebe says 'This award was very important to us as a school because it gave us national recognition for the vital role of the pupil voice within our school.'

The report says:

> **Participation in a class and school council meeting confirmed their effectiveness in involving all the children in the decision-making process. Foundation stage children are included in the school council. Children are actively encouraged to take responsibility.**

Every Child Matters: change for children in schools

Every Child Matters: Change for Children, published by the DfES in December 2004, aims at creating improved outcomes for children, young people and families through local authority programmes for change. Guidance on developing a Children and Young People's Plan was issued in April 2005; all local authorities have a statutory duty to have a plan in place by April 2006.

The inspectorate will judge the integrated contribution of services to improving outcomes against the following criteria:

1 Children and young people are helped to develop socially and emotionally.
2 Children and young people are helped to manage change and respond to challenges in their lives.

2 *Assessing Progress: Key stage statements*
QCA Citizenship, A Scheme of Work for Key Stages 1&2: Teachers' guide

3 Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision-making and to support the community.
4 Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour.

The thinking behind *Every Child Matters* is not new for many schools. Effective school councils make a significant contribution to the desired outcomes, especially the strand *Make a positive contribution*, which includes:

- engaging in decision-making
- developing positive relationships and choosing not to bully
- developing self-confidence
- developing enterprising behaviour.

More detail, including the timetable for consultation and details concerning the timing of the new duties, is available at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

Investors in People

Investors in People is the national standard which sets out a level of good practice for training and development of people. It provides a national framework for improving performance, through a planned approach to setting and communicating objectives so what people can, and are motivated to do matches what the organisation needs them to do. Whilst Investors in People is more commonly used by schools to look at the development and training of the adults within the school community, it is also valuable to look at the work of the school council in the light of the achievement of this status.

For more information about Investors in People, see www.iipuk.co.uk

Glebe achieved Investors in People status in March 2000 (before it had a school council) and then was reassessed in March 2003 (after the school council was set up). The assessor was impressed with the work of the school council and commented:

> **Meeting the School Council further enhanced the assessment. Anyone who feels that infant children are too young for this role should visit Glebe. Wonderful children ably supported by the Deputy Headteacher and the whole school community.**

Building on our own foundations

Schools have many different ways of making sure that their pupils are able to contribute ideas as well as speak about things that worry them. Circle time, now widely used in primary schools, is an obvious example.

A number of initiatives to encourage increased pupil participation are coming into schools; it is helpful to have strategies already in place that enable these programmes to become embedded in the way the school is run.

School councils provide a structure for all pupils to participate in school through a system of elected pupil representatives from every class. Class meetings (or councils) must be rooted in the life of each class on a regular basis.

For a school council to be successful it needs:

- a commitment throughout the school to listen to, respect and respond to, pupils' ideas and contributions
- active support from the senior management
- regular communication between the 'constituency' of pupils in each class and their elected representatives: the pupils from every class who are members of the school council
- commitment from all class teachers to regular pupil-led discussions through class councils or class meetings
- an understanding by everyone in the school community of the part the council plays in how the school is run
- training for all pupils.

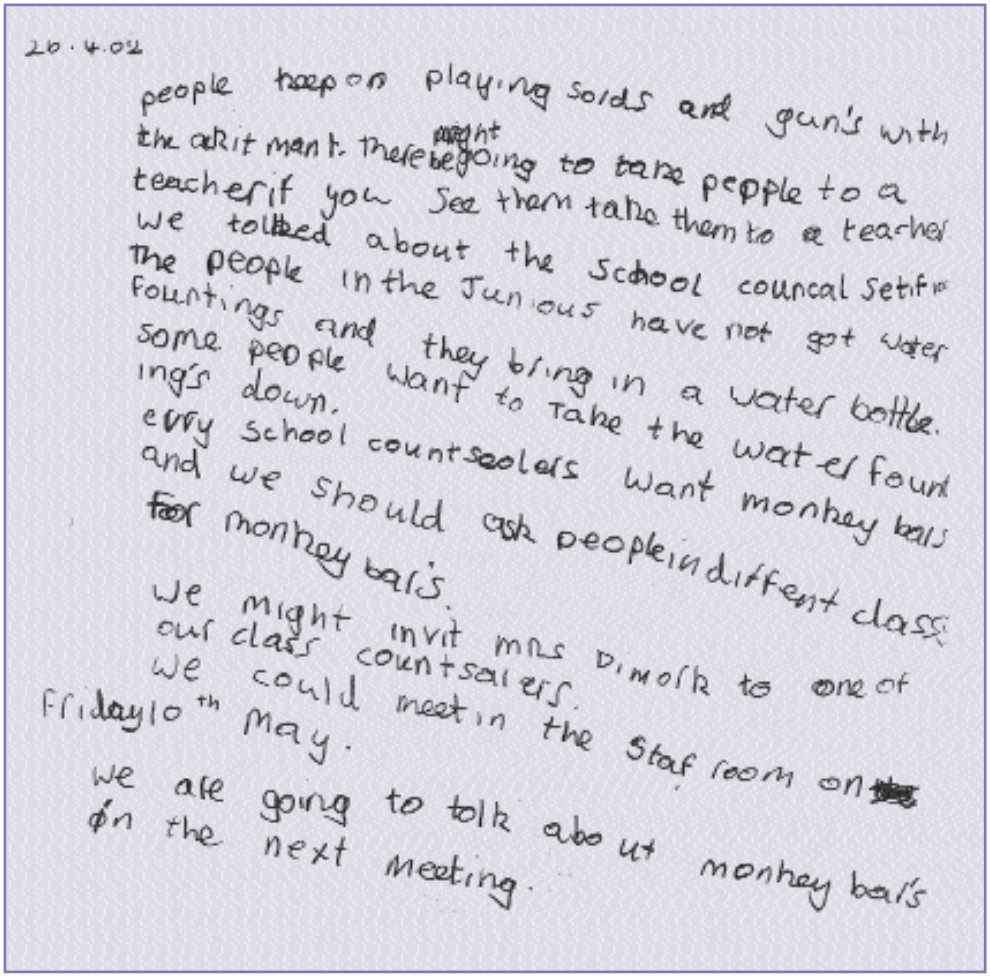
It is important, therefore, for schools to take some time to consider the implication of these commitments and to plan strategies for putting them into practice.

The importance of training for all pupils

> Our first school council meeting took place on 4 November 2004 with two elected representatives from each class. The children elected a chairperson and secretary of the school council who were very confident in their new roles. I am sure this is due to the training that they received through the toolkit lessons. They had a really good idea of what they would need to do in a school council meeting, before they even got there.
>
> Claire Edwards, Headteacher, Powers Hall Infant School, Witham

Pupils need training in the skills of thinking, listening, making choices in the light of others' opinions as well as their own, discussion, note-taking, agenda-setting, decision-making, and action planning. This will equip them to participate in, and take turns to lead, their class councils.

The skills learnt in class will equip those pupils elected as class representatives to organise their school council meetings with the help of the link teacher.



26.4.02

people keep on playing sords and gun's with
the akit mant. there be might going to take pepple to a
teacher if you see them take them to a teacher
we tolked about the school council setif
The people in the Junious have not got water
fountings and they bring in a water bottle.
some people want to take the water fount
ing's down.
every school countseolers want monkey bars
and we should ask people in diffent class
for monkey bar's.
we might invit mrs Dimork to one of
our class countsalers.
we could meet in the staf room on
Friday 10th May.
we are going to tolk about monkey bar's
on the next meeting.

The lesson plans

Circle time is the foundation of pupil training. The lesson plans in this toolkit do not, however, cover the process of introducing circle time to pupils because it is now commonly part of regular practice in infant and junior schools.

Lessons 1 to 5 are about developing processes in every classroom that encourage effective participation, irrespective of pupil councils. These processes are:

- thinking
- listening
- discussing
- choosing
- agreeing.

Lessons 6 to 8 are about developing the structures necessary to ensure that pupil councils are effective. These will become part of the school's systems for pupil participation. These lessons are about:

- class meetings
- school council structure and how to choose class representatives
- class councils, agendas and minutes.

If the idea of the school council is a new initiative in the school, it should be introduced to the pupils after lesson 6. An appropriate time to do this would be during an assembly, followed up with lesson 7 in each class. The pupils need to understand that the lessons are about getting ready for pupil councils so that everyone can feel part of the school council.

The importance of training for all staff

A successful school council affects everyone in school. Therefore teachers, classroom assistants, support workers, midday supervisors, governors, secretaries, site managers, and everyone in regular professional contact with the school and its pupils, should all take part in some or all of the INSET sessions.

The training programme is written as five one-hour sessions; these can be organised in a variety of ways:

- as a one-day INSET
- as a half-day INSET followed by two evening sessions in staff meetings
- incorporated into weekly staff meetings over five weeks.

The time needed for INSET depends on the current position of pupil participation in a school. Schools that do not already have a structure for circle time may need to take a much longer time to develop one.

The person who is leading the INSET needs to familiarise themselves with the toolkit and to photocopy handouts for each session.

A flipchart should be available at each session. The sheets of notes should be kept until the end of the training when they will form the basis of an action plan.

The lesson plans should be photocopied so that each teacher has a copy to refer to during INSET and has them ready to use for their pupil training.

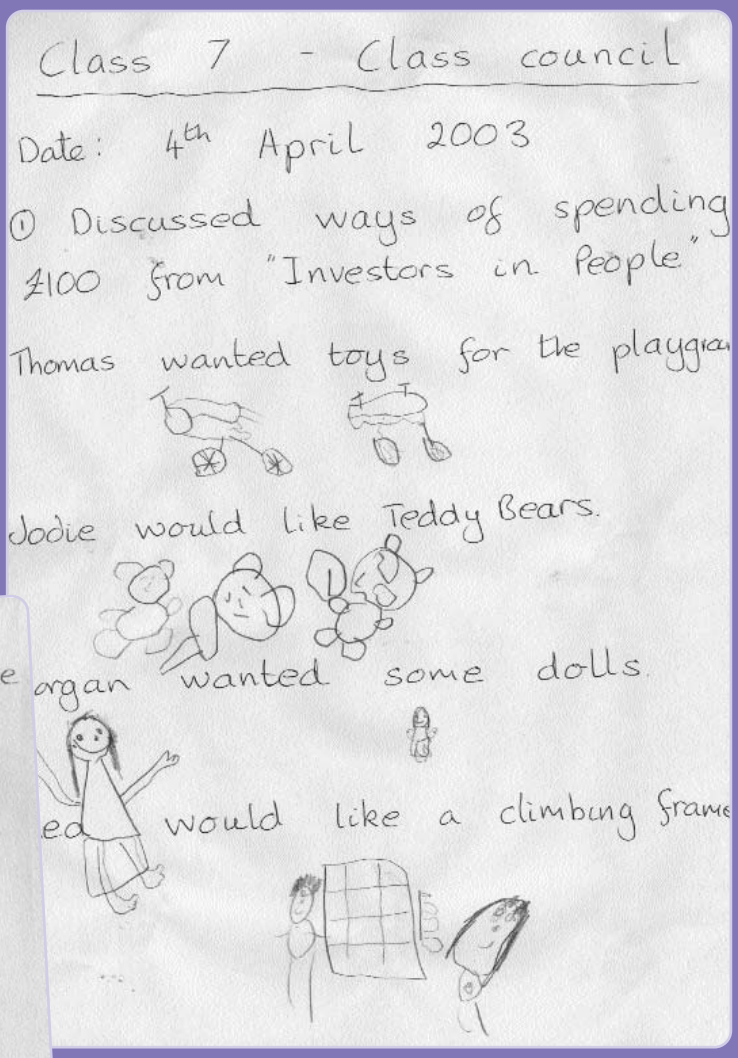
module 1

Circle time and oracy skills: the foundation for pupil councils

Handouts
- **Circle time**
- **Listen, think, discuss**

INSET session
1 The basic building blocks

Lesson plans
1 What do I think?
2 What do you think?


Class 7 - Class council

Date: 4th April 2003

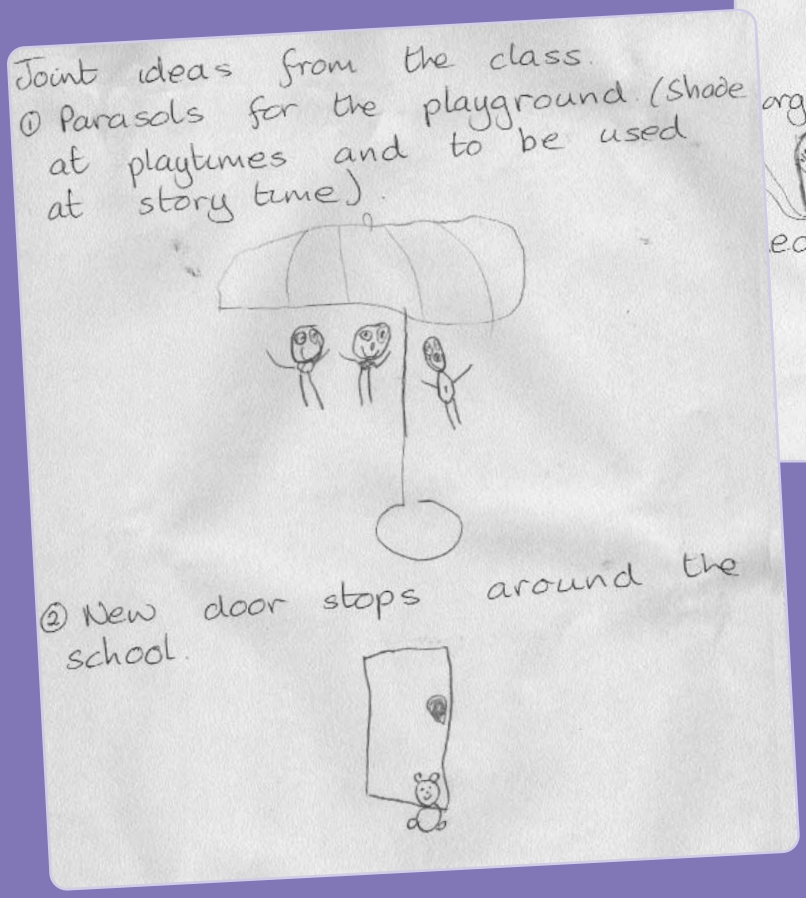
① Discussed ways of spending £100 from "Investors in People"

Thomas wanted toys for the playgra

Jodie would like Teddy Bears.

organ wanted some dolls.

ed would like a climbing frame


Joint ideas from the class.

① Parasols for the playground (Shade at playtimes and to be used at story time)

② New door stops around the school.

instalment 1 **The windfall: £100 to spend**

hand out

Circle time

Developing skills

Many schools have incorporated circle time into their curriculum, either as part of PSHE or as an activity in its own right. Schools that have adopted the ethos of circle time already have the foundations for developing pupil participation within their school. Any school that wants to set up a school council needs to lay these foundations by adopting circle time as part of regular classroom practice.

For circle time to develop as a consistent and coherent structure, it is essential for all members of staff to:

- agree on a circle time policy
- share an understanding of why circle time is regularly practised
- adopt a common approach to leading circle time in the classroom.

Why circle time?

Circle time provides a perfect forum for nurturing and monitoring the learning behaviour and social and emotional competencies that improve schools.

Children learn how to:

- acknowledge their feelings and express them appropriately, becoming emotionally literate
- listen attentively.

Circle time gives children opportunities to develop these skills, becoming more aware of themselves in relation to others and what it means to be part of a community.

Children also need to grow in self-esteem – an inner sense of self-worth that is not necessarily the same as self-assertion or even self-confidence. Children with self-esteem apply themselves to learning more readily. They feel that they have something worthwhile to contribute to society as they grow up, and develop a positive attitude to citizenship.

Circle time allows special and caring attention to be given to shy or less able children who make few demands on the class teacher and may often go through a day without being given any attention at all.

The skills learnt in circle time can be developed to help children negotiate and resolve conflicts effectively. The safety of the structure provides the ideal forum in which to address issues, provided that the ‘rules’ are adhered to and no one is left at the end of the session feeling that they have not been heard and understood.

How circle time is organised

Above all, the circle should feel safe and unthreatening.

There are three basic rules:

1 Only one person speaks at a time.
2 Everyone listens to what each person says.
3 There are no 'put-downs' or negative judgments about others.

Children sit in a circle where they can all see each other. The circle layout is important because there is no hierarchy within it.

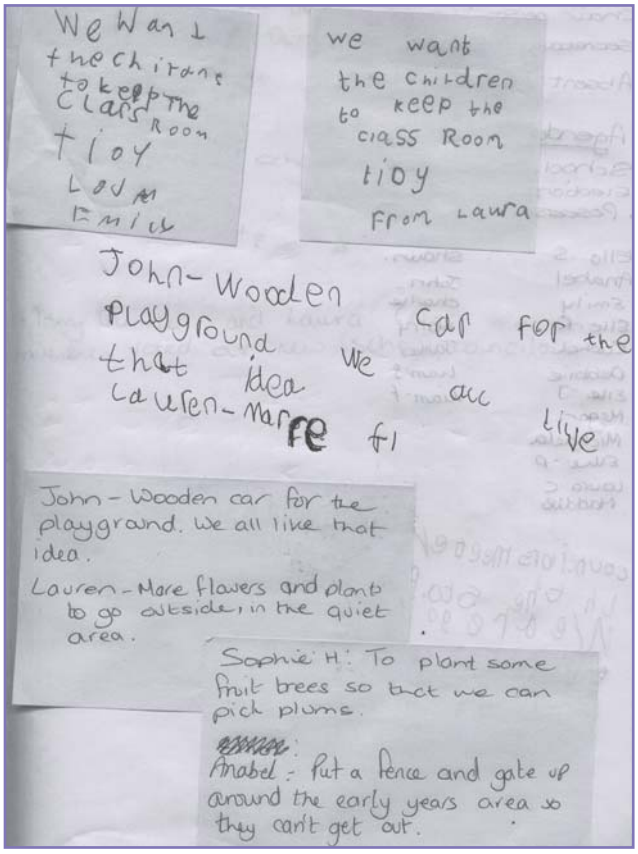
Choose a natural object, such as a stone or a shell (or a soft toy for very young children), to pass round the circle for each speaker to hold in turn. This helps everyone to abide by the first two rules of circle time. The object may be handed straight on to the next person if someone can't think of anything to say. It doesn't matter if anyone repeats what someone else has already said.

The teacher must also abide by circle time rules but sometimes, of course, she may need to speak without holding the object – for instance, just to remind everyone about a rule.

Once pupils are familiar with this process, it is only a few easy steps to developing class councils. You can read about this in the handout *A discussion action plan: from* self *to* group *to* class (module 2).

eg

Kingmoor developed its school council based solely on the circle time training that all members of staff and governors attended. Through circle time, they gradually developed the structures that have resulted in a democratically elected school council. Circle time rules apply to school council meetings.



hand out

Listen, think, discuss

The QCA materials *Speaking, Listening, Learning: working with children in Key Stages 1 and 2* (2003) highlight the role of children's talk in raising standards in classrooms across the country, and speak of the need for a national drive to improve oracy skills.

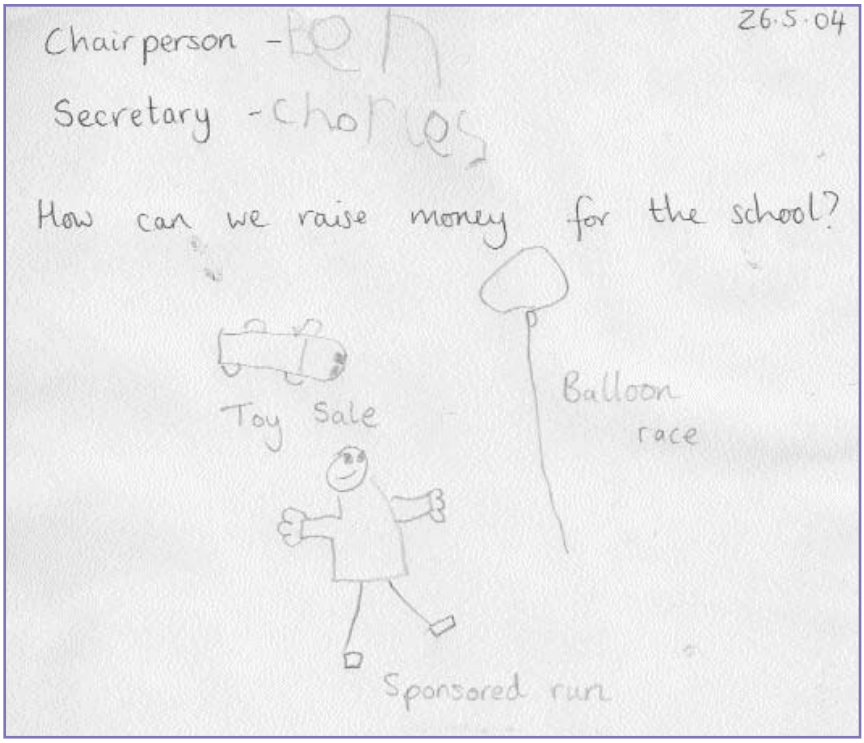
Children need to understand what good listening is, and they need practice to develop their listening skills. Learning to listen at an early age is an important step in developing the ability to communicate meaningfully with others. To be good listeners, we need to take note of the body-language of the person we are listening to, and to demonstrate to them through our own body-language that we are engaged and interested in what they are saying.

Developing pupils' thinking skills is a fundamental step in a process that leads from talk to discussion (see module 2, page 32). Children must learn the importance of:

- listening to the views of others
- allowing those views to influence and, sometimes, to change your own views
- considering the opinions of others before making up your own mind.

It is possible to actively develop pupils' thinking skills within an ethos where it is understood that there can be lots of answers, that many of them can be 'right', and that it's also ok to be 'wrong'.

Pupils should understand that thinking is a process that takes time. Schools often neglect the need for thinking time; the teacher asks a question and hands shoot up with ready answers before there has been an opportunity to think.



One way would be for a teacher to ask a question, then say that she is going to give everyone 'thinking time' before inviting a pupil to respond. If a child replies 'I don't know' (often a get-out for children who don't want to think about a possible answer) the teacher can then gently coax the pupil with prompts, such as *'If you did know, what might you say …'?* or '*If you were talking to your friends about this …'* etc

Only when someone is able to listen well, and think about what the other person has said, can they progress from talking from an egocentric perspective to having a genuine conversation.

INSET session 1

The basic building blocks

1 hour

Aims

- Introduce pupil councils.
- Review circle time in school.
- Decide whether more work on circle time is needed.
- Consider strategies for developing oracy skills in the classroom.
- Relate government guidelines to the activities.

Resources

- Presentation on screen or as printed handouts (download from www.schoolcouncils.org/resources/ks1)
- Handouts
  - *Circle time*
  - *Listen, think, discuss*
- Lesson plans
  1 What do I think?
  2 What do you think?

Introduction

10 minutes

Presentation introducing the concept of pupil councils and the overall objectives of the INSET sessions (alternatively use as handouts).

Circle time review

20 minutes

Use the *Circle time* handout to review your practice considering these questions:

- How does this match your own school practice?
- Does each member of staff have a clear idea of how to practise circle time and why it is part of the timetable?
- Do you disagree with any points?

Consider the need for a circle time plan for your school, taking into account whether:

- you have a circle time policy
- the staff as a whole needs further training in circle time
- there is a shared understanding of the circle time process in each class.

This could provide a basis for agreeing on a policy and developing a blueprint for how circle time is practised in your own school.

If your school needs to review circle time, additional time should be set aside for this.

Identifying oracy skills

10 minutes

Discuss the listening and thinking opportunities available to children in your classes.

- List points on the flipchart.
- Identify any gaps and shortcomings.

You may find it helpful to agree on the first step to be taken to address these. If so, agree who will be responsible and set a date for reporting back to the staff group.

Oracy skills in action

10 minutes : In pairs

Look at lesson plans 1 and 2.

- Discuss when and how they could be put into practice in your own class and what, if any, modifications would be needed for the age group.
- Consider how this needs to be supported by:
  - communication with children during playtimes as well as in the classroom
  - expectations from adults and children when dealing with conflicts and issues.

10 minutes : As a whole group

Share thoughts from each group, noting on a flipchart any specific points that might need action or further consideration.

- Keep the flipchart for action planning later.

Extra activities

You may find time for some additional activities.

Ask participants to think back to their own experiences as young people and ask them.

- Did anyone ask for your views?
- How did this feel?

Values continuum

- Lay out a tape/line along the floor.
- Put *Involved in everything* at one end and *Seen and not heard* at the other end.
- Participants stand on appropriate part of line, and explain their position.

lesson plan 1

What do I think?

30 minutes

Objectives

By the end of this session, pupils should understand that:

- everyone has a right to have their own thoughts
- thinking is a process that takes time
- there may be many valid opinions about the same issue.

Resources

- An object to pass round the circle
- Newspaper or magazine pictures
- Picture of dog (page 72)
- Picture of cat (page 73)

'What do I think about this?'

10 minutes : Sitting in a circle

Ask the pupils *What is thinking?*

- Explain that thinking about things goes on in our brains and takes time.
- Ask the pupils to think about the colours red and blue.

Pass the object round the circle.

- As it reaches each pupil, ask them to say how they want to finish the sentences *'I think red is …'* and then *'I think blue is …'*
- Tell them that their ideas were all different but they were all 'right'.

'In my opinion'

10 minutes : Still in the circle

Introduce vocabulary *'In my opinion …'*

- Show a newspaper or magazine picture or a painting of an object that the pupils can relate to and go round the circle to find out what they think about it.
- Point out again that all of their opinions were interesting and no one gave 'wrong' answers.

'Changing my mind'

10 minutes

Cat and dog game

- Put a picture of a cat on one side of the room and a picture of a dog on the other.
- Ask the pupils to stand beside the one they like best.
- Addressing one group at a time, encourage the children to say the things they like about the animal they chose.
- Write their responses on the board.
- Then ask each group what they *don't* like about the animal they did *not* choose.
- Write their responses on the board.

When you have read out all the reasons from the board, ask if anybody wants to change their mind.

- If they do, get them to move to the other group.
- Point out that now we've really started to think about things before we make a decision and that thinking takes time!
- Does it matter if you change your mind?

lesson plan 2

What do you think?

30 minutes

Objectives

By the end of this session, pupils will have:

- had opportunities to listen to and respond to others
- practised showing their partner that they are listening effectively.

Resources

- An object to pass round the circle

Likes and dislikes

10 minutes : In pairs facing each other

Play an 'either/or' game on 'what I like best' – either riding a bike *or* swimming, dog *or* cat, etc.

- Each pupil:
  - completes the sentence, *'I like … best because …'*
  - listens carefully to their partner's answers.

In a circle

Each pupil reports what their partner likes best and why.

Good and bad listening

10 minutes

Demonstrate listening badly.

- You need a helper – a teaching assistant or one of the pupils.
- Ask them to tell you something; for example, what they did last weekend.
- Visibly show that you are not listening – looking away, picking up a book to look at etc.
- Ask pupils for responses and observations.

Now demonstrate listening well – what did the pupils see?

- Draw out points such as eye contact and body language.

Listening to each other

10 minutes : In pairs

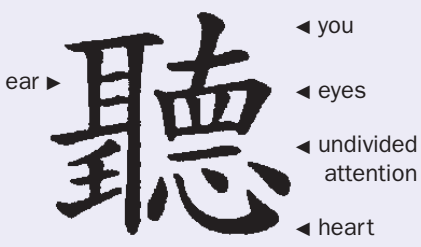
Take turns to tell each other something about themselves, *eg* why they like something, what they do after school etc.

- The person listening should try to do the things a good listener does.
- Observe and praise good listening.
- Ask the children about taking turns.

Point out that they have learned:

- how to listen well
- how to show that we are listening.

These are important skills – many adults don't have them!



extra

You could use the pictogram of the Chinese word meaning 'listen'. Either draw the pictogram or download it from www.schoolcouncils.org/resources/ks1

- Explain that in Chinese culture pictures are used to make words and that each picture is made up of a number of symbols that have different meanings.
- Ask the children why they think each part is included.
- For the heart they might come up with ideas such as caring about the person and taking what they say into their hearts.

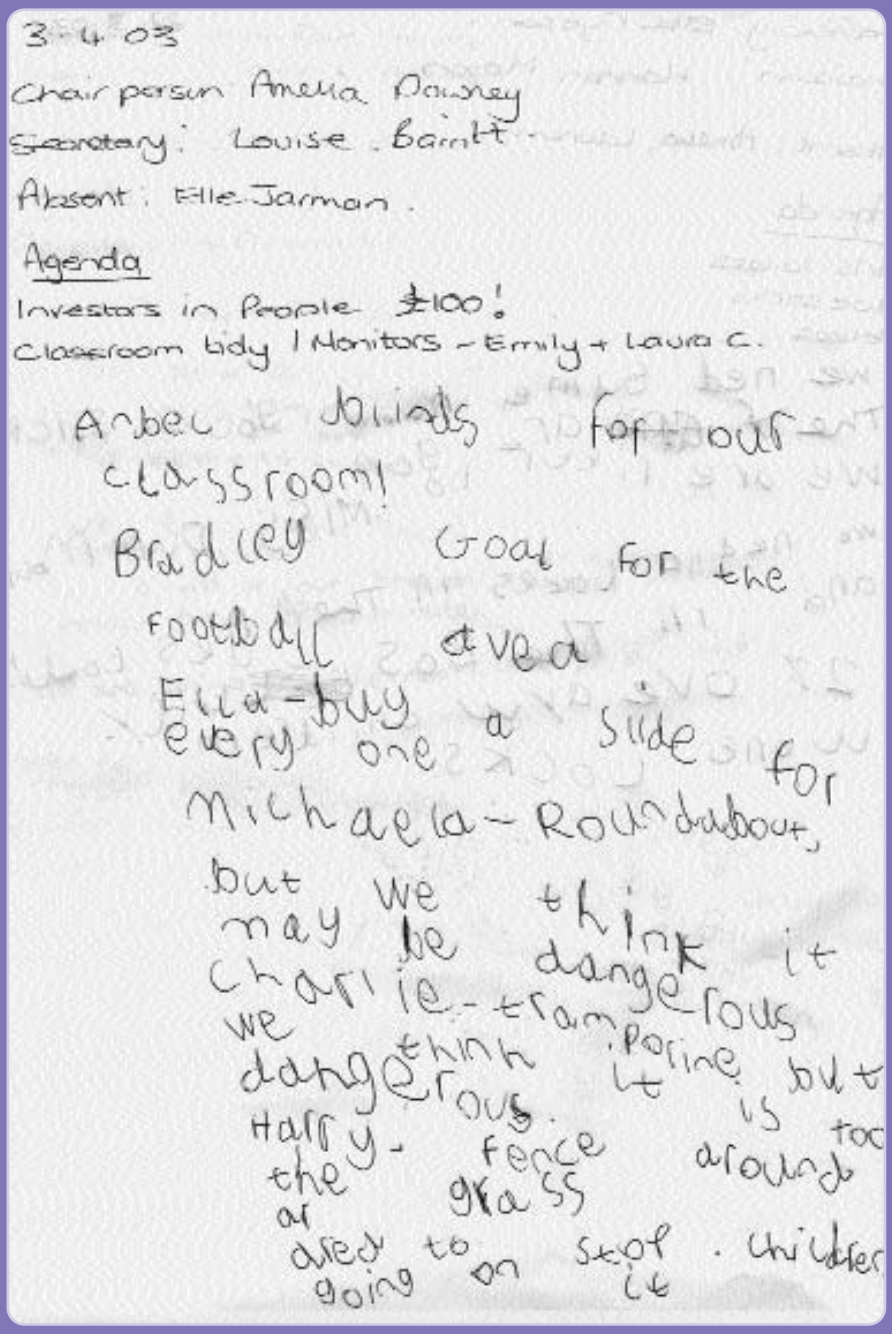
module 2

Preparation in the classroom

Handouts
- **Developing pupil skills**
- **A discussion plan: from *self* to *group* to *class***
- **Class meetings: class councils**

INSET session
2 Getting ready

Lesson plans
3 How do I choose?
4 What could we do?
5 Discussing and finding the best decision


3-4-03
Chairperson Amelia Downey
Secretary: Louise Baintt
Absent: Elle Jarman.
Agenda
Investors in People £100!
Classroom tidy / Monitors - Emily + Laura C.
Anbel blinds for our classroom!
Bradley Goal for the football area
Ella - buy every one a slide for Michaela - Roundabout, but we think it may be dangerous
Charlie - tramporine we think it is dangerous. but Harry - fence around the grass too ared to stop children going on it

instalment 2 **How shall we spend our money?**

hand out

Developing pupil skills

Practices to promote pupil participation in school decision-making begin in the classroom and should become part of everyday classroom practice.

A classroom process for decision-making

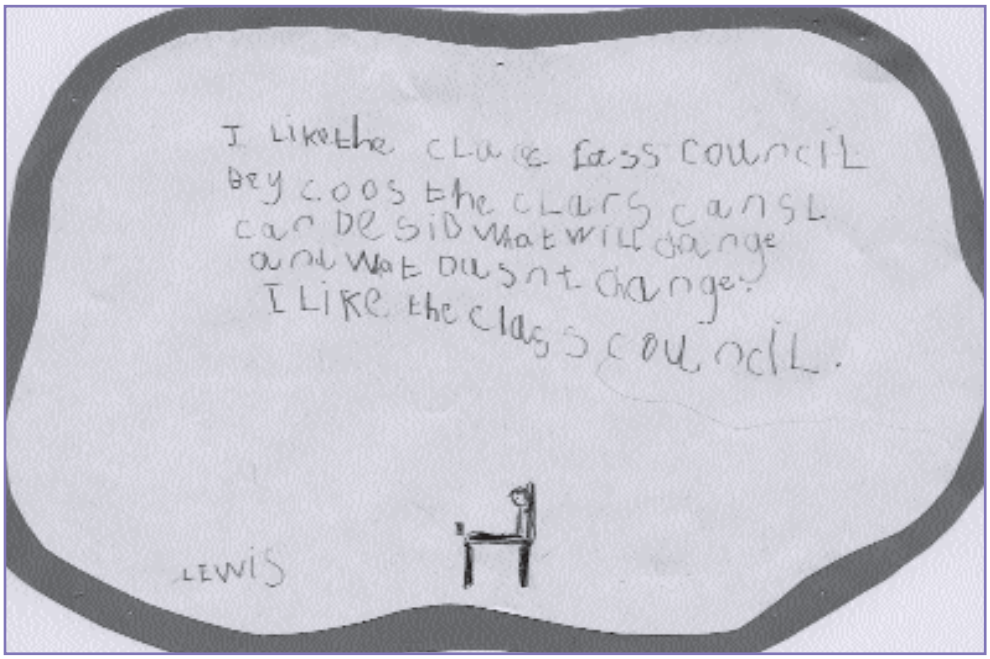
There is a progression of skills – from talk, to listening, to thinking, to discussion – that can be developed through circle time and class discussions. Children develop these skills into those of making decisions together in class or school council meetings.

When teachers have planned common strategies for developing circle time, the next steps are to:

- develop circle time into small group meetings
- merge these small group meetings into whole class meetings/councils.

Once the school council is established, pupils can see the link between discussions in their own class meetings and actual changes that take place in the school. They can identify their own contribution to the process of making things happen.

Pupils can also be encouraged to see how behaviour changes. For example, if pupils are encouraged to show respect for others, they need to consider how that will *actually look* in practice – how they will recognise respecting others when it is happening in their classroom and in the rest of the school.



Circle time and class councils: clarifying the difference

Circle time is a valuable process whatever the age of the participants. It was in use as an adult group facilitation tool long before it was adopted as regular practice in primary schools. Its purpose was always to enhance the self-esteem of all participants and promote a non-hierarchical, safe environment for self-disclosure and personal interactions.

Class councils (sometimes referred to as a class meeting) are more specifically for the discussion of class issues, some of which may be taken to the school council through the class representatives.

The combination of regular circle time and class councils plays a valuable and ongoing part in enhancing pupils' self-esteem and developing their interpersonal, discussion and decision-making skills.

Class councils	Circle time
Pupil-led.	Teacher-led.
May organise itself by sitting in a circle, but this is not necessarily the case.	Everyone sits in a circle including the teacher.
Pupils set the agenda.	Teacher initiates topics to discuss or explore.
Linked into a whole system of pupil communication throughout the school.	Normally is just about what happens to these children in this classroom.
Is an opportunity for developing peer leadership and discussion skills in each classroom.	Is a safe environment usually used to explore and express feelings and opinions of a personal nature.

hand out

A discussion action plan: from self to group to class

Self and circle time

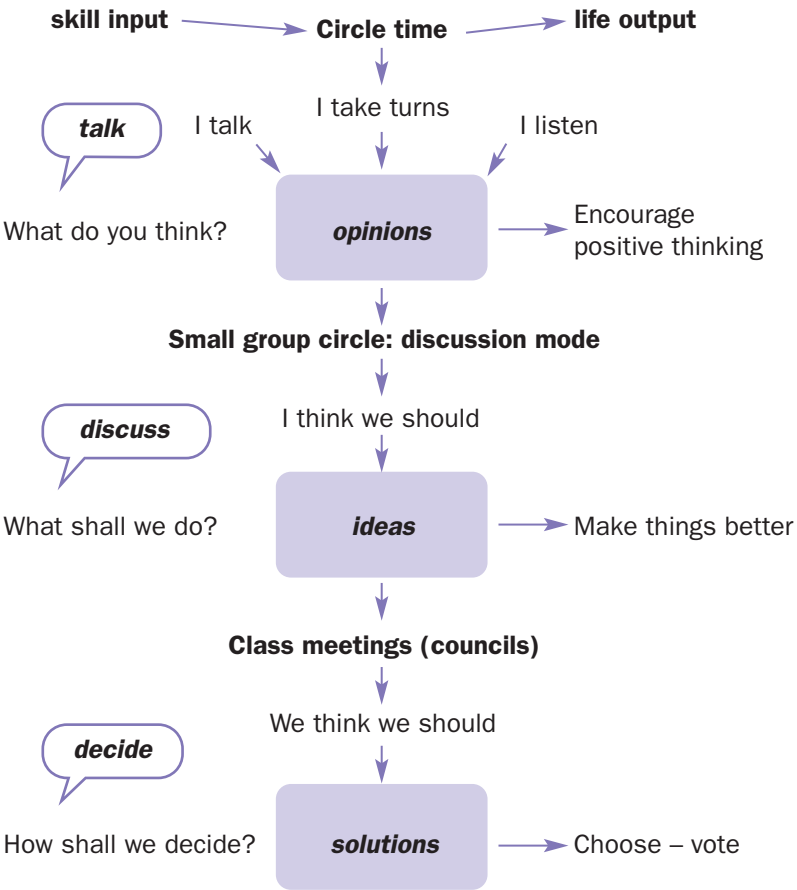
Circle time is the ideal structure for emotional and behavioural development. It provides a safe environment in which children's self-esteem is enhanced, their confidence grows enough for them to talk about their feelings and ideas, and their listening and thinking skills develop.

Small groups: discussion mode

Where teachers develop small group discussions as part of their regular classroom activities, discussion skills can be practised every day. Using circle time rules and conventions, children share their ideas about a topic or issue in smaller groups – round their tables in groups of six.

Pupils learn that this is 'discussion mode', during which they will use all their skills of listening and thinking before offering their own opinions. Discussion mode then becomes a familiar and recognisable structure for whenever the class is engaged in a whole class discussion. Teachers can reinforce these listening and thinking skills by referring to them in every lesson.

From talk to discussion



hand out

Class meetings: class councils

Discussion skills learnt in the small group transfer into the whole class situation. It doesn't matter whether these discussions are called 'class meetings' or 'class councils' as long as everyone in school is using the same term. What is important is that:

- they are regular and frequent, preferably every week
- pupils recognise them as a time when they can talk about issues that affect people in their own class, and sometimes people in the rest of the school.

Pupils can be taught how meeting skills differ from discussion skills:

Discussions	Meetings
Everyone can contribute their thoughts and ideas about an issue providing they are showing respect to everyone else engaged in the discussion.	Everyone has an opportunity to contribute their ideas, but usually has to wait for the chairperson to ask them to speak.
Can be open-ended without having to decide on any definite course of action.	Usually called to talk about issues where a decision needs to be made.
There is not necessarily a formal leader.	Needs a leader (or chairperson).

Organising class meetings

Class meetings provide the structure for learning about meetings: how to participate in them and how to lead them.

- **Leading the meeting**
  One pupil leads the discussion, another takes notes. Different children can take these chairperson and secretary roles each time.
- **Agenda**
  Pupils should suggest the topics for the agenda. For instance, the children can write or draw pictures of their ideas for the agenda on post-it notes and stick them on the class council noticeboard.
- **Voting**
  When pupils vote on an issue, it is important to count votes against as well as for, even if there is a clear majority. Give those who were in the minority a chance to explain why they did not agree; children who have not agreed with most of the class are sometimes able to influence others so that the majority changes its mind. In this way it may be possible to achieve a consensus.

Political literacy

The development of political literacy skills begins with an understanding of democratic decision-making; this understanding is best achieved through experience.

These class-based structures ensure that all pupils gain insight into the way issues are discussed and decisions are made. Every pupil has opportunities to practise their skills.

Once class councils are established, the next step is to form a school council where pupils representing their peers meet to discuss issues that affect not only individual classes but the school as a whole. We see how this works in module 3.

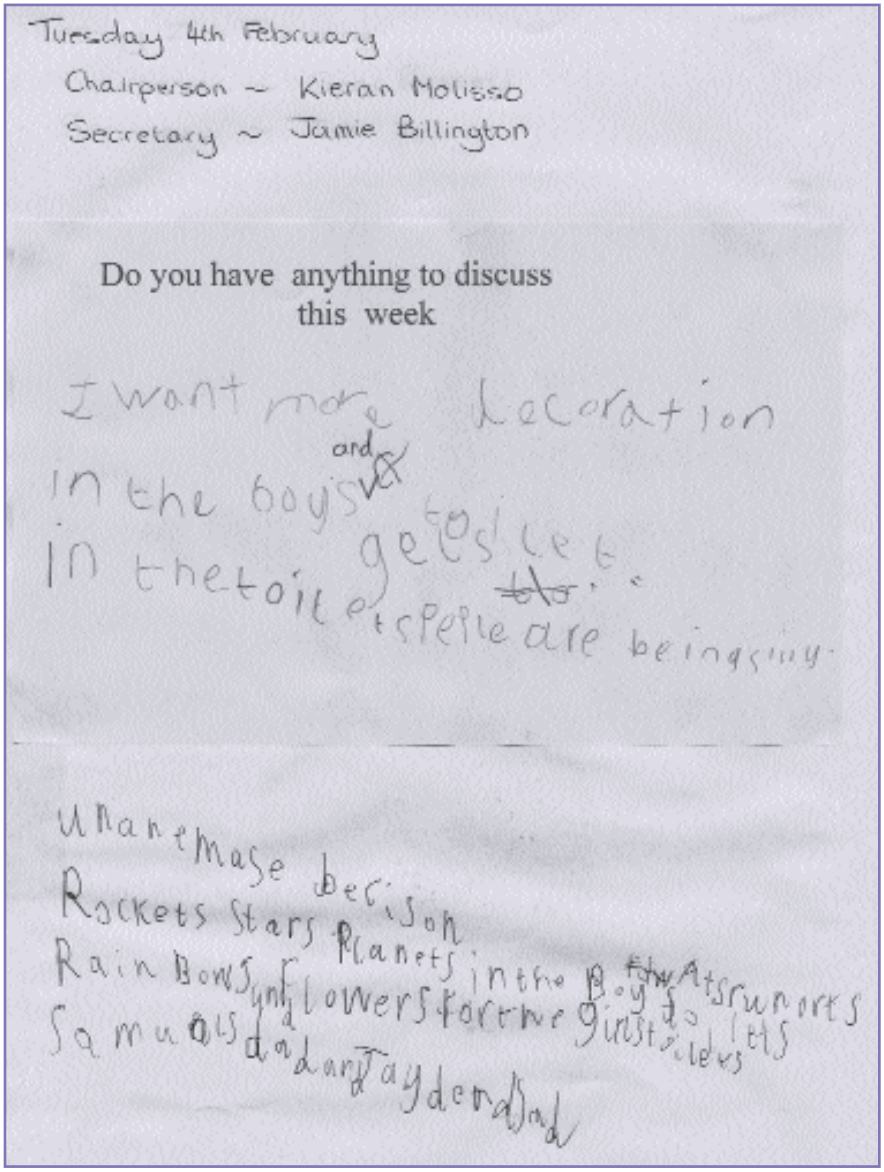
eg

At Glebe, class councils are able to take action on their own, as well as contributing to the school council.

One class at Glebe moved into a new room and took immediate ownership of their surroundings. The class council did not like the magnolia walls in the toilets. This is a taste of the process they went through over the next five months:

- ***Meeting 1*** **In February everyone agrees that the toilets should be painted.**
- ***Meeting 2*** **Discussion about designs for the toilets.**
- ***Letter 1*** **to the headteacher asking if it is all right to paint the toilets.**
- ***Letter 2*** **to the site manager asking if he would paint the toilets.**
- **Reply from the headteacher saying that the toilets can be painted but there is no money for paint.**
- ***Meeting 3*** **The class teacher draws a scale plan and the children discuss their ideas for the final design.**
- ***Meeting 4*** **The children are not happy about having to wait for paint and decide to ask their parents if they have any spare paint at home.**
- **Paint starts arriving in school!**
- ***Meeting 5*** **Samuel says that his dad will come and paint the toilets.**
- ***Letter 3*** **to Samuel's dad.**
- ***Meeting 6*** **Samuel's dad comes to the class council to clarify their thoughts on the designs.**
- **Samuel's dad paints the background during one school holiday.**
- **Samuel's dad paints the detail of the designs while the class are out on a school trip in June.**
- ***Letter 4*** **to thank Samuel's dad.**
- **The boys make a rocket to hang from the ceiling of their toilet.**
- **The girls paint the flowers on the wall in their toilet.**

The children learnt that decisions can't always be made quickly and that there are processes that they have to go through in order to reach a final decision and for the work to be carried out.



Tuesday 4th February

Chairperson ~ Kieran Molisso

Secretary ~ Jamie Billington

Do you have anything to discuss this week

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Unanemase decison

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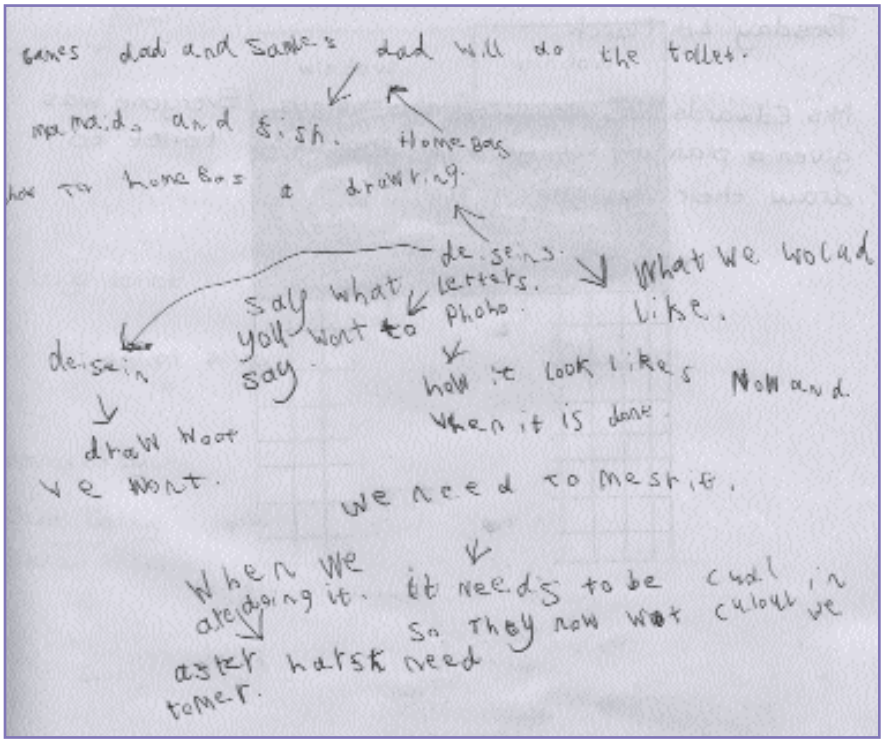
Rain Bows and flowers for the girls toilets

Samuels dad and Jayden dad



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INSET session 2

Getting ready

1 hour

Aims

- Show how small group discussions can develop out of circle time.
- Identify the difference between circle time and class councils.
- Merge group discussions into class meetings.
- Show how whole class decision-making develops through peer leadership.
- Consider the classroom preparation needed to implement a whole-school approach to group discussion and decision-making.

Resources

- Object to pass round circle
- Handouts
  - *Developing pupil skills*
  - *A discussion action plan: from* self *to* group *to* class
  - *Class meetings: class councils*
- Lesson plans
  3 How do I choose
  4 What could we do?
  5 Discussing and finding the best decision

Introducing the small group meeting

5 minutes : As a whole group, sitting in a circle

Think of a problem that seems to occur almost daily *eg* packed lunches get muddled up because the names come off the boxes.

- Go round the circle with each person saying how they *feel* as a result.
- Don't talk about what could be done at this stage – just how people are feeling about the situation.

10 minutes : In groups of four

Using circle time rules, discuss the problem.

- Agree on a solution.

Merging group discussions into class meetings

10 minutes : As a whole group

Listen to each group's suggestion.

- Continuing to use circle time rules, one person leads a discussion about the possible solutions.
- Attempt to arrive at a whole group decision about what should be done.

Conclusion to exercise

20 minutes : As a whole group

Reflect on the process that has been demonstrated:

- expressing personal feelings about a problem
- participation in a peer-led group discussion
- a structure that facilitates whole group decision-making.

Looking at the diagrams in the first two handouts, take particular note of:

- the difference between circle time and class councils
- the progression from talk through discussion to decision-making.

Political literacy

15 to 20 minutes

Look at pupil lessons 3, 4 and 5

Discuss and consider:

- the implications for cross-curricular practice and curriculum time
- how 'discussion mode' can apply to all curriculum areas.

Note on a flipchart any specific points that might need action or further consideration.

Extra activities

You may find time for this additional listening exercise:

'Reporters'

- in pairs, people tell their partner some information (what they did at the weekend, most challenging pupil, etc)
- their partner reports back to the rest of the group.

lesson plan 3

How do I choose?

20 to 30 minutes

Objectives

By the end of this session, pupils will have:

- exercised personal choice in the context of discussion
- taken turns in discussions and taken different views into account
- considered the difference between good and bad choices.

Resources

- Set of picture posters of everyday school activities (pages 74–79)
- Two sheets of stickers – one of smiley faces, the other of sad faces (not included in the toolkit)

Making choices

Put six pictures of typical school activities around the room.

- Produce pictures of your own school or use the illustrations of school dinners, playtime, rainy days, PE, assembly, painting and drawing.
- Ask the pupils to describe what they see on the pictures.

Give them two stickers, with a smiley face on one and a sad face on the other.

- Ask pupils to put the smiley next to the one they like most.
- Ask the pupils what they see now – ask them to start with *'I think …' eg 'I think that dinnertime is everyone's favourite time.'*
- Now ask them to do the same with the sad faces.

How can we find out which is the favourite thing? The least favourite? (Count smiley faces – early voting.)

Explain to the children that they have been making choices about what they like.

- All their choices are good.
- No one has made a better choice than anyone else.

But there are some choices about what we do and how we do it which *can* be good or bad choices.

- Sometimes a choice is better because it is what other people want as well as what we want ourselves.
- For example, we can choose to keep all our sweets for ourselves or we can choose to share them with our friends.
- So when we are choosing what to do, it is really important to think about what is good for other people as well as what is good for ourselves.

We can make good choices about how we behave when we are talking together and discussing things.

lesson plan 4

What could we do?

30 minutes

Objectives

By the end of this session, pupils will have:

- taken part in agreeing ground rules for discussion
- come to an agreement with a partner
- recognised that there can be conflicting views
- understood that it may be necessary to compromise in order to reach agreement on a decision.

Resources

- Set of prepared rules cards for each table in the classroom where the children sit in their usual class groups (pages 80–81)
- A set of 4 solution posters – either a set of posters illustrating a school issue or the computer mouse posters (pages 82–85)

Ground rules for discussion

15 minutes

Place a set of rules cards on each table, with the picture side up.

- Tell the children that the cards are about choosing rules for people when they are having discussions.
- Ask each group to sort the cards into two piles – one where they think the pictures show people being nice to each other and the other where they are not.
- Ask the groups in turn to choose a card from one of the piles.
- As they choose, ask one of the children from the group to describe what they think is happening in the picture.
- Depending on the reading age of the pupils, either the children look at the back and read out what the 'rule' says or the teacher reads it to the class
- Ask the class to put their hands up if they want to keep this as a 'discussion rule'.
- If they want to keep it, write it on the flipchart.
- Repeat until all the rules have been considered.

After the session, make a display of the agreed rules using two sets of the cards to show both the picture and the written side.

- Refer to the display every time the children are asked to be in 'discussion mode'.
- Keep the rejected rules to produce when a reminder is called for.

Making decisions together

15 minutes

Pose a typical class problem – one you have chosen that is relevant to your class, or the broken computer mouse.

- Display the four solutions to the problem as posters on different walls in the room.

In pairs

Pupils decide with their partner which poster to go to.

- Everyone listens to each pair's reasons for their choice.
- Are there any pairs who would like to change their minds after hearing what the others say?

Ask the children what they think the class has decided.

- Has it been possible to reach a decision that everyone agrees with?
- If not, what should happen next?
- Introduce the word 'compromise', if appropriate.

Point out that we have learned that:

- we need discussion rules so that everyone can contribute
- when we have to make a decision as a class, we need to consider everyone's opinions.

lesson plan 5

Discussing and finding the best decision

20 minutes

Objectives

By the end of this session, pupils will have:

- been reminded what they have learnt about discussions so far
- considered their own ideas and those of others
- developed skills of discussion, negotiation and co-operation in a group
- understood 'discussion mode'.

Resources

- Enough playground picture boards for each group of 6 or 8 children (page 86)
- Enough sets of playground picture cards for each group of 6 or 8 children (page 87)

What we have learnt about discussions

5 minutes

Ask the children what they can remember about discussions. Remind them about:

- thinking time
- listening well
- their discussion ground rules
- good and bad choices
- compromise.

Discussion mode

15 minutes : In groups of six round a table

Point out that as a teacher you often lead discussions in class. When you do this you:

- tell everyone what is going to be talked about
- ask people to speak and give their opinion
- remind everyone about the rules.

Write these points on the board and then give the pupils a chance to lead discussions in small groups.

- Give each group:
  - the picture of a school playground with four spaces in it
  - a set of pictures of things to install in the playground.
- Each group decides together which four things are most suitable, thinking about:
  - Can only one person play on anything?
  - Would that be a good idea for a school playground?
  - Are any more dangerous than others?

Emphasise that everyone must follow the rules when they take part in the discussion.

- Choose one pupil at each table to lead the discussion and refer them to the points on the board.
- Choose another pupil to tell the rest of the class what their group has decided.

If the groups make different choices, ask each group to say why they chose the things they did.

- Check if any pupils are ready to change their minds.
- Vote on the final decision as a whole class.

Tell them they have learned:

- the importance of considering other people when deciding what they would like for themselves
- a way of discussing something as a whole class
- a way of making a decision together.

module 3

Pupil council structures in school systems

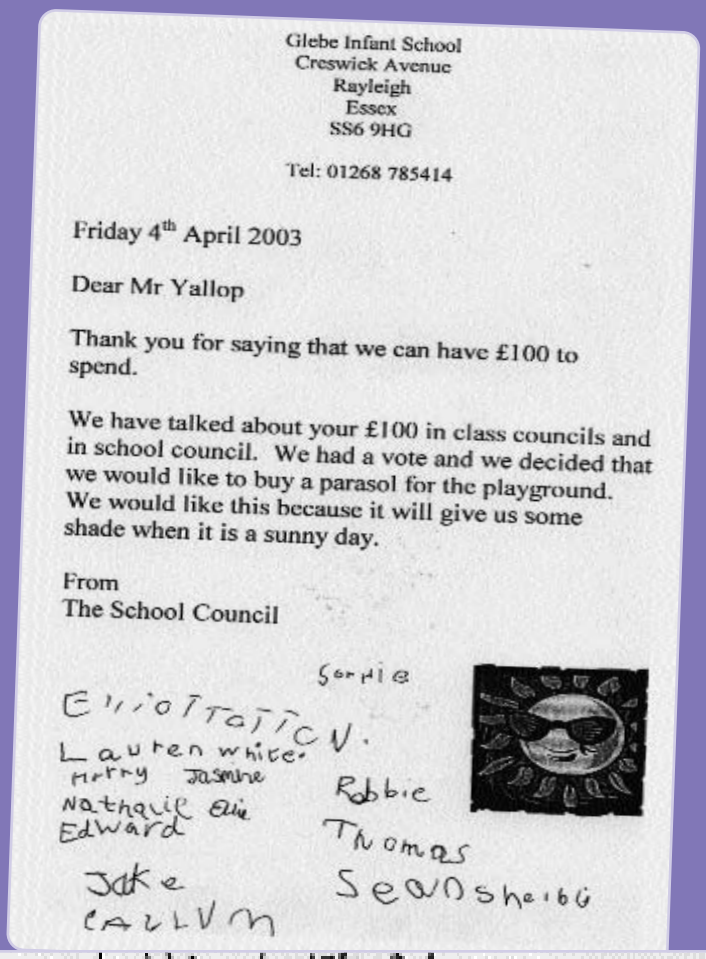
Handouts
- **Pathways to participation**
- **School council constitution**
- **School council election procedure**
- **School council effectiveness**

INSET session
3 Participation through pupil councils

Lesson plan
6 Having a meeting

instalment 3

Everyone has had their say



Glebe Infant School
Creswick Avenue
Rayleigh
Essex
SS6 9HG

Tel: 01268 785414

Friday 4th April 2003

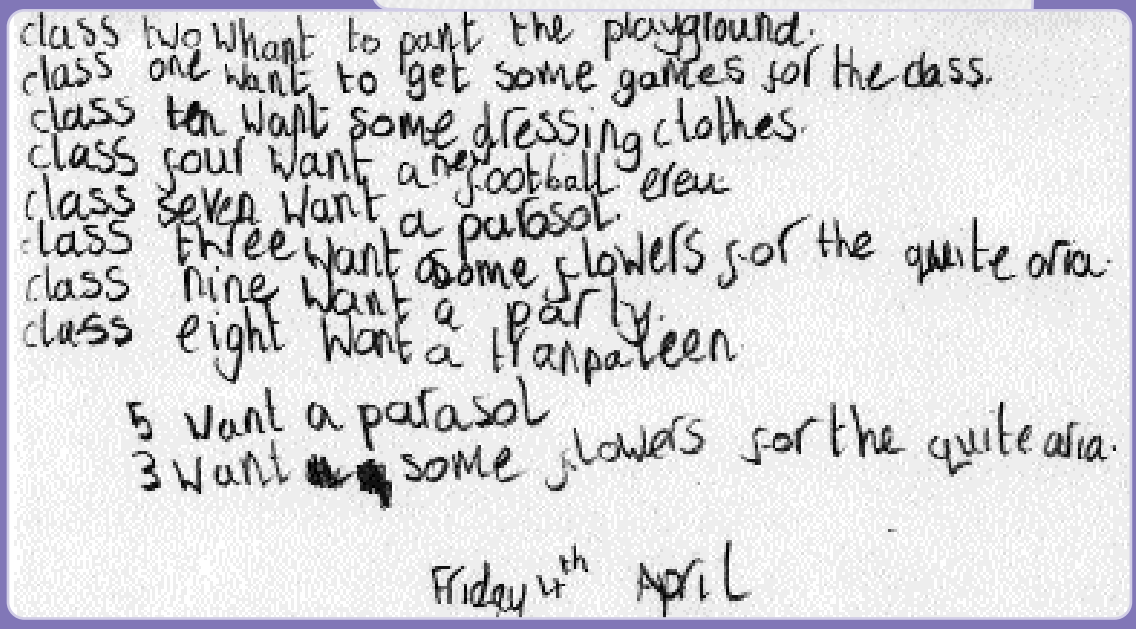
Dear Mr Yallop

Thank you for saying that we can have £100 to spend.

We have talked about your £100 in class councils and in school council. We had a vote and we decided that we would like to buy a parasol for the playground. We would like this because it will give us some shade when it is a sunny day.

From
The School Council

Sophie
Elliott Taylor.
Lauren White.
Harry Jasmine
Nathalie Evie
Edward
Robbie
Thomas
Jake
Calum
Seanshelby



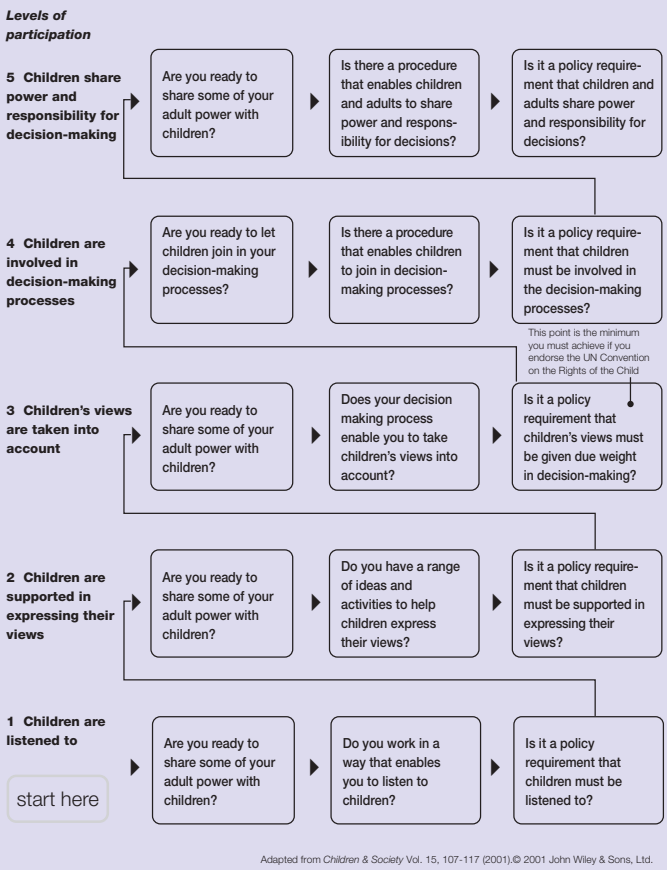
class two Whant to pant the playground.
class one want to get some games for the class.
class ten Want some dressing clothes.
class four Want a new football ereu
class seven Want a parasol.
class three Want some flowers for the quite aria.
class nine Want a party.
class eight Want a trampoleen

5 Want a parasol
3 Want some flowers for the quite aria.

Friday 4th April

Pathways to participation

Pathways to participation



Adapted from *Children & Society* Vol. 15, 107-117 (2001).© 2001 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

All members of staff need to discuss the issues that arise from encouraging pupil to be actively involved in the decisions that are taken in school.

DfES statutory guidance on *Working together: Giving children and young people a say* (April 2004) provides a basis for schools to decide how best to involve children in all aspects of the life of the school, with examples of good practice for them to use and adapt.

Pupils are encouraged to express their views in a variety of ways in the vast majority of schools. However, schools are at different stages on the path of achieving effective pupil participation and many schools do not have systems to ensure that pupils' views are taken into account before making policy decisions.

Pupil councils enable the collective pupil voice to be heard.

A larger version of this chart is given on page 93.

After training KS1 children using School Councils UK materials, Ann Battye (PSHE consultant for Guernsey) gave this feedback:

I worked with a small group of Year 1 and Year 2 reps covering such topics as listening skills, making decisions, roles within the council, agendas, minutes, running a meeting etc. Then they held a meeting, with reception pupils joining.

The headteacher was amazed!

The year 2 secretary confidently took the minutes and recorded votes, the chairperson thanked everyone for attending. They voted to produce notices to ask older pupils to be considerate to reception pupils in the corridors and organised how and when these notices were to be produced.

Afterwards they said 'We don't really think we'll need any help from you or the headteacher next time!'

hand out

School council constitution

Once the INSET and lesson plans have been completed, a small working party of teachers and two Year 2 pupils should draft a simple constitution for the school council. (You may find it useful to make copies of the prompt sheet on page 93 for every member of the working party.)

Including pupils right from the start signals to everyone the school's commitment to involving pupils in decision-making. The draft constitution should be written in a way that is accessible and comprehensible to pupils as well as adults. It should be circulated to all classes, members of staff and governors for comment before a final document is agreed.

This document will then be used for training pupils in preparation for school council meetings. The school council's aims should be reviewed and agreed each year by all council members and signed by the chairperson.

The constitution should set out the procedures and rules for running the school council under headings for:

- Aims
- Membership
- Elections
- Meetings
- Leadership of the council
- Responsibilities of school council members

Aims

The constitution should start by listing some aims for the school council.

This could include:

- To help make school life better for everyone.
- To care for everyone in our school community.
- To give pupils a voice and a way of helping to make decisions in school.

Membership

The constitution should say who will be elected as members of the school council. This is usually two representatives – a girl and a boy – from each class in the school.

It could also say:

- who will be non-elected members, such as the link teacher (see page 58)
- how reception class children will be involved.

Reception children

Although reception class pupils do not take part in discussions and meetings, they can be consulted and express their views on issues that affect them. For instance, school councils often discuss questions about playground equipment; children in the reception class can be asked what they would like to have in the playground.

One or more school council members could volunteer (or be elected) to be the reception class 'link officer'. When appropriate, they could:

- talk to children in reception about what they like or don't like – in the playground, in the dining hall, in the toilets and so on
- ask reception class teachers to include a particular topic in circle time to find out what the children think.

The reception class children could draw, take photos, make a tape-recording or make a video to show what they like or don't like.

The link officer would be responsible for reporting their views to the school council in the same way as they report the views of their own class.

School council elections

See *School council election procedure* handout (page 47).

The constitution might include:

- how often elections will be held and when they will take place
- how they will be organised (for instance, each class will hold an election for its own representatives)
- how nominations will be made (for instance, whether pupils can volunteer themselves as candidates and/or whether someone else has to nominate them)
- who can vote
- how voting will be organised (for instance, by a secret ballot)
- how the votes will be counted and who will count them.

Meetings

The constitution should say how often the council will meet.

It could also include:

- when meetings will be held
- where the school council will meet
- which adults will attend meetings, such as the link teacher and a learning support assistant for a pupil with special educational needs or a disability.

The first council meeting takes place as soon as possible after the elected representatives have been trained.

Fitting councils into the busy school day

The Primary Strategy 2003 has given schools more flexibility than they previously had in planning their curriculum. This enables all schools to be innovative and to vary the amount of time spent on different areas of the curriculum to suit their particular circumstances.

Circle time and the class council should be on every class timetable (see page 31). It is important for children to know that these are special times, which will take place on the same day every week. If the class council has to move to a different slot in any week, it is important to explain why this has had to happen so that the children experience a shared ownership of this part of the weekly timetable.

Classroom organisation

It is assumed that there is enough space in each classroom for a carpet area where the whole class can sit on the floor in a circle, at the same time as having tables arranged for groups of six to eight pupils. When the pupils are working in their groups, there may be as many as four groups in each classroom. It could be advisable to have adult support available to work with the groups if necessary.

The white board and/or a flipchart will be needed for each lesson as well as pens, markers, crayons and writing pencils for pupils.

eg

Circle time

Glebe allocates a separate period for circle time each week – usually half an hour. The learning objectives are drawn from both the Speaking and Listening programme of study and the PSHE non-statutory guidance.

Class council

Glebe allocates a separate time slot for each class council every week. The time allowed varies according to the age of the children but is usually no longer than 20 minutes (a timer is used).

School council

Kingmoor school council meetings take place in the library at 10.20 for 20 minutes during assembly time. Orange juice and biscuits are provided and quiet music is played.

School council meetings

Although it is a generally accepted that the chairperson leads the meetings and the secretary takes notes (or minutes), the precise format of a meeting will vary from school to school. A typical meeting at Glebe is described at the beginning of the toolkit on page 8.

It is important for pupils to contribute items regularly to the school council agenda. Initially these might arise from their first few class council meetings; each class representative could bring one issue from their own class to the school council meeting. Once the school council has discussed these issues, further consultation with each class council will almost always be needed, resulting in an ongoing and developing agenda of current issues.

Members of staff may consult the school council about concerns on which they would value the pupils' perspective. At Kingmoor there is a rolling programme of issues that members of staff want the council to address; two of these tend to get covered each term.

eg

At Kingmoor, Year 2s and Year 1s work in pairs to discuss issues and produce posters during school council meetings. These are sent to the classes to inform them about issues that have been discussed and to ask for opinions. One of the pupils, usually a Year 2, scribes on the white board as a method of note-making during meetings. It is then photographed and photocopied to send back to classes. (This method of note-making is also used in class councils.)

Leadership of the council

The constitution should state how members of the school council will choose their chairperson and secretary and how long they will remain in office. They could be elected or volunteer or change on a rota basis.

When considering how long the school council leadership should remain in office, it is worth bearing in mind that pupils will develop leadership skills over a period of time. A leadership team that has a chance to learn through mistakes and become really good could be beneficial to all members of the council in the long run; everyone will begin to understand more about good leadership.

The chairperson

As well as leading meetings (which pupils learn about in lesson 6), the role of the chairperson of the school council might include extra duties, such as:

- preparing the agenda for the next meeting with the help of the link teacher
- meeting the headteacher to talk about a school council issue
- attending part of a staff or governors' meeting (maybe to give a report on a school council achievement or to request help for a project)
- explaining to other adults in school (*eg* dinner time supervisors) any decisions that the council has made that might affect how things are done.

The link teacher should organise a short discussion with the new council members to make sure that they understand:

- the responsibilities of the chairperson
- the need for the chairperson to have the confidence to carry out their duties.

The secretary

As well as making notes during the meeting (lesson 6), the school council secretary might need to:

- help prepare agendas with the chairperson and link teacher
- make sure that enough copies of the minutes are sent to each class
- keep all the minutes safe in a book or file for future reference
- attend adult meetings with the chairperson and make notes if necessary.

Responsibilities of school council members

The key responsibilities of school council members are to:

- take part in school council discussions
- represent their class at all school council meetings
- consider the views of the pupils they represent when they make decisions
- report back to their class after school council meetings
- elect a chairperson and secretary.

Glebe, Kingmoor and Tavistock all have a 'friendship post' in the playground where children wait if they feel lonely or upset. Members of the school council keep an eye on the post and respond to anyone who needs help. At Kingmoor, ten 'playmates' are available for those who need someone to play with; Year 2 pupils take turns at being 'playmates' for a week. At Tavistock, the 'playground friends' are Year 2 volunteers who make a commitment for one term, wear yellow caps and who recognise a special set of rules, *eg* not to boss others.

hand out

School council election procedure

> The lessons ensured that by the time the pupils came to choose representatives, they knew about the issues and processes involved.
>
> Jan Massey, Headteacher, Newlaithes Infant School, Carlisle

To make sure that all pupils (and members of staff) understand the process, all classes should complete lessons 1 to 8 before the school council election. If you hold the election as soon as possible after that, you can be confident that election day will be a success.

Taking part in a democratic election will be a new experience for pupils in infant schools. A simple – yet authentic – procedure is best. We suggest that it should be based on the current British electoral system.

Class teachers should explain to their pupils what is meant by democratic elections, telling them we are going to elect our school council in the same way that Members of Parliament and local councillors are elected in Britain.

> The local MP visited Glebe in 2003 as part of a PSHE week. He talked to the children about what his job entailed and how lots of people discuss things and then have to reach an agreement. One child put his hand up and said 'Oh, your job is just like our school council'.

Election day can be announced in assembly at the beginning of the election campaign a couple of weeks before the elections. The election procedure can be talked about in other assemblies. Parents and governors should be told about the school council elections.

Nominations

Candidates for election must be nominated. The group who worked on the constitution will have decided whether pupils can nominate themselves, or whether one or two other pupils in their class must nominate them.

Before making a nomination, children need to think about the qualities that school councillors should have.

Teachers can talk with children about the meaning of words such as fair, reliable, impartial, listening, represent, etc. A circle time could be used, with a sentence to finish such as *'I would like the class representative to be …'*

Once they have thought about these issues, children can consider whether they would like to stand for election (see lesson 6, page 55).

Campaigning

The lead-up to election day should be fun.

Have photographs of the candidates on display. Candidates tell the rest of their class why they would like to be elected and what they will do to make sure that they represent everyone in their class. The children could simply stand in front of their

class and talk, they could make a video or they could write a ‘manifesto’ saying what they promise to do if they are elected.

You should make it clear to the pupils that they are choosing together the people who might be good at being school councillors. The election is part of the process of doing this in the fairest way possible way. It should not be presented as a competition with winners and losers.

Voting

Class teachers discuss with children how they decide who would be the best candidate to vote for. Remind them about the qualities they thought would make a good and reliable class representative (see Lesson 7, page 66). Discourage them from automatically voting for their best friend.

Explain to the class about ballot papers and the concept of the secret ballot. Each class has a ballot box. After making sure that all the pupils are clear about what they are to do, and how to keep their ballot paper secret before posting it in the ballot box, the voting process can begin.

If ballot papers are used, the school may want every class to use a standard design for listing the candidates’ names (see page 96). Ballot papers may include photographs of the candidates.

Most schools follow the standard procedure of voting in secret by putting a cross beside the name of the candidates they want to elect. But marking with a cross usually means that something is bad, not good! Some young pupils could be confused by having to write a cross to say ‘yes’ to a candidate.

One alternative system would be to display the candidates’ names (*eg* a list on the board) and the children can write the names of the candidate they are voting for onto a blank ballot paper.

Counting the votes

Before the election, it is important for the working party to discuss how they will count the votes. They need to think about:

- the effect on pupils without any votes if votes are counted in front of the class
- children not being able to see that the process is fair if votes are counted by the teachers on their own.

The results can be announced in assembly or in each class. Only the names of the newly elected members of the school council need to be read out; there should not be any reference to winning or being defeated.

School council effectiveness

If it is to thrive, a whole-school focus for the council must be kept high in the profile of the school. The school council needs wholehearted support from all the staff to keep school council issues alive in every class. A supportive and enthusiastic link teacher has a vital role in this; this role is discussed in detail in module 4.

Some simple practical arrangements can pay dividends, including:

- a school council noticeboard in a central position
- regular announcements in assembly
- a class council noticeboard in each class.

Support for school council members

Elected representatives need support from their class teachers to help them report back in the way that is most appropriate to their age and abilities. Each representative might have made their own notes in words and pictures and/or they will have a copy of the school council minutes made by the secretary. The teacher can help them to read these to the class before putting them on the noticeboard.

Members consult their own class about school council issues. These should not, of course, take over the whole class meeting.

This process will soon become an ongoing regular cycle of events so that all pupils are involved in the process: consultation – discussion – representation – decision-making – reporting back – consultation – discussion again. Surveys and questionnaires are often used.

Encourage the council to attempt small, easily achievable projects as well as ambitious ones. When pupils are consulted – for example, about playground issues – they often come up with workable solutions to everyday problems in surprising ways that teachers may not have thought of.

It is important for pupils to understand why there may be limitations on what the council can achieve. They should be given adequate and supportive feedback on issues that have gone to staff or governors for their backing.

eg

Kingmoor school council discussed whether children from the junior school should be allowed to play in the infant school playground. The overall feeling was that they should not be allowed to because the infants are not allowed on the junior playground. Then one councillor said that although she didn't want junior children to play on the infant playground, she didn't have any brothers or sisters in the junior school. This made council members think about how many infants had siblings in the junior school and they voted that junior children should be allowed after all.

Helping to appoint staff

Increasingly, schools are taking the opinions of the pupils into account in the appointment of new members of staff. The school council could have an important role within this process.

If pupils are to be consulted in this way, it is important for them to understand and feel involved in the process. They need to trust that their opinions will be heard and given due weight in discussions leading to the appointment. They must also understand that the final outcome may not be the one they hoped for.

To help children move away from the tendency to judge adults at face value, they need to see the process in terms of what is good for the school. They have to consider what each individual could bring to enhance life in school, rather than whether they like them or not.

eg

At Newlaithes, representatives of the year 2 class councils were involved in the appointment of a new deputy head. At a class council meeting the children came up with the following suggestions for the sort of person they wanted:

- **Able to get on with people – a happy person**
- **A nice teacher – kind and helpful to children**
- **Sensible – sets a good example**
- **Has good ideas**
- **Can have a laugh now and again!**

We then discussed the type of questions we could ask to find out if the candidate had these qualities. Much discussion took place about avoiding the type of question that could be answered with a *yes* or *no*. The children became quite skilful at rephrasing their questions to be more open-ended.

The class representatives selected questions for the candidates:

- **What makes you happy when you are teaching?**
- **How would you help the other teachers?**
- **How do you know you have got the confidence to be a deputy headteacher?**
- **If children are misbehaving how do you stay calm?**

The representatives spent about 10 minutes with each candidate after their main interview, then reported to the interview panel at the end of the day.

At Damson Wood, the school council was asked to draw up a person specification for a new teaching post and was involved in the interview process. Class councils agreed on a question for their school council representative to ask the candidates. The pupils were encouraged to think about:

- **how a teacher might be able to help to make the school a better place**
- **the qualities that a teacher might have that would improve the school**
- **what they would like to see in a classroom**
- **how they could make the playground a safe place to be.**

The children then identified what they considered to be good answers; they used these to evaluate the answers that the candidates actually gave.

Afterwards the headteacher asked the children how they felt it went. The chairperson of the school council said he wasn't happy with one of the answers. The candidate said he was quite a good singer and if he was going to teach singing he should be a very good singer!

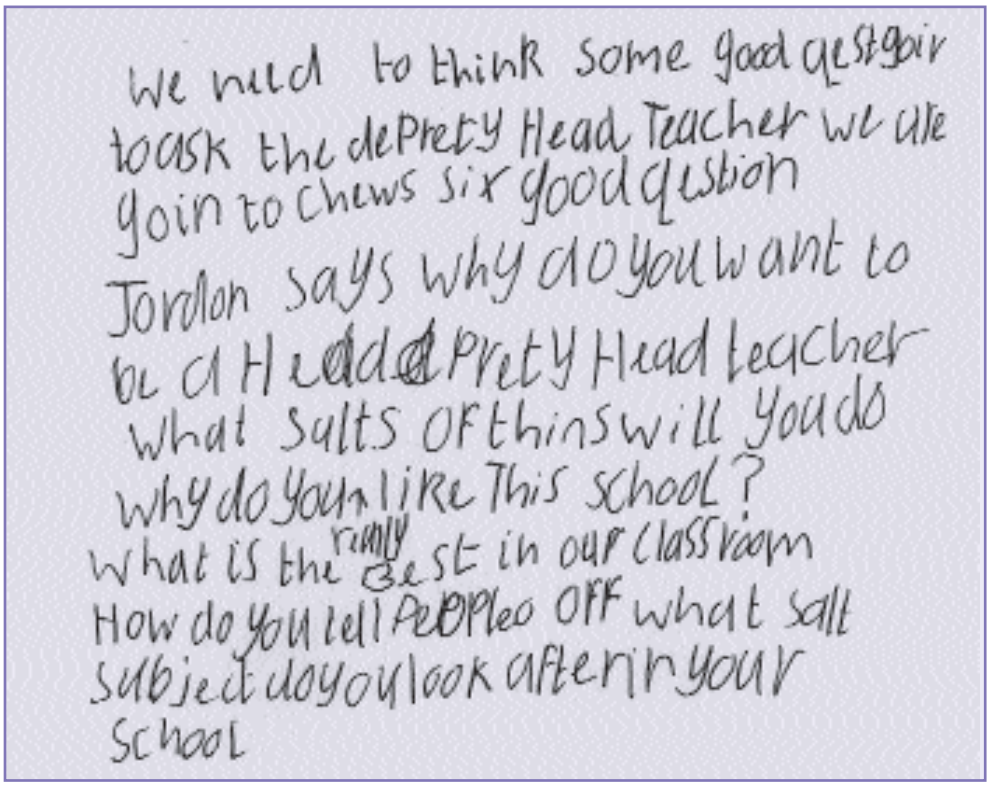
The senior management at Glebe decided to involve the school council in the appointment process for a new deputy headteacher because it seemed to them to be the next natural step for their school council. Throughout the process, the correct terminology was used with the children where possible. They very quickly understood what was required of them and all of them kept the process confidential.

eg

Glebe developed the appointment process over the course of five meetings:

1. **The councillors were told that the deputy headteacher was leaving and they would help to choose a new one. The appointment process was explained and it was made clear that their opinions were valued but that someone might not be appointed even though the school council thought they were nice.**
2. **School councillors thought about questions to ask someone who wanted to come and work at Glebe. There was a discussion about confidentiality and what they could and could not tell other people about the appointment process.**
3. **The questions were reviewed and they worked out what would be the perfect answers.**
4. **It was agreed which child would ask each question, with the whole age range represented. The link teacher printed the questions with their answers for the school council secretary and a sheet for the chair showing what she has to say (see page 52). Each child asking a question also had its question printed on a piece of card.**
5. **The school council rehearsed the interview (with the current deputy head as candidate). It lasted for 10 minutes.**

The school council interviewed each of the four candidates, with the headteacher in the room. The interviews were scheduled at half-hour intervals to give the children a break between each candidate.



School Council – Deputy headteacher interviews

Headteacher ***Hello children. This is Mrs …***

Lauren *Welcome to our school council meeting. My name is Lauren and I am the chairperson. This is Rachel and she is the secretary. We have taken a lot of time on these questions. John has the first question.*

John ***Why do you want to be a Deputy Headteacher?***

Lauren *Charlie has the next question.*

Charlie ***What sorts of things will you do as a Deputy Headteacher?***

Lauren *Maddie has the next question.*

Maddie ***Why do you really like this school?***

Lauren *Jordan has the next question.*

Jordan ***What is the best thing in your classroom?***

Lauren *Callum has the next question.*

Callum ***How do you tell people off?***

Lauren *Joseph has the next question.*

Joseph ***Could you tell us about your rules in the classroom?***

Lauren *Lauren has the next question.*

Lauren Cutler ***What sorts of subjects do you look after in your school?***

Lauren *That's all of our questions. Do you want to ask us a question? Thank you for coming.*

INSET session 3

Participation through pupil councils

1 hour

Aims

- Identify the extent of pupil participation as part of the ethos of your school.
- Ensure the council is effective by being embedded in the school's ethos and decision-making process.

Resources

- Handouts
  - *Pathways to participation*
  - *School council constitution*
  - *School council election procedure*
  - *School council effectiveness*
- Lesson plan
  6 Having a meeting

Pathways to participation

10 minutes : In groups of four

Use *Pathways to participation* handout.

- Each group should come up with a real example in school relating to one of the questions in the boxes.

5 minutes : As a whole group

Compare everyone's examples.

- Is there agreement on the participation level in the school?
- The implications may need to be included in discussions on the school development plan.

Pupils leading meetings

10 minutes : In groups of four

Discuss Lesson Plan 6

- Bear in mind that this represents what each class will be aiming for after the preliminary training through the previous lessons.
- Consider how it might need adapting according to the age of the pupils – younger children will need lots of practice over a number of weeks.

The school council constitution

5 minutes : As a whole group

Refer briefly to the *School council constitution* handout.

- Consider who might be in your working party to draw up a constitution.

Democratic elections

10 minutes : In groups of four

Discuss the election procedure handout as a possibility for your school.

5 minutes : As a whole group

Listen to any points arising from the discussions and make a note of them on the flipchart for the working party to refer to later.

An effective school council

10 minutes : In groups of four

Go through the *School council effectiveness* handout.

- If any of the issues could cause problems in your school, discuss them and suggest solutions.

5 minutes : As a whole group

- Listen to each group's solutions to potential problems.
- Make notes on the flipchart of any issues that need to be followed up.

Board game

extra

10 minutes **:** *In groups of four*

- Give each group a *Pathways to participation* sheet, printed on card if possible (see page 93).
- Place a piece (say, a coin) at 'start here'.
- The group must come up with a real example from their schools relating to the participation level on the sheet.
- After 10 minutes, see which group got farthest.

lesson plan 6

Having a meeting

50 minutes

Objectives

By the end of this session, pupils will understand:

- the meaning of 'meeting mode'
- that meetings have rules, roles and responsibilities
- how to participate in a peer-led meeting
- the roles of the chairperson and secretary
- the importance of being able to report on a meeting.

Resources

- The chairperson's role written on the board in preparation
- Prompt sheet: *How to lead a meeting* (page 88)
- Discussion rules from lesson 4 displayed
- A couple of suitable topics for discussion that are appropriate for your class
- Notepad or blank minutes form (page 90)

Meeting mode

10 minutes : Sitting on the carpet and facing the teacher.

Tell the children that this lesson is about meetings.

- Meetings are an important and formal way of having discussions where decisions need to be made.
- Meetings are led by one person who is called the chairperson.
- Remind them about the discussion leader's role in lesson 5.

Explain that everyone in the class has responsibilities too.

- Show them their discussion rules.

Talk to the pupils about:

- the need to listen and think about what is being discussed
- the importance of body language – how they can show that they are at a meeting by the way that they are sitting
- not calling out until the chairperson has asked them to speak
- how they are going to indicate to the chairperson that they have something they want to say.

Now that we are in 'meeting mode' we are ready to have a meeting!

The chairperson

10 minutes

Model the role of the chairperson for the class by going through the points on the board whilst leading a discussion on a topical issue that affects everyone in the class (tell them this is just a demonstration and a solution might not be found nor a decision made at this point).

- After a few minutes when all the points have been demonstrated in the discussion, ask if anyone would like to have a go.
- Ask the chairperson to sit at the front of the class in the 'important' chair.
- After five minutes, stop the meeting and praise the pupil's attempt at leading a meeting.

The secretary

10 minutes

Explain that everyone needs to remember what has been agreed at the meeting.

- Someone needs to write down what happens so that anyone can read about it later – these are called 'minutes'.
- Explain that the secretary usually does this important job.

- Pupils write if they are able to, or younger pupils can draw pictures to remember the main points in a meeting.

Ask if anyone would like to have a go at being the secretary while another pupil has a go at being chairperson.

- Give the secretary a notebook or minutes form and ask them to sit beside the chairperson on another 'important' chair.

The new chairperson should begin the meeting again going through the prompt sheet, but the discussion can be picked up from where it was left.

- Stop after a further five minutes and feed back to the children any points about how they conducted the discussion.

Reporting back

10 minutes : In groups of six seated around tables

Choose a chairperson and secretary for each group.

- The pupils can continue with the same topic or you can give them another one.
- Explain to the pupils that this time the secretaries will need to report back to the whole class, using the notes that they have made.
- After five to 10 minutes stop the discussions and ask the secretaries to report back to the class

Explain that this training is about getting ready for the school council so that everyone understands how meetings are run and organised.

- Everyone in school gets to know about what has gone on in the school council meetings.
- The link teacher will help the secretary of the school council to make sure that their notes are copied and sent to each class as well as keeping them in a special minutes book.

Decisions mean action

10 minutes

If today's discussions show that some action is needed, you can take a vote to arrive at a class decision.

- Point out that once you have decided to do something, you must decide who will make sure that it actually happens.
- One person (or a group of people) always has to take some action before anything can happen to put their decision into practice.

eg The class decides that everyone must tuck in their chairs when they leave the room so that people don't fall over them when they line up by the door.
Action needed: Someone must make a drawing for the noticeboard to remind everyone in the class what they decided.

If they are not ready to make a decision, pupils may want to carry on discussing the things they have talked about today in a 'real' class meeting soon.

Tell them they have learned:

- to take part in a meeting
- how meetings are led
- that minutes are a record of what happens in meetings
- how the school council will report back to their class.

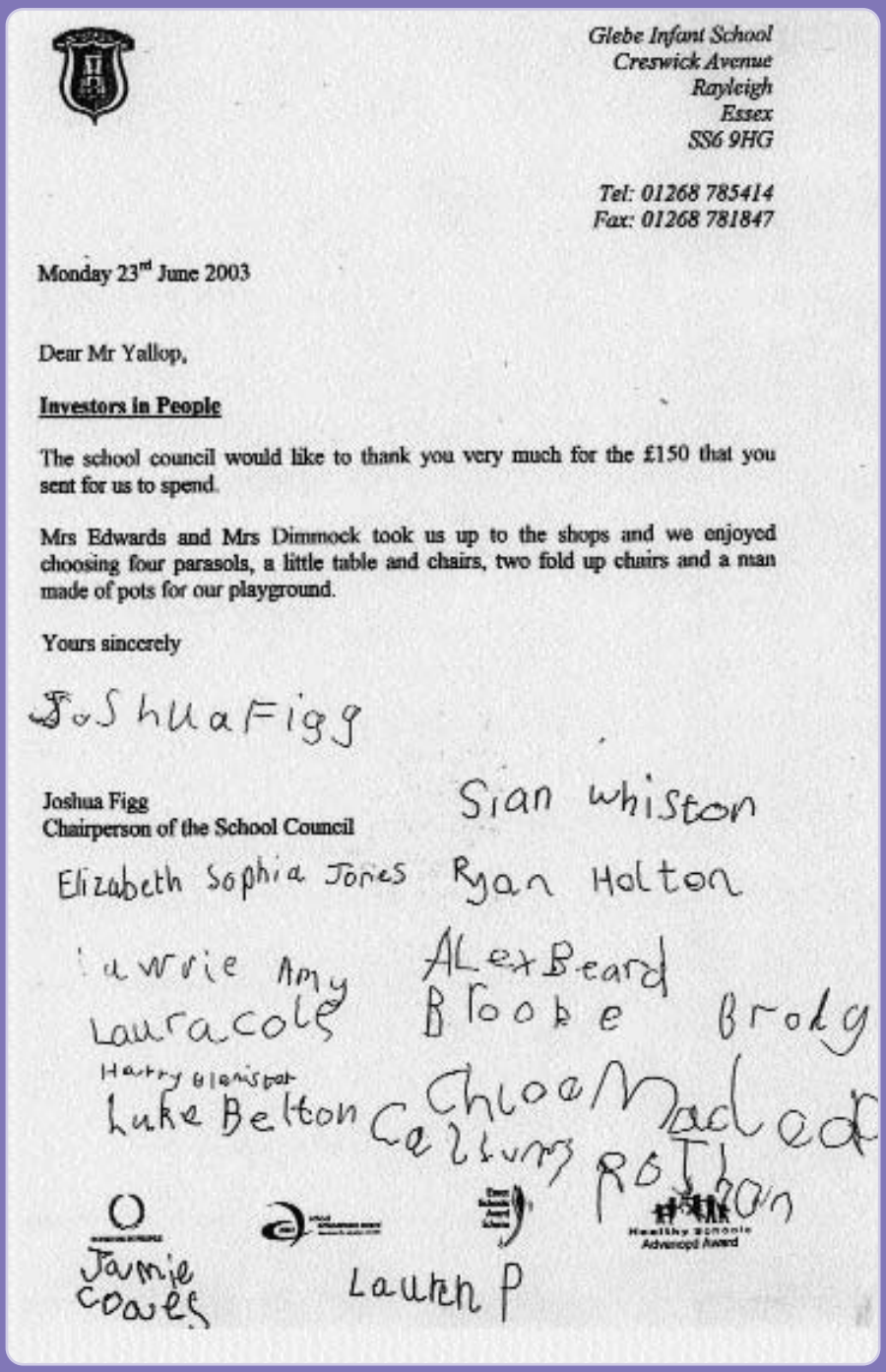
module 4

Roles and responsibilities

Handouts
- **The role of the link teacher**
- **The role of all class teachers**

INSET sessions
4 Teachers playing their part
5 Making an action plan

Lesson plans
7 What is a school council?
8 Agendas, minutes and class councils



Glebe Infant School
Creswick Avenue
Rayleigh
Essex
SS6 9HG

Tel: 01268 785414
Fax: 01268 781847

Monday 23rd June 2003

Dear Mr Yallop,

Investors in People

The school council would like to thank you very much for the £150 that you sent for us to spend.

Mrs Edwards and Mrs Dimmock took us up to the shops and we enjoyed choosing four parasols, a little table and chairs, two fold up chairs and a man made of pots for our playground.

Yours sincerely

Joshua Figg

Joshua Figg
Chairperson of the School Council

Sian whiston
Elizabeth Sophia Jones
Ryan Holton
Laurie Amy
Alex Beard
Laura cole
Brooke
Brody
Harry Blanister
Luke Belton
Chloe Madeo
Callum
Rothan
Jamie Coates
Lauren P

instalment 4 **A wonderful surprise: an extra £50**

hand out

The role of the link teacher

This is the only role that requires a substantial amount of time on the part of a teacher.

The link teacher needs to be present at council meetings, to be prepared to follow up issues raised at meetings, and generally to keep an overview of the council's progress and direction. The qualities and skills needed, and the time required, should be taken into account in deciding who should be the link teacher.

Status

The person who takes on the role of link teacher needs to have status within the school in the eyes of the pupils; this immediately signals to them that the council is being taken seriously.

The headteacher or deputy head often acts as link teacher but the role is sometimes taken on by a class teacher, and occasionally by a governor who is known to the children and is closely involved with the school on a day-to-day basis. (If a class teacher acts as link teacher, they will need to have cover for their class.)

Glebe says:

> We have found that it works best if the link teacher is not the headteacher. In this way, there is another step in the process that children need to undertake in order for decisions to be taken, which gives them a greater understanding of some of the other factors involved.
>
> For example, when the children wanted to run a toy and book sale, they had discussed it and had agreed that it would be a good idea and then asked the headteacher if she could identify some dates in her diary that would be suitable for this.
>
> So far the headteacher has never disagreed with something that the school council wanted to do but we were concerned that without this extra step, there was a danger that children would think that all issues could be resolved instantly – which is just not the case in life.

Time

The issue of time will be a factor in deciding on the link teacher. Some schools incorporate a 15-minute playtime into a half-hour meeting. Others use lunchtime for half-hour meetings. Non-teaching heads will obviously be better placed to attend meetings when they occur in lesson time or they could cover for a class teacher.

Facilitating leadership

The link teacher should act as a facilitator; they should enable pupils to lead council meetings and run discussions – not lead the discussions themselves. Training school council members at the beginning of the year, and supporting them as they put these committee skills into practice, provides these pupils with important learning opportunities. They will gain more from making mistakes than from having responsibility taken out of their hands. So the link teacher must not dominate the council, however tempting it might sometimes seem to simply go ahead and get something done.

Commitment

The link teacher must:

- attend all meetings
- help the pupils to raise the profile of the council in as many ways as possible
- keep the council on the current school agenda.

The link teacher must also encourage school council members to:

- give feedback on the school council at staff meetings
- keep parents informed about the council
- tell governors' meetings about school council business.

As the pupils learn how to run their school council, the link teacher needs to develop the training that they received in their classes. The better the link teacher does her job in the initial stages, the more independent the pupils will become, and the less the link teacher will have to do. To make sure that their requests and ideas are both appropriate and relevant, the link teacher needs to give the school council guidance on the school decisions that they can influence.

Communication

At times, the link teacher will have to act as a channel of communication between the pupils and the staff.

Listening skills are important; the teacher must hear and understand the views of both sides and be able to communicate them effectively to each party. For example, if senior managers reject a proposal made by the school council, the link teacher needs to give the council a clear explanation of the reasons and make sure that the children understand them. Similarly, the link teacher must be sure that the staff and/or senior management fully understand the issue from the children's point of view.

The link teacher may sometimes need to remind colleagues about giving the class representatives time to report back to the class after each meeting if any of the children mention that they are not able to do this.

Evaluation

The link teacher needs time to reflect on:

- how the council is progressing
- what steps might need to be taken to raise its profile
- whether the issues being discussed are broadening and developing in content
- whether the children are seeing results from the concerns and proposals they have voiced
- whether the school council is becoming central to the way the school is run
- whether any members of staff are having difficulty with class council meetings.

hand out

The role of all class teachers

The class teacher has a vital – but not time-consuming – role to play in providing effective support to pupil councils.

Class meetings

The children need a regular time – preferably about 20 minutes every week – for class council meetings. This gives them an opportunity to discuss concerns and ideas with pupils in their class, and to identify issues for their class representatives to take to school council meetings.

The class teacher's role is to encourage and support – occasionally even to participate in – the discussions, but not to lead them.

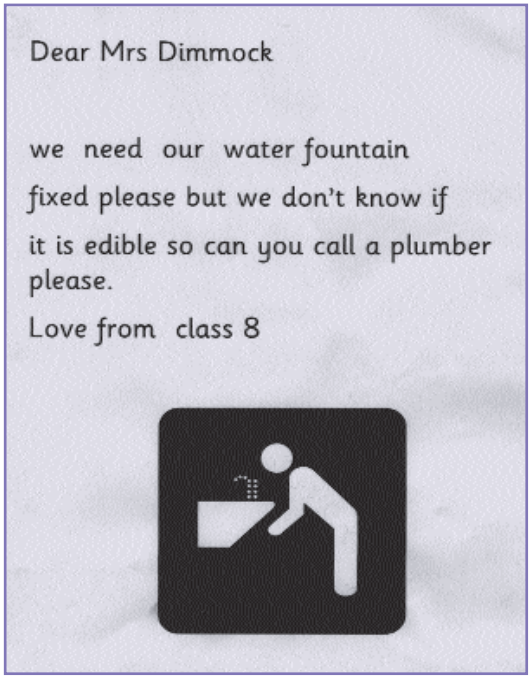
Elections for class representatives to the school council

Once a procedure for democratic elections has been agreed, all class teachers will arrange for the election of class representatives to take place on the day agreed.

Committee and leadership skills

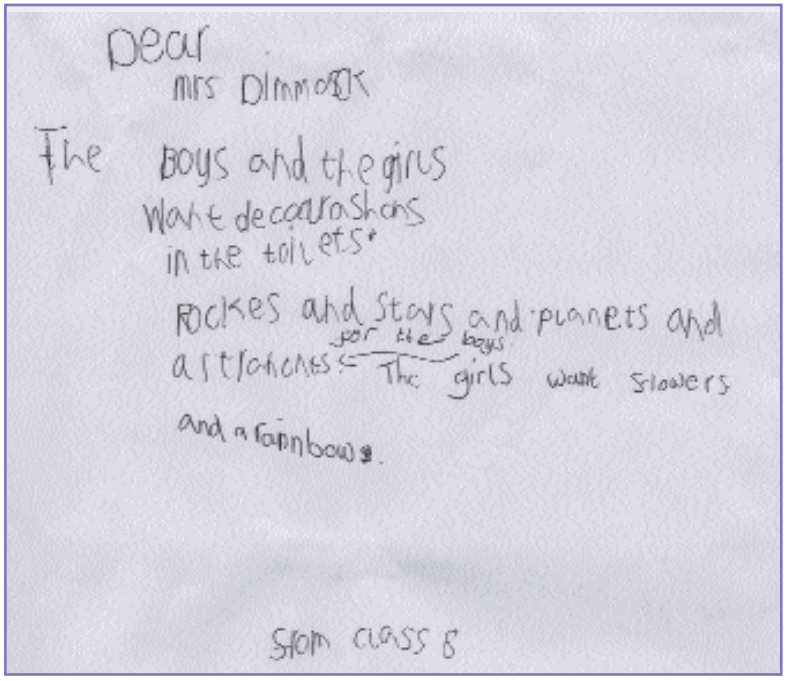
Class teachers provide the training activities that prepare and equip all pupils to participate in, and lead, discussions. They should be aware of any further committee skills the members of the school council develop and be able to reinforce these skills for the children who lead class discussions and take notes.

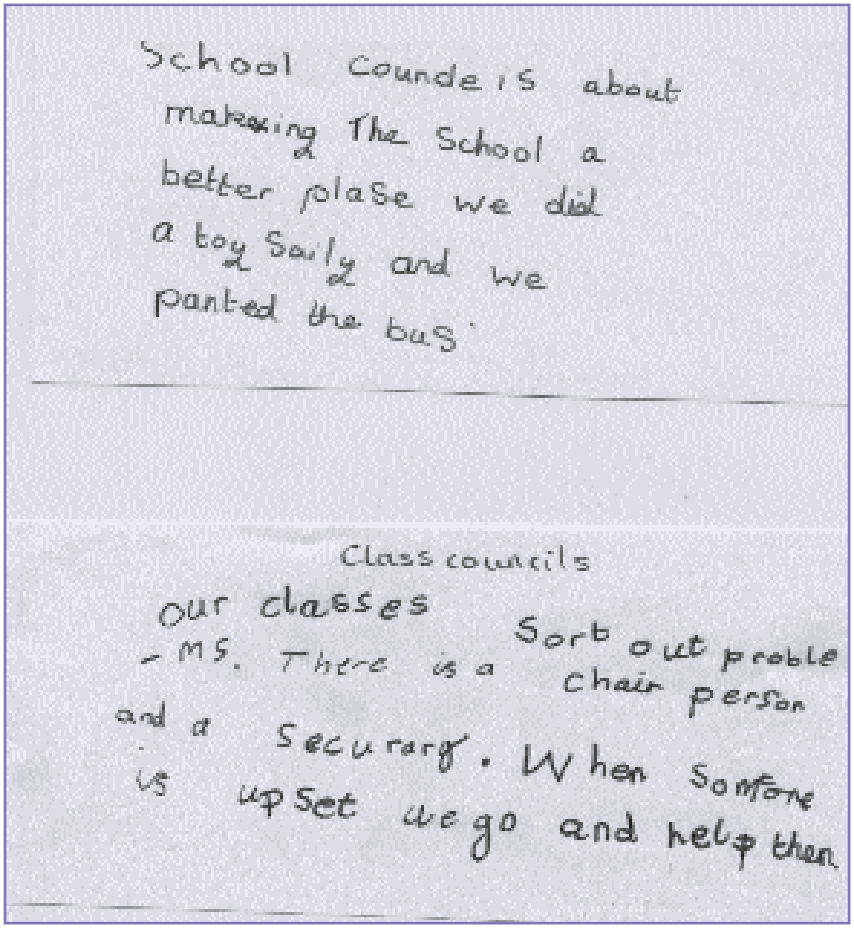
They should explain to their pupils a procedure for arriving at a class meeting agenda each week and make sure that this is part of everyday practice and awareness in the classroom.


Dear Mrs Dimmock

we need our water fountain fixed please but we don't know if it is edible so can you call a plumber please.

Love from class 8


Dear
mrs Dimmock
The boys and the girls want decourashons in the toilets.
Rockes and stars and planets and astronomes for the boys. The girls want flowers and a rainbow.
from class 8


School Counde is about
makeing The School a
better plase we did
a toy Sarly and we
panted the bus.

Class councils
our classes
- MS. There is a Sort out proble
Chair person
and a Securarg. When Somone
is upSet we go and help then

Class representatives

The class teacher's positive attitude to discussion and reporting back signals to the children that the council is important and is taken seriously by everyone in school.

Class teachers should know when school council meetings are taking place and allow the class representatives to attend. As soon as possible after the meeting, the representatives need three or four minutes of class time to report back and respond to questions from other children.

Whole staff commitment

The staff as a whole needs to be committed to the principles underpinning the existence of democratic pupil councils. This commitment can be demonstrated by:

- having a regular slot in staff meetings to update everyone on school council issues and give them a chance to raise concerns and suggestions
- occasionally inviting the chairperson of the school council to attend part of a staff meeting, with the secretary or another member of the school council
- telling parents about some of the things the children discuss in the class and how their own child participates
- talking about the activities and achievements of the pupil councils at parents' evenings and events
- making sure that caretakers, midday supervisors and other non-teaching staff are told about any pupil council issues or activities, and that everyone knows the system for raising and following up any issues
- incorporating information about the school council into the introduction to school systems and structures for new members of staff.

Including the school governors

When the school council is embedded in the ethos of the school, governors will be aware of its importance in the school decision-making process. Governors should therefore be kept informed of school council business on a regular basis, and members of the school council should be aware of the role of governors in school.

Kingmoor school council writes letters to the school governors.

The chair of Tavistock governors occasionally comes to school council meetings to talk about the role of the governors.

INSET session 4

Teachers playing their part

1 hour

Aims

- Identify the role of the link teacher.
- Consider the role of all class teachers.
- Have an overview of the training that pupils need to fulfil their responsibilities.

Resources

- Handouts
  - *The role of the link teacher*
  - *The role of all class teachers*
- Lesson plans

  7 What is a school council?

  8 Agendas, minutes and class councils

  All earlier lesson plans

The link teacher's role

15 minutes : In pairs

Discuss the link teacher handout using the different headings within it to organise feedback to the whole group.

As a whole group

Discuss the points that have arisen, noting on the flipchart any that need to be followed up.

Class teachers' role

15 minutes : In pairs

Discuss the class teachers' role in the same way.

- Teachers should consider the implications for their own practice.

As a whole group

Discuss the points that have been raised.

- Share ideas about how to put recommendations into practice.
- Note on the flipchart any actions that are needed to ensure that all members of staff are informed of the processes, and the parts they will need to play in them.

Pupil training and the class teacher

30 minutes : In pairs

Discuss the pupil training and make a note of any points to discuss with the whole group.

- Write points from each pair on the flipchart and return to them later.

As a whole group

Go through the lesson plans.

- Discuss how they may need to be modified according to the age of the pupils.
- Identify issues that will vary from class to class.
- Agree on how and when to introduce the pupil training.
- Address the points on the flipchart.

INSET session 5

Making an action plan

1 hour

Aims

- Plan the necessary steps to be taken to implement the actions and training needed in preparation for setting up a school council.
- Agree on a monitoring and evaluation procedure.

Resources

- Notes on any flipcharts made during previous sessions

The current climate

30 minutes : In pairs

(It might be useful for teachers of the same year groups to pair up.)

- Identify the current strengths and opportunities in your school on which you can build in order to develop pupil councils.
- Identify any significant weaknesses and threats, discuss how these might be overcome and how much time might be needed to do so.
- Address each section with particular reference to teachers' own year groups.

As a whole group

Collate the results on the flipchart.

- Referring to flipchart notes from previous sessions, discuss together any steps that need to be taken.

Action planning

30 minutes : As a whole group

Use a planning grid to:

- discuss the order of the steps that need to be taken
- agree on a plan of action with deadlines
- identify what changes are needed in classrooms.

Plan a monitoring strategy and a procedure for reflecting on school council issues on an annual basis.

In considering the success of your school council, you might want to review:

- how many people know about it and are involved
- whether ideas initiated or discussed by the school council get put into practice
- whether school and class council meetings take place regularly
- whether the pupils are happy with the recording and reporting back systems
- how the staff feels about the process once it has been in operation for a while.

Alternative to the SWOT analysis

extra

Draw a large picture of a hot air balloon on the flipchart.

Add captions to each part as you answer the following questions:

- **balloon** What needs to be in place?
- **basket** Who needs to be on board?
- **tethering ropes** What is holding it back?
- **sky above** What will make it fly?
- **trees** What might send it off course?

lesson plan 7

What is a school council?

30 minutes

Objectives

By the end of this session, pupils will:

- have been introduced to the concept of a school council
- understand how all classes in the school have a say in the school council
- understand the role of the class representative
- have thought about whether they would like to be a class representative.

Resources

- An object to pass round circle

The way the school council works

15 minutes : In groups of six, sitting round tables

Remind the children about the lesson on having meetings (lesson 6):

- different groups in the room had their own discussions
- each group made a decision
- someone from each group told the whole class about their group's decision.

Explain that having a school council would be a bit like that.

- All the classes in school will hold discussions and make decisions.
- You will find out what decisions other classes have made.

Get the children to pretend that each group is a different class in the school.

- Choose a chairperson and secretary for each group.
- Give them the playground issue from lesson 5 to discuss again.
- This time they do not have a board with pictures and some pupils might think of other ideas for equipment.
- Give them five minutes for their group to decide which four things to choose.

Ask the secretaries to leave their groups and form a separate group round another table (or on chairs in a circle).

- They each tell the other secretaries what equipment their group has chosen for the playground.
- Make sure everyone in the class can hear what they are saying.

Explain that this new group is like the school council.

- Each secretary was the representative of their group and reported what their group decided.

In the school council, a person represents each class and reports what their class has decided.

- The school council is a meeting for one or two pupils from every class, who are called representatives.
- Their job is to discuss what all the different classes have said and to agree what the school council wants to do.
- Then they must report back to their own classes about what the school council has decided.

This is how the school council works:

- every class has meetings and agrees what they want to say
- a representative from each class reports to the school council what their class has agreed
- when all the class representatives meet together they are the school council.

Choosing class representatives

15 minutes : In a circle

Explain that the class representative's job is to:

- go to all school council meetings
- tell other members of the school council what their class has been saying
- take part in school council discussions
- report back to their own class what the school council has said.

Ask the children what sort of person they think a class representative needs to be.

- Get the pupils to think about the job of the representative and the qualities the representative should have if they are going to do the job properly.
- Highlight qualities such as fairness, being a good listener, having a good memory, being reliable, etc.
- Go round the circle, asking pupils to finish the sentence: *'Our class representative should be …'*
- Write the qualities that the children mention on the board.
- Add any others that need to be mentioned.

Now ask them to think about whether they would like to be elected themselves.

- If they would, they must think about the kinds of things they would say to persuade other people to choose them.

When they are considering who to choose, they must think about who has the qualities to be the best person for the job – it might not be their best friend!
Tell them they have learnt:

- that the school council cannot function properly without the class councils
- what a class representative has to do
- that they must think carefully about the job of the class representative before they decide if they want to be one themselves and before they vote for anyone else.

lesson plan 8

Agenda, minutes and class councils

40 minutes

Objectives

By the end of this session pupils will:

- understand what an agenda is
- have considered how class meeting agendas might differ from school council meeting agendas
- know how class meeting agendas are going to be decided
- understand what minutes are
- be clear about how minutes are made and where they will be kept and displayed in the classroom
- understand how class meeting mode is the basis for their class councils.

Resources

- Notepad or form for minutes (page 90)
- How to lead a meeting prompt sheet (page 88)
- Minutes: prompt sheet (page 89)

This session includes information on how to conduct meetings and provides an outline for that procedure. The real learning will take place as pupils put the process into practice in actual meeting situations.

What is an agenda?

10 minutes

All meetings must have an agenda.

- An agenda is a list of the things that are going to be discussed at meetings.
- The chairperson must make sure that everyone knows what they are going to discuss at the meeting.

Ask for ideas for an agenda based on the kind of things that their own class might want to discuss.

- Write them on the board.
- Explain that this list could be the agenda for a class meeting.

Now ask which of the things on the list affect other pupils in school as well as their own class.

- Put a mark beside them on the board.
- Explain that the marks show that those items also need to be discussed by the school council.
- They could be put on an agenda for a school council meeting.

How can we put something on our class meeting agenda?

5 minutes

It is important for everyone to have a chance to contribute to the class meeting agenda.

- Explain to the children how they can put forward ideas for their class agenda.
- For instance, pupils could write or draw something they want to discuss in class on a post-it note and stick the post-it on a large piece of paper on the class noticeboard.
- All the post-it notes are used to put together the agenda.

What are minutes?

10 minutes

Minutes are the notes that the secretary makes at meetings.

- After the meeting they are kept in a special book.
- Minutes help us remember what we decided at our meetings.

Remind the children how notes were made during their lessons on meetings, and ask them to think about:

- whether all the children are able to read and write
- how pictures could help people understand and remember things
- whether pictures or writing or both would be the best way of making notes for their class.

Talk through the minutes prompt sheet.

■ Keep a copy on display on the class council noticeboard.

Discuss:

- a method of minute-taking appropriate to the age range of the children in the class
- where the minutes will be kept
- how they will be displayed in the classroom.

Meeting mode = Class councils

15 minutes

Ask the pupils to be in 'meeting mode'.

■ Encourage them to show that they are ready for a meeting through their body language and attentiveness.

Choose a chairperson and secretary.

■ Ask the chairperson which of the items from the agenda on the board they would like the class to discuss now.

Now that we have an agenda and a secretary to take minutes, the whole class is like a council.

■ So we can call these class meetings 'class councils'.

Spend a few minutes practising meeting mode as a class council.

■ The chairperson should have the prompt sheet to hand and the secretary should have a notepad.

Depending on how well the discussion is going, conclude by one of the following:

- steering the discussion towards a definite proposal that everyone votes on
- saying that this issue will be on the agenda at their first proper class council meeting
- explaining that this is only a practice
- asking them to suggest topics for the agenda in the way that they have learnt today ready for the first proper class council meeting.

If they have reached a decision that requires action to be taken, introduce action planning now.

■ An action plan shows:

- What the action is
- Who is going to do it
- When it is going to be done by
- How they will know when it has been done – what will it look like in the classroom.

Copy the chart on the next page on to the flipchart and fill it in together.

■ Keep it on display on the class council noticeboard.

Date	Action plan for Class
What is going to be done	
Who is going to do it	
When it has to be done by	
How we will know it has been done	

Tell the class that they have learnt about some important skills and that they will continue to learn about meetings as they take part in their weekly class councils.

Extra activity

If you have time you could teach the children the *Minutes Song* now (pages 91–92). This would also be a good activity for a future class meeting.

Resources

Lesson plan resources

Lesson 1 What do I think?
- Dog *72*
- Cat *73*

Lesson 3 How do I choose?
- Six everyday school activities *74–79*

Lesson 4 What could we do?
- Discussion rules cards *80–81*
- Computer mouse 'solutions' *82–85*

Lesson 5 Discussing and finding the best decision
- Playground board *86*
- Playground pictures *87*

Lesson 6 Having a meeting
- Leading a meeting: prompt sheet *88*
- Minutes: prompt sheet *89*
- Minutes form *90*

INSET resources

INSET session 3 Participation through pupil councils
- Pathways to participation *93*

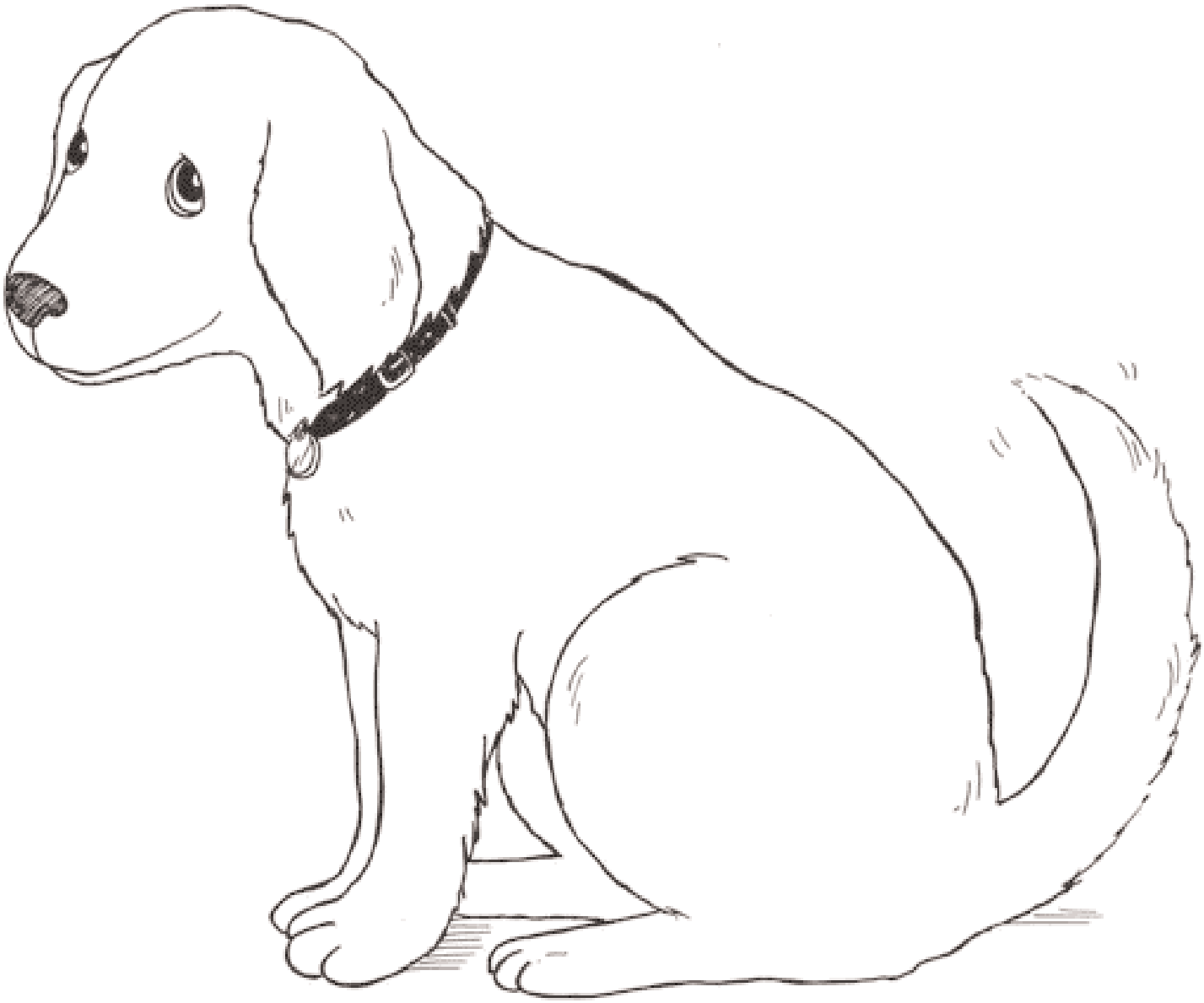
School council resources

1 School council constitution: prompt sheet *94*

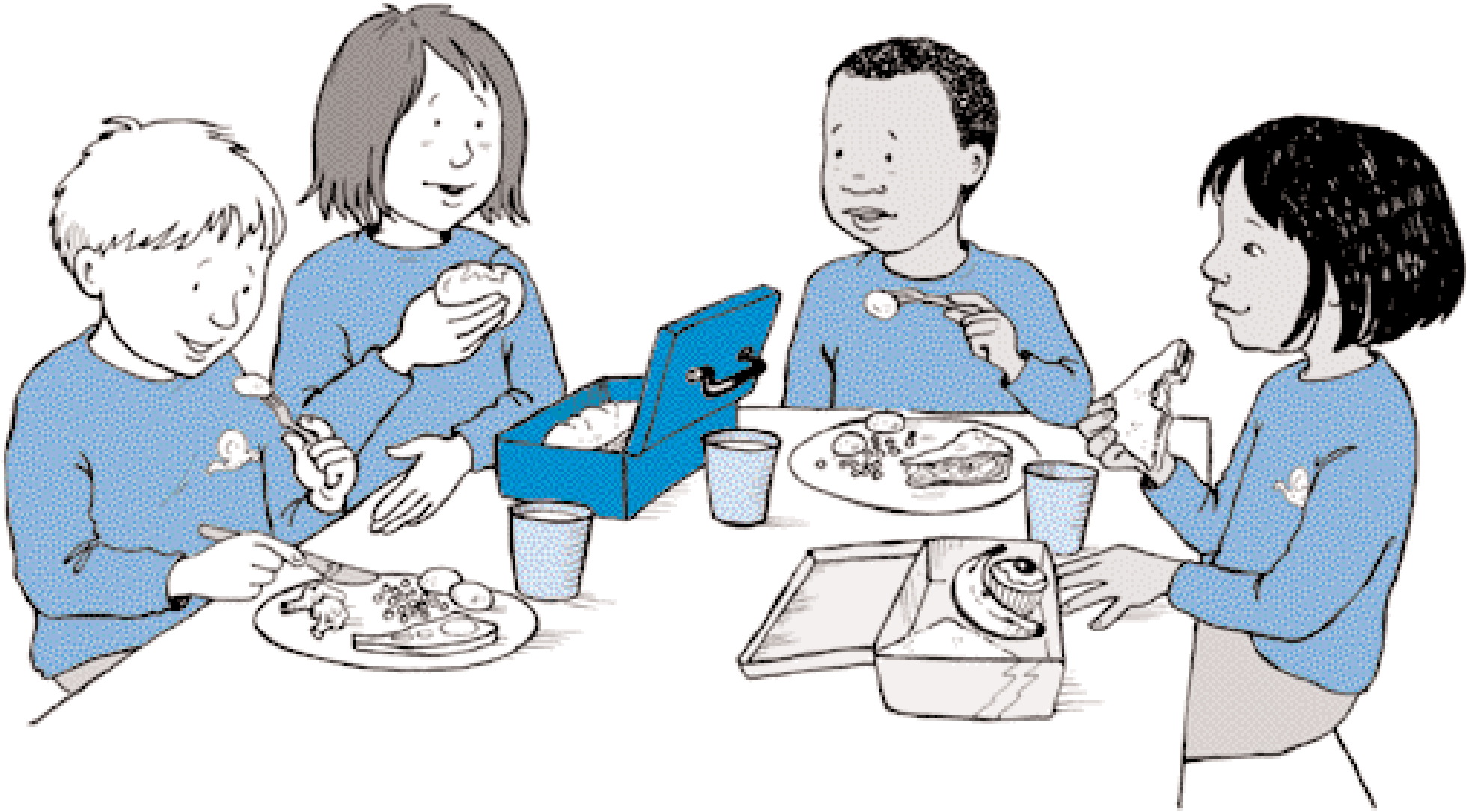
2 My manifesto *95*

3 Ballot paper *96*

dog

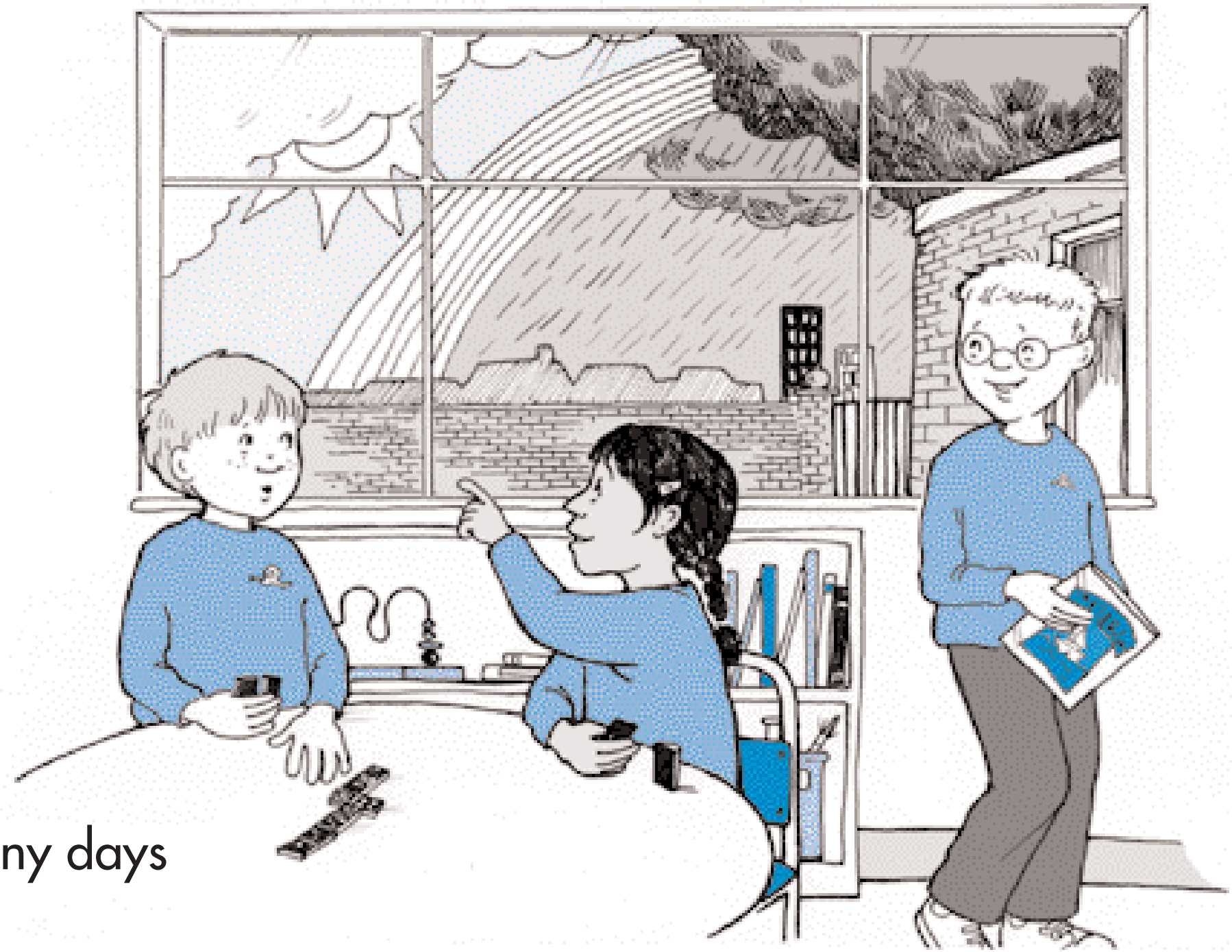


cat

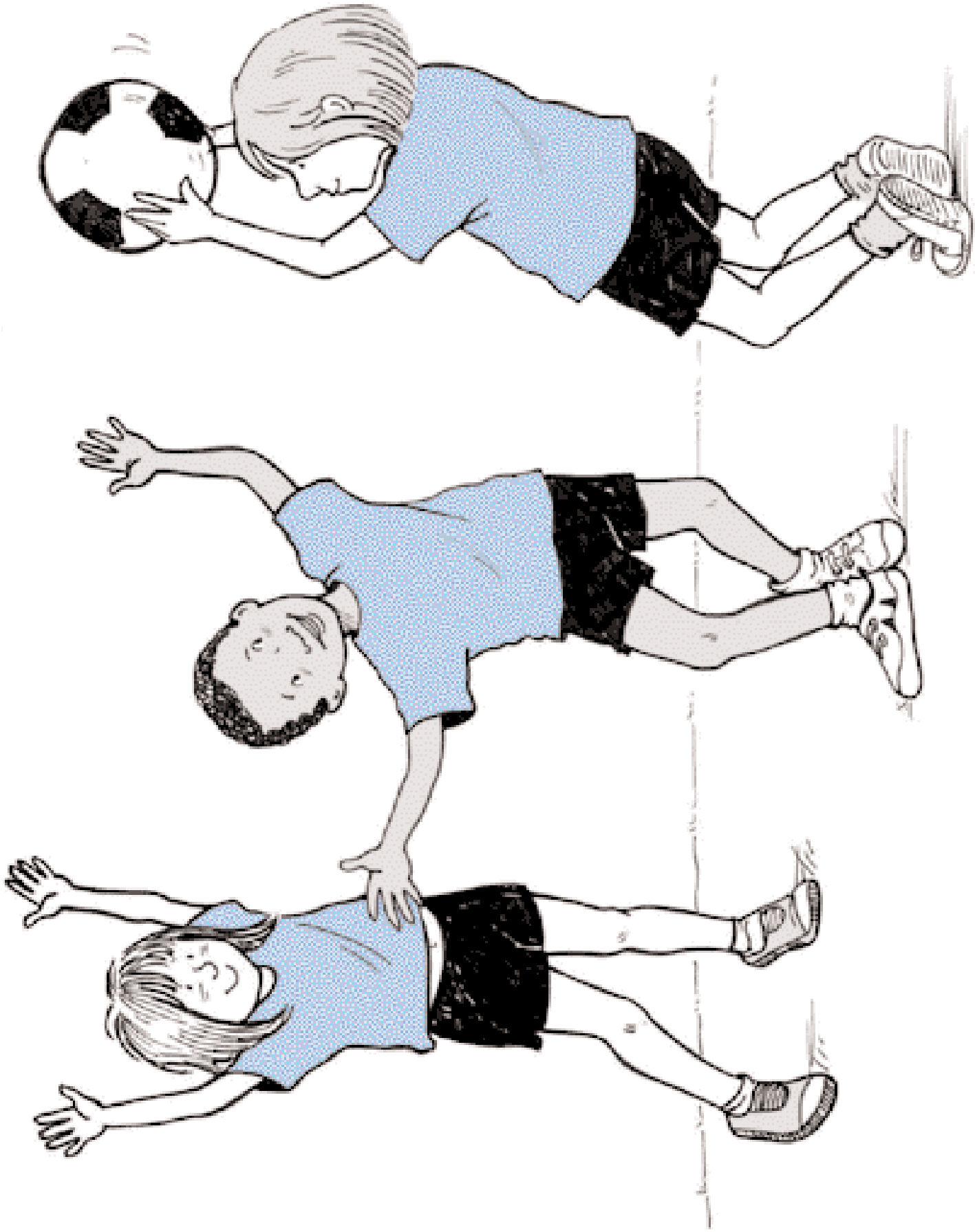


school dinners

playtime



rainy days



PE

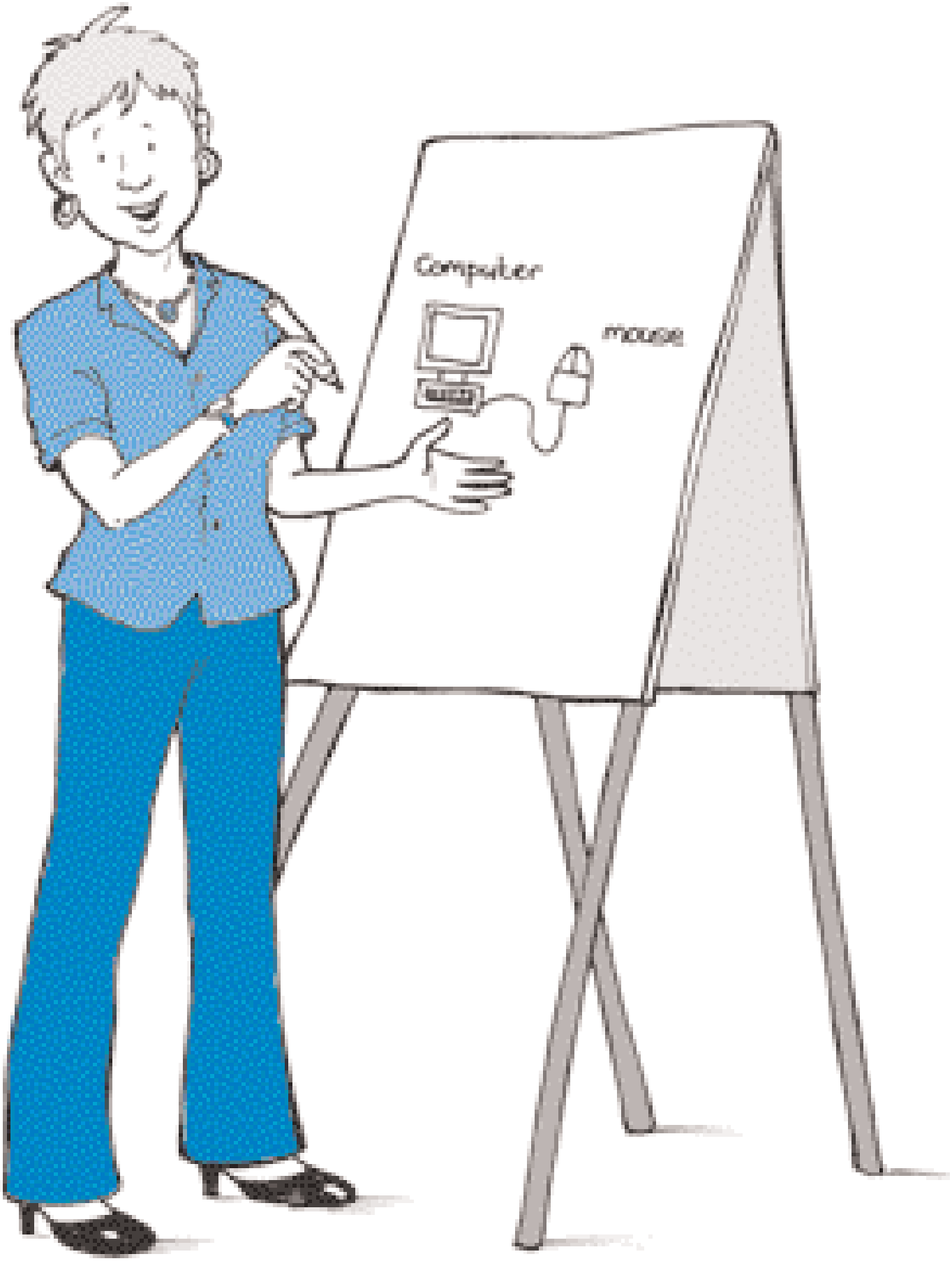
school assembly

painting and drawing

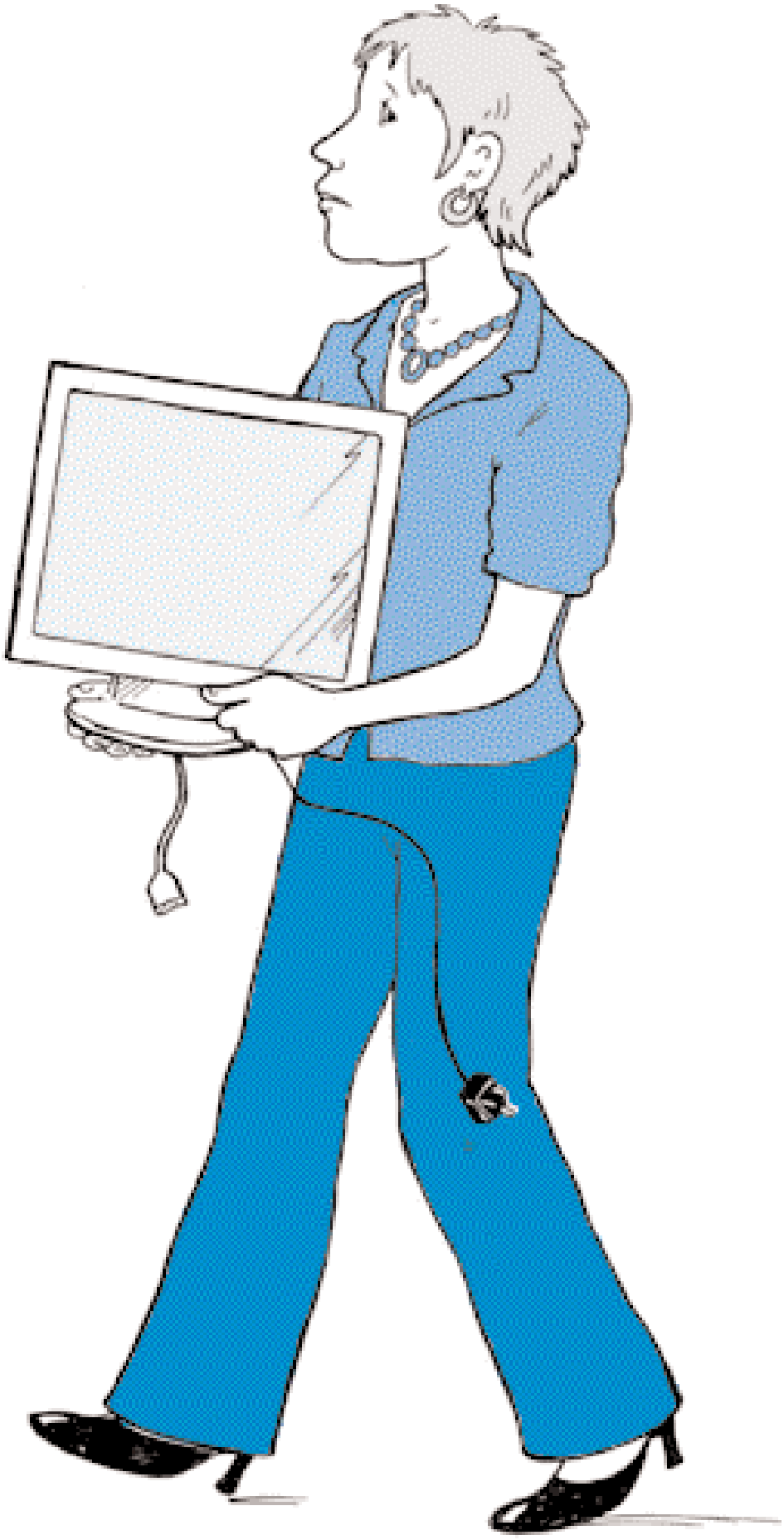
Ground rules for discussion

Print on card backed with words on page 81.

We listen carefully.	We let other people finish what they are saying before we speak.
When someone is talking to the group, I can talk to my friend.	We think before we speak.
When we don't want to take part in a discussion, we can play.	We can laugh at someone when they make a mistake.

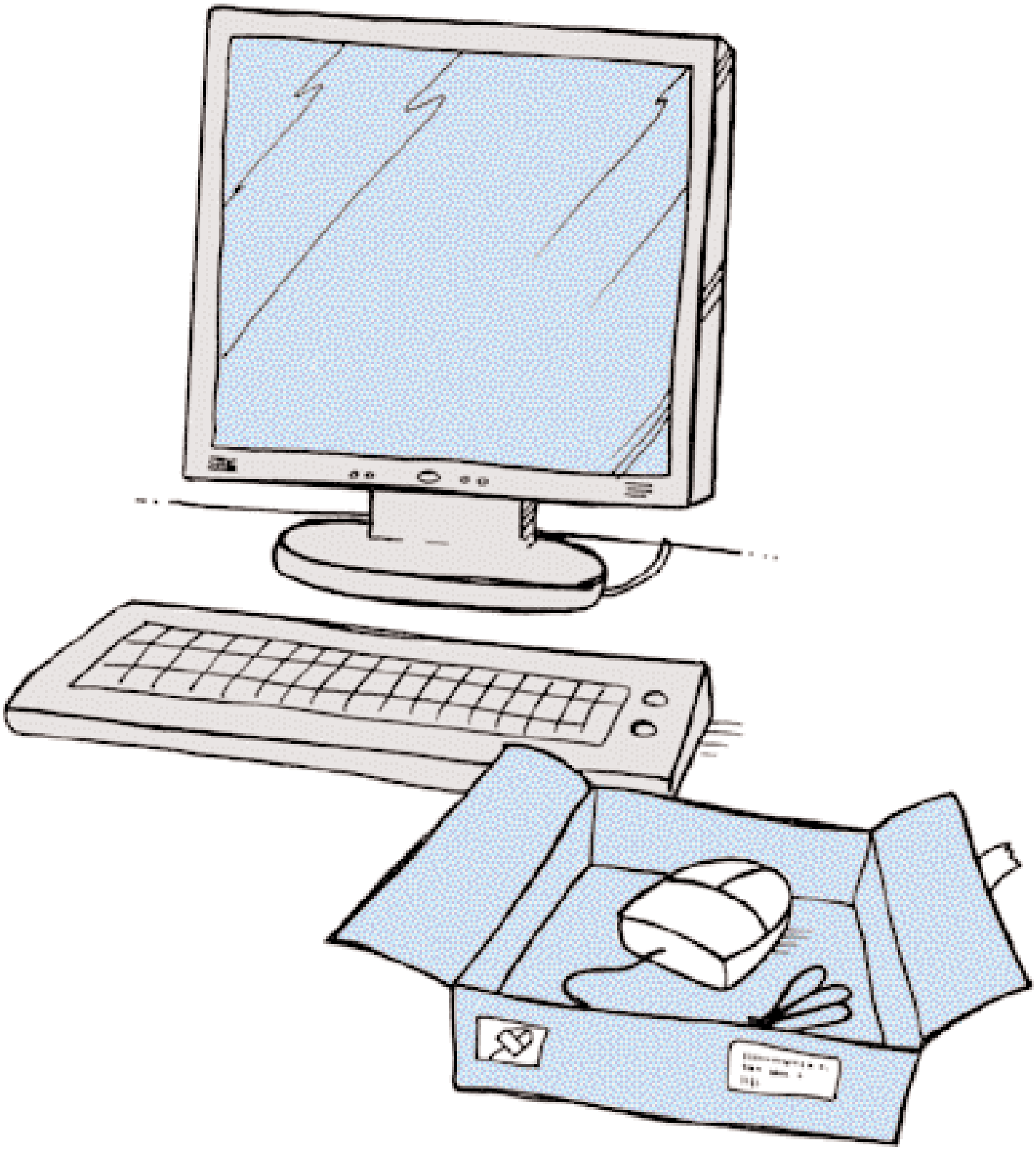


This is how to use the mouse



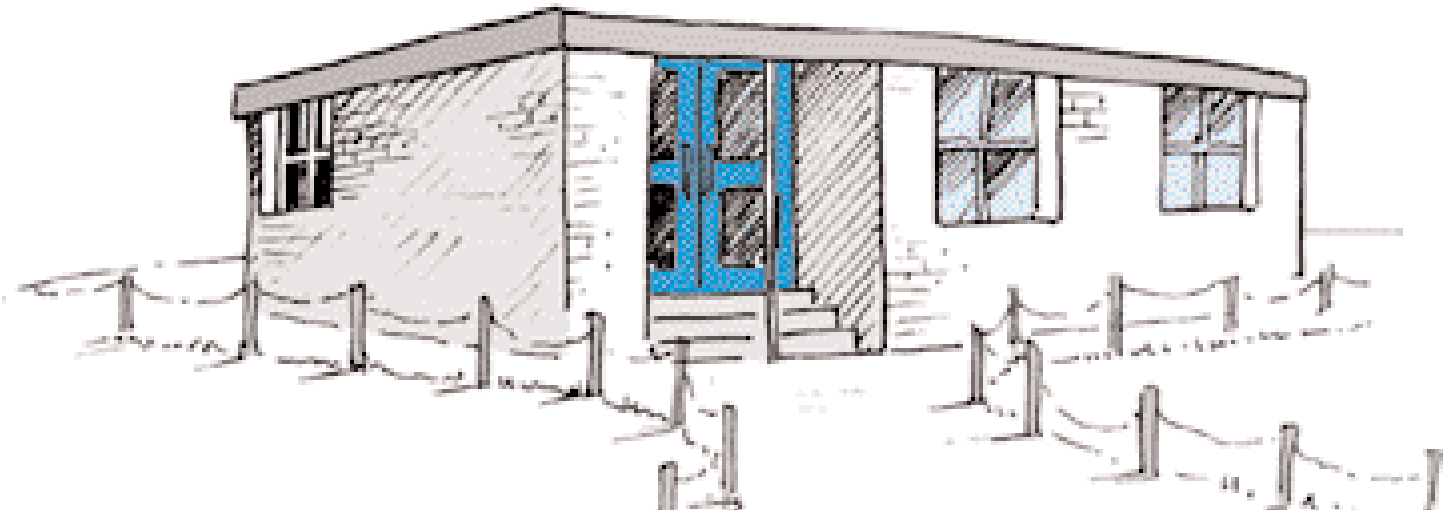
We will not have a computer

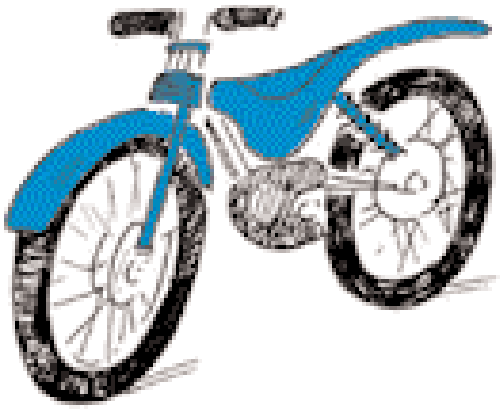
We must miss playtime

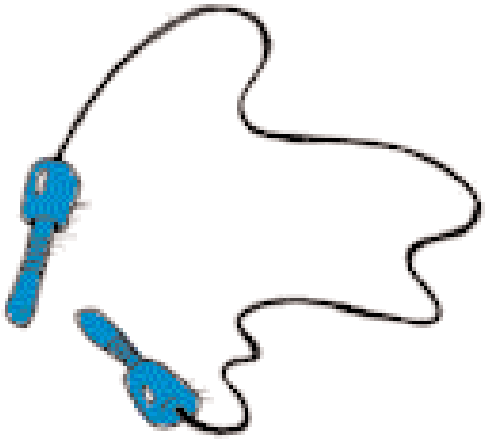


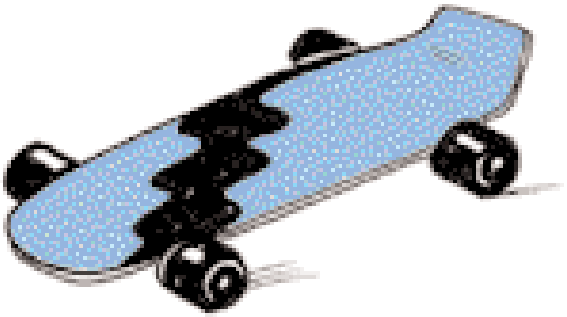
We buy a new mouse

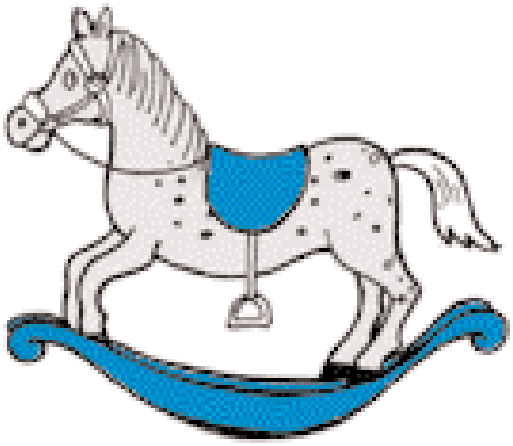
The school playground

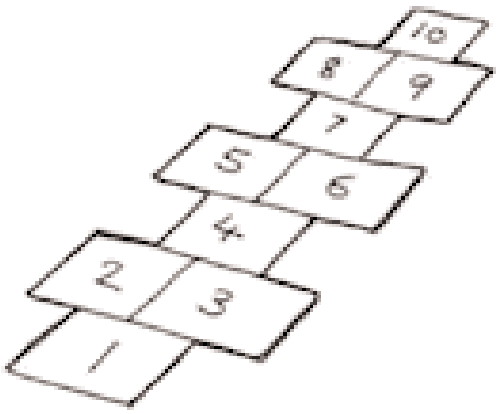








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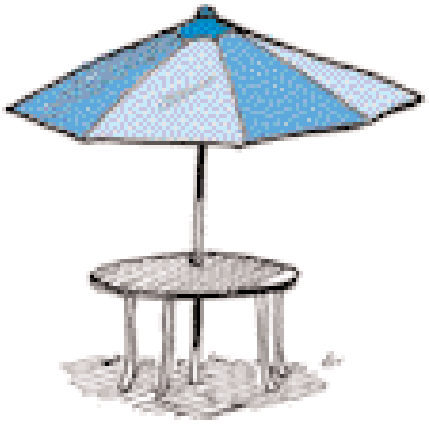
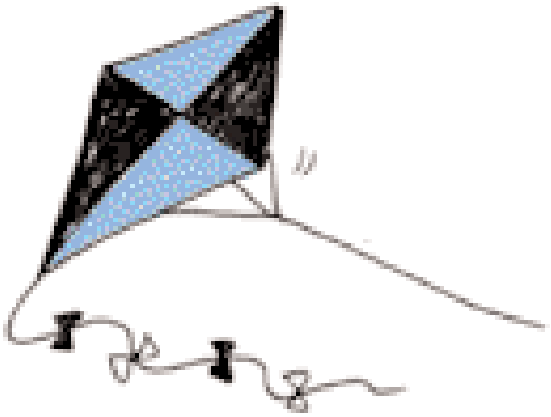




How to lead a meeting: prompt sheet

Excuse me everyone – meeting to order.

Remind everyone about listening, body language and putting their hands up if they want to speak.

We are going to discuss …

Read out the item from the agenda.
Ask people what they think.
People take turns to speak when you ask them to.

Has everyone had a chance to speak if they want to?

Look around at the quieter people to check.

Proposals please.

Ask if anyone has a suggestion about what to do.

Let's vote – how many for this proposal?

Count how many hands are up.
Ask if people disagree with the proposal.
Count them.
Ask if anyone didn't vote and count them too.
Ask those who voted against or didn't vote if they would like to say why.
Find out if anyone wants to change their mind now by voting again.

We have agreed to …

Say what the meeting has agreed.

Let's make a plan

Decide who has got to do something, when it has to be done by and how everyone will know that it has been done.

Minutes: prompt sheet

What are minutes?

- They are a record of what was decided at meetings.

How are they made?

- During the meeting, the secretary makes notes of all the decisions that are made and the important issues that are discussed.

Who are they for?

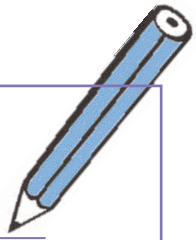
- Everyone in the school!
- Minutes can be photocopied and given to each member of the council.
- Class representatives can use the minutes to help them when they report to their class council.

Where are they kept?

- The secretary keeps all the minutes in a book or file called the minutes book.

Why do we need minutes?

- The chairperson needs them to plan the next meeting.
- Each council member needs them to check whether they promised to do anything so that they get it done before the next meeting.
- Anyone should be able to look up decisions that were made in the past.
- The governors might need to see the minutes so that they're kept informed about the council's activities.
- The head teacher might need to refer to them to discuss school council issues with members of staff.



Minutes of the meeting of _____

Held on _____

Chairperson _____

Secretary _____

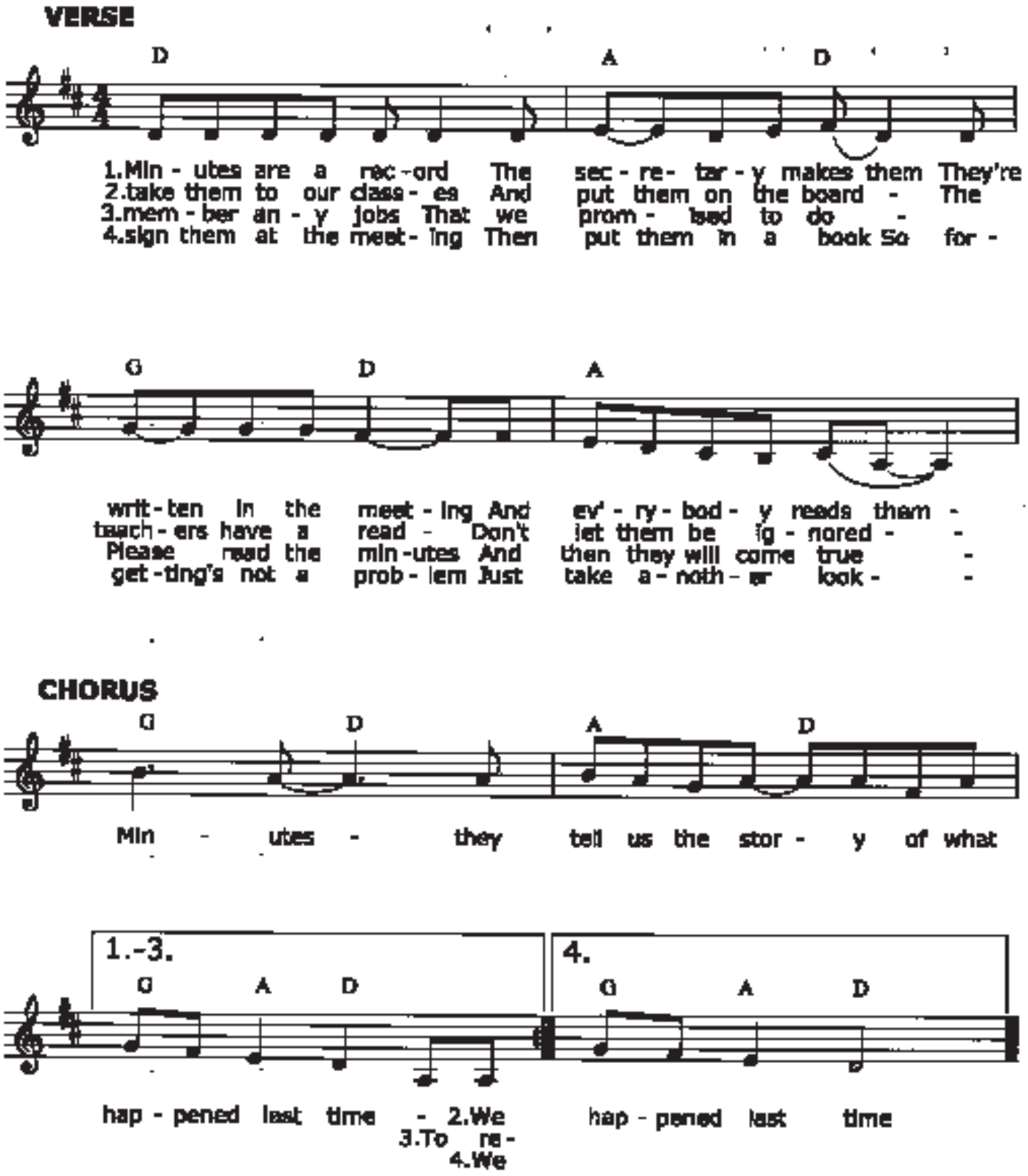
This is what we talked about:

This is what we decided:

Date of next meeting _____

The minutes song

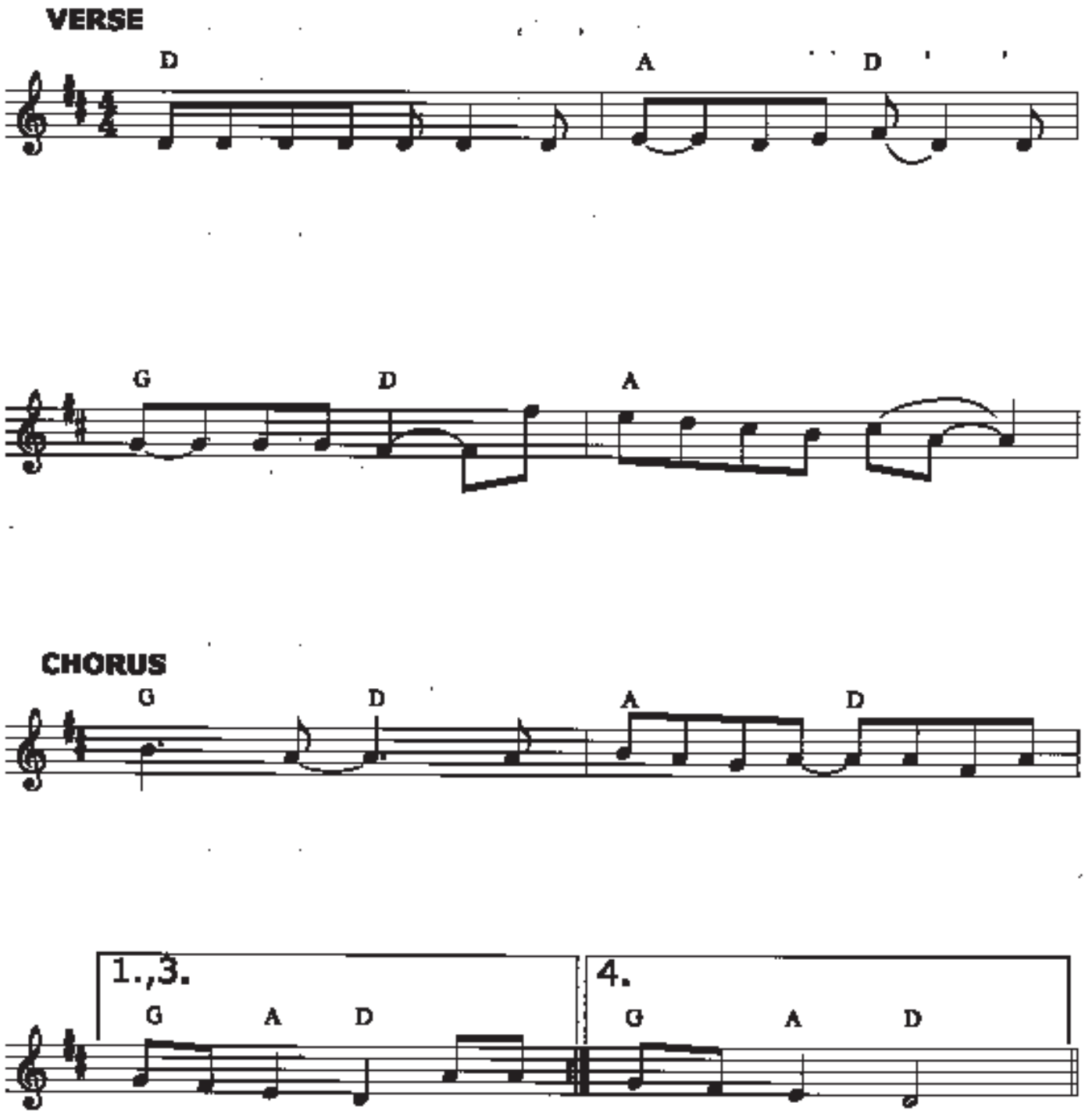
Words and music by Jessica Gold



see next page for recorder version

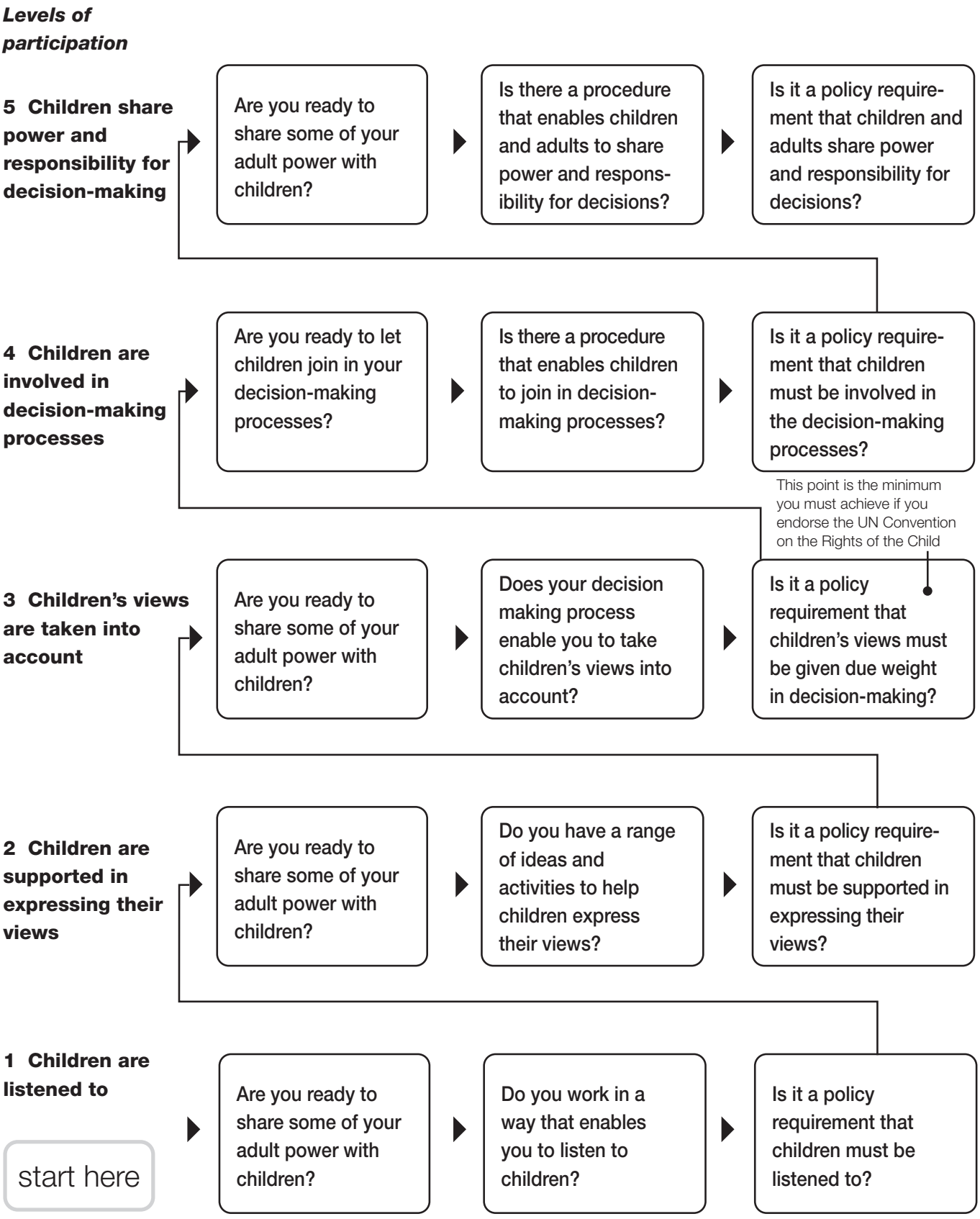
The minutes song (recorder)

Music by Jessica Gold



Pathways to participation

to be printed on card



Adapted from *Children & Society* Vol. 15, 107-117 (2001).© 2001 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

School council constitution: prompt sheet

Aims

- How the school council will contribute to the school community.

Membership

- Who will be elected as members of the school council.
- Who will be non-elected members of the school council.
- How the school council will make sure that children in the reception class are part of the school council.

School council elections

- How often school council elections will take place.
- When elections will be held.
- How elections will be organised.
- How candidates will be nominated.

Voting

- Who can vote.
- How people will vote.
- How votes will be counted.

Meetings

- How often the school council will meet.
- Where it will meet.
- Which adults will attend meetings.

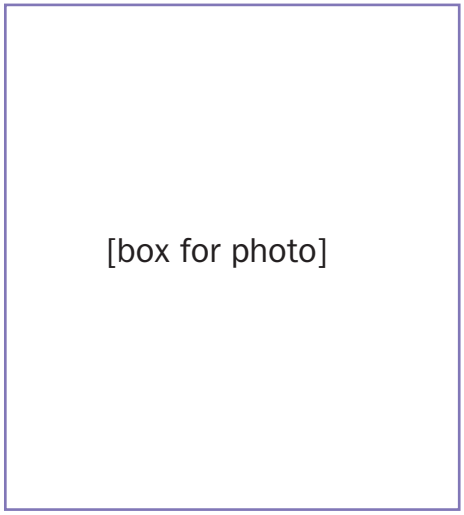
Leadership of the council

- How the chairperson and secretary of the school council will be chosen.
- The responsibilities of the chairperson.
- The responsibilities of the secretary.

Responsibilities of school council members

- What every member of the school council is expected to do.

My manifesto



My name _____

I think school is good because _____

_____

_____

_____

One thing I would like to change in school is

_____

_____

_____

If I am elected as a school councillor I promise to

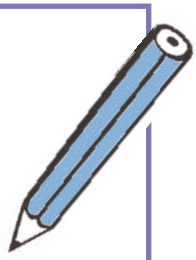
_____

_____

_____

_____

Class _____



Ballot paper

Put X in the box next to the name of the **girl** you want to represent your class as a member of the school council.

Name _____ ☐

Name _____ ☐

Name _____ ☐

Name _____ ☐

Put X in the box next to the name of the **boy** you want to represent your class as a member of the school council.

Name _____ ☐

Name _____ ☐

Name _____ ☐

Name _____ ☐