

Pencaerau Primary School

“Learning for life”



Pupil Voice Policy

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Date	Review Date	Headteacher Signed	Chair of Governors Signed
June 2021	June 2022	<i>H Brady</i>	<i>J Cuff</i>



Pupil Voice Policy

Overall Principles

Pencaerau Primary School values the views of all its members. This policy outlines how learning at Pencaerau is enhanced by exploring the thoughts and feelings of pupils within the school. Pupil Voice is embedded in all aspects of school life. We provide children with opportunities to contribute to school improvement because we believe listening to learners is fundamental to their wellbeing.

Our school aspires to enhance each child's self-esteem; providing a safe and secure environment in which they feel confident to take risks and strive to reach their full potential. Through recognising and celebrating achievement, we encourage every child to view themselves as a successful individual.

We believe that engaging our children in 'Learning for Life' enables them to develop a deeper understanding of themselves as learners and therefore equips them with a greater capacity to learn. Our school ethos and the positive relationships established within our school community promote the value of learning and create a desire for children to become 'Learners for Life'.

As a school we work alongside learners to develop pupils as:

- Healthy, confident individuals
- Ambitious, capable learners
- Ethical, informed citizens
- Enterprising, creative contributors

We believe:

- Every child has an entitlement to personal, social and intellectual development and must be given the opportunity to achieve his/her potential in learning
- Every child is unique in terms of characteristics, interest, abilities, motivation and learning needs
- Education systems should be designed to take into account these wide diversities
- Those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) should have access to high quality and appropriate education

Context

Traditionally, children have very little say in shaping their own educational experience. However, the importance of children's rights and their relevance to education has been increasingly recognised. This has led to a range of legislation that has emphasised the importance of listening to children and involving them in decision-making. Within education, systems are being developed to consult with children about school life, learning targets and behaviour.

Involving all children is challenging both in principle and in practice. Yet aside from any legal requirements; research and practice indicate that there are real benefits to be gained from pupil participation. Participation helps education to develop to meet changing needs. It can give children influence and an increased choice over the provision offered. It helps empower them, giving a sense of self efficacy, which raises self-esteem. This is important for all children especially young

people with ALN. Ultimately, pupil participation can enhance the democratic process, enabling children to become active, responsible citizens.

Involvement of children and young people can easily become 'tokenistic'. There is a need for all staff to find ways to communicate effectively with a range of children. Participation is only meaningful within their context of an inclusive school where all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum, properly differentiated curriculum, pupils need to experience a wide social circle and to encounter a broad range of peers with different strengths and perspectives. The success of participation, like the success of inclusion, depends upon the involvement of all teachers and staff working with a sense of common purpose to support the learning needs of all children.

Principles

- **Entitlement:** Children have a right to participate and to be listened to. When developing educational policy, local and central government must ensure that consulting with children is at the heart of multi-agency planning.
- **Empowerment:** All children need to feel that they are valued and important and can make a difference. Being consulted and allowed to make choices from an early age helps to develop emotional growth and self-awareness. Directly involving pupils in their education enhances their engagement and promotes active learning. This expands their horizons and increases the choices open to them in their future. It helps to ensure that the education they receive is relevant to their needs.
- **Equal opportunities:** Consulting effectively with pupils is challenging for staff, particularly when communication with younger children or those with significant ALN. In order to make this a meaningful task, attention must be paid to language so that young people understand what is available and can make informed choices. The curriculum needs to be properly differentiated and resourced to address pupil's individual learning patterns and interests. Alternative options need to be properly resourced to allow each child, whenever possible, to fulfil his/her potential.
- **Raising attainment:** Pupil participation can help to raise academic standards. Progress is also supported by a curriculum that meets individual needs. Careful consideration should be given to pupil's groupings to ensure that those with learning, emotional, social or behavioural difficulties do not feel marginalised or de-motivated.
- **Protection:** Promoting pupil participation is an important aid to their self-protection. Apart from parents and carers, it is staff in schools that are best placed to notice early signs of distress and symptoms of abuse. A recurrent theme of successive inquiries into abuse has been the failure to listen to children.
- **Democracy:** Involving pupils in decisions about their learning and the educational environment will help to prepare them for making important choices as adults. Giving more power to pupils can lead to more motivated and engaged children and less staff/pupil contact. Representative democracy is strengthened as young people gain greater skills in communication, listening, negotiation and peaceful conflict resolution.
- **Respect:** Pupil Participation can only flourish in an environment where teachers and other staff have a shared sense of responsibility for supporting and learning from one another and where young people are encouraged to build collaborative relationships with their peers.

Aims

We believe that we should:

- Regard the involvement of pupils in decisions about their education as essential to good practise
- Include pupils in assessing and monitoring their own progress. This involves reducing barriers to participation, with attention to language and level of understanding. Pupils should be helped to set targets for their learning and behaviour and be provided with opportunities for on-going review and feedback
- Foster a whole school ethos in which all pupils are valued and encouraged to express their opinions and make decisions from an early age. Create structures and mechanisms for listening to pupils and responding to their views, and monitor their effectiveness. Develop constructive alliances between pupils based upon tolerance and respect of individual differences
- Recognise that pupil participation can only become a reality in an environment where all staff are valued and involved in decisions affecting the school community. Relationships between adults should act as the model for the desired relationships between young people
- Ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum, properly resourced with a wide range of social opportunities. Put in place systems which allow pupils to have a greater say in the content of the curriculum and how it should be taught
- Offer guidance and support to both new and experienced staff in managing diverse classrooms and in developing individualised learning programmes
- Act as an empathic guide and advocate for the child equipping him/her with skills to respect different opinions and diverse cultures. This includes learning how to negotiate with others, and to make compromises when appropriate
- Work in a partnership with parents/carers whilst, at the same time, exercising sensitivity when pupils' views differ from those of their parents/carers
- Collaborate with other agencies to ensure a 'holistic' approach. Exercise care and sensitivity when sharing information, in order to respect confidentiality without compromising the safety of the child. Help other agencies to recognise that there are usually educational implications when children are experiencing health or social problems
- *Pupils who participate in decision-making enjoy enhanced self-esteem and motivation, gain important personal, social and organisational skills, and become familiar with group and democratic processes. At the organisational level, pupil involvement in decision-making leads to better relationships, more relevant and effective policies, and better learning. In the best scenarios, pupils and adults work together as partners to ensure that their school provides the best possible learning environment for all. Pupils have an important part to play in helping their school to improve in every aspect of school life.*

(Pupil Voice Wales Website. 2010)

The Curriculum

Creating Authentic Learning Experiences-

At the beginning of a topic the children engage in discussions with their peers and the class teacher; they share ideas for learning opportunities within the topic. Topic titles are chosen to be engaging and relevant to pupils, enabling them to be engaged by authentic learning contexts. Pupils share their existing knowledge of a topic with staff, through discussion, identify how learning within the project may develop them as:

- Healthy, confident individuals
- Ambitious, capable learners
- Ethical informed citizens
- Enterprising, creative contributors

Informing planning-

Curriculum planning is produced based on skills, knowledge and understanding appropriate to the cohort age-group and ability; these plans include learning opportunities and activities that have been generated by the children. As a starting point, curriculum planning identifies the aspects of the four purposes being developed through each topic. These pupil voice opportunities are based on the children's initial on-going interests/suggestions.

Evaluating Learning-

Throughout a topic and at the end of the topic, children are given opportunities to evaluate their learning and reflect on the ideas and questions they raised at the beginning of the topic. Questions and ideas may be added at various points during a topic, as learning takes place. Children should use Afl strategies, to reflect on their learning and opportunities for children to evaluate their learning should be planned for and evident within their books.

Rights and Responsibilities

Pupil voice is embedded in all aspects of our school life. We provide children with opportunities to contribute to school improvement because we believe pupil participation is fundamental to children's wellbeing and development as successful individuals and to the success of our school. Through pupil participation we encourage all pupils to think about their rights and responsibilities and those of others.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people a comprehensive set of right. It sets out in detail what every child needs to have a safe, happy and fulfilled childhood regardless of their sex, religion, social origin, and where and to whom they were born. The Convention gives children and young people over forty substantive rights, including the right to:

- Special protection measures and assistance
- Access to services such as education and healthcare
- Develop their personalities, abilities and talents to the fullest potential
- Grow up in an environment of happiness, love and understanding
- Be informed about and participate in achieving their rights in an accessible and active manner

As a Rights Respecting School we are committed to the UNCRC and to its implementation. We aim to ensure that pupils are aware of their rights as stated in the UNCRC. We encourage the

children to recognise and value their own rights and the rights of others. We believe our pupils are treated fairly and with respect; we strive to support children in overcoming challenges and give them the confidence to reach their full potential, in a safe and secure environment.

For learners working below the expected levels at either FP or KS2, we use the needs of the learner as a starting point and adapt the curriculum accordingly. Sufficient flexibility exists within the curriculum to meet the needs of learners and promote inclusion. For learners working at higher levels, we provide greater challenge by using material in ways that extend breadth and depth of study and opportunities for independent learning. The level of demand is also increased through the development and application of literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum.

We seek to remove barriers to learning with imaginative curriculum delivery that will use the best of innovative educational practice and enterprise to transform learning and teaching. We seek to provide an inspirational learning environment based on a personalised style of learning. Learning is at our core and we believe it will broaden horizons, raise aspirations and enhance student's self-confidence as successful learners, both now and in the future.