



Holy Trinity College

Pupil Voice and Participation Policy

'Holy Trinity College is a Catholic, maintained school committed to providing high quality educational opportunities for each pupil to develop his/her unique talents to the full in a secure, caring environment.'

Promoting – Inspiration, Innovation and Excellence.



April 2017

Participation means that it is my right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing any action that might affect me. Having a voice, having a choice.

The belief that

'Pupils themselves have a huge potential contribution to make, not as passive object but as active players in the education system ' (Partnership with pupils 1998)
underpins the aim of the pupil voice and participation in Holy Trinity College, which serve to give pupils the participation that they need in their own education.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 12 of the Convention says that 'young people should have a voice on issues that affect their lives. In Holy Trinity College, Pupils Voice and Participation is the set of systems through which our pupils are enabled to give their opinions and suggestions on life in school in an open, honest, secure and constructive way. Student leadership enables students to actively participate in the day-to-day running and improvement of the College.

We planned and identified areas for improvement using

- I. Pupil Participation' DENI Circular 2014
- II. Resources from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young peoples (NICCY) Democra-School guidance pack.
- III. Every Schools a Good School – A Policy for School Improvement 2008
- IV. Effective Practice and Self-Evaluation Questions for Post-Primary 2017 (ETI)

Principles

Pupil Voice activities have a direct impact on the individuals who have their voices heard. They:

1. Enable pupils to make a positive contribution to their learning environment.
2. Increase engagement with school and learning and counter disaffection.
3. Give a better understanding of young people's insights and capabilities.
4. Form the basis for developing democratic principles and practice.

Opportunities to gather pupil voice permeate and inform all areas of school life gathered through:

1. Consultation with student groups about things that matter in school.
2. Evaluation of the learning experience.
3. Systematic collection and evaluation of the views of pupils, across the spectrum of their school experience.

In Holy Trinity College, we value all forms of pupil participation and the important contribution these can make in supporting pupils as key stakeholders and decision-makers in our school. We are committed to finding meaningful ways of giving our pupils a voice, listening to them, respecting and responding to their views and by doing so enabling our pupils to understand that their opinions count.

'Hearing pupils' voices and responding in a timely manner is the key to effective participation.' (DENI Circular 2014)



Benefits of the Pupil Voice and Participation Programme

'Pupil participation is about ensuring and developing a culture within schools where pupils have a voice, and have the opportunity to play an active role in decisions that affect their learning and well-being.' (NICCY)

What are the benefits for the pupils?

- Improved emotional Health and Well-being
- Better educational outcomes
- Development of life skills such as problem solving, negotiation and decision making
- Increased respect for those who are different to them
- Enhanced confidence, self-esteem and motivation
- Development of knowledge, understanding and skills that can lead to increased learning outcomes
- Familiarity with group, leadership and democratic processes
- Better personal, social and organisational skills
- Increased responsibility, involvement and commitment to the school and the community

What are the benefits for the school?

- Happier children and young people
- Better communication/relationships between staff and children and a more cohesive school community
- School policies are more likely to be successful where they are clearly understood and accepted by all partners within the school community
- Improvements in engagement, learning and teaching
- Improvements in pupil behaviour and school ethos
- Improvement to the school environment
- Teachers and pupils can work together and share responsibility for school matters
- Improved communication between pupils and teachers, SLT and governors.
- The identification of shared goals between pupils and staff.
- Improvement in behaviour with pupils taking greater responsibility for their own behaviour, as well as improved learning.

What are the benefits for the community?

- Less anti-social behaviour
- Empower young people with heightened awareness of local and global issues and a greater sense of social responsibility to tackle wider issues, such as poverty, crime and health
- Improvements within the local community
- Improved relationships with parents and the wider community
- Valuing of education by parents and the community.

Practice

Pupils need to be encouraged and enabled to participate in a variety of decision-making processes within a school, with due regard to their age and abilities. Participation can take many forms, informal discussions; pupil evaluation; suggestion boxes; pupil surveys; focus groups; school councils and many more.

Outlined below are some examples of involving children and young people in the process.



- Curriculum choices where the curriculum is tailored to meet the needs, interests and abilities of the pupils.
- Mentoring/Buddying – Senior pupils receiving training and responsibility to support younger pupils
- Peer Mentoring – Senior pupils supporting younger pupils in their reading or maths.
- ‘Helping Hands’ Project – Senior pupils supporting the learning in the classroom.
- Developing school policies such as promoting positive behaviour and reward systems, learning and teaching, attendance, anti-bullying, assessment and marking.
- Identification of future priorities for the School Development Plan to give pupils the opportunity to express their views on whole school development.
- Dealing with matters such as pupil welfare, school meals, healthy eating, school uniform and school transport.
- Extra-curricular/lunch-time/enrichment activities
- Fundraising
- Improvements to the school environment
- Developing links to other schools
- Sports Leaders
- Student leadership Team with specific roles ('17-'18)
- Introduction of Anti-Bullying ambassadors ('17-'18)
- Re-introduction of Class Prefects and time-tabled meetings with the HOKS to review and evaluate aspects of school life. ('17-'18)
- Pupils' evaluations of the Induction programmes used to plan Induction Programmes the following academic year.
- In Year, the Enrichment programme for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities.
- Debating Society
- Opportunities to participate in Art, Sport, Music, ICT, Enterprise and Drama outside the curriculum.
- Shared Education opportunities
- Pupils' views sought and used to inform planning of termly rewards in the Promoting Positive Behaviour for Learning Initiative.
- Pupils with additional learning needs involved in decisions that affect their learning and well-being through IEPs. Pupils are also consulted when they have their annual reviews.
- Assessment for learning which encourages a view of assessment as an essential part of everyday classroom practice involving teachers and learners in reflection, dialogue, decision-making and target-setting.
- Re-introduction of the Eco-Club who actively promote their work.
- Pupils evaluate the learning experience during Form-period to inform future planning.
- Students act as hosts to Primary 6 and 7 pupils during Taster day and new intake events.
- Pupils to evaluate their own learning ('17-'18)
- Assemblies
- Suggestion/Comment boxes placed at regular intervals throughout the school.
- Use of imagery such as ‘This is a listening school’ to demonstrate to pupils that their views are listened to. ('17-'18)
- Year Group Pastoral Noticeboard to celebrate pupils' participation
- Review Magazine to highlight and celebrate pupils' achievements
- Plasma screen to highlight and celebrate pupils' achievements
- Pupil elections of members of the school council.
- Pupil membership of PTA and BOG

Acknowledging and Rewarding Participation

Through the Promoting Positive Behaviour for Learning Initiative pupils are rewarded to participation. Three achievement points are awarded for the following

- Assisting in Taster Days
- Assisting in the Open Night



- ICT Club
- Junk Kouture
- Traditional Group
- Choir
- Pope John Paul 11
- A Range of Sporting Activities
 - Gaelic
 - Handball
 - Netball
 - Cross-country
 - Running Club
 - Camogie
 - Golf
 - Basket-ball
- Debating
- Participating in Charitable fund-raising
- Peer Support
- Student Council
- Participation in Assembly

The main reward for participation, however, should be the celebration of improvement in the quality of provision for participants, the local community and the next generation.

School Councils

'The establishment of a School Council is not an end in itself but rather offers all concerned an enhanced means of building partnerships and effective communication within the school.'

(DENI Circular: Pupil Participation 2014)

The School Council is a means through which young people represent their peers and can be valuable in providing a process for children and young people's participation in the decision making structure of the school. The School Council works well because it gives the pupils a voice, develops their personal and social skills and enhances citizenship. The Council works hard to try to improve aspects of school life and has been an important and useful method to provide leadership and development opportunities for pupils. There is a lead teacher who works with the Council and is the link person between pupils, staff and management.

Monitoring and Evaluating Pupil Participation and Voice

Pupil participation and pupil voice are monitored and evaluated by the Lead teacher and SLT in line with other existing procedures for curriculum development.