



investing in children

Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Blue Coat Junior School Junior School

Blue Coat Junior School is a Church of England voluntary aided school in Newton Hall. Andrea Cox is the Head teacher and after being in post for one year has enhanced the existing student voice with more opportunities for children to participate in the life of the school.

Evidence of dialogue and change is provided by a host of children from various groups and some children who use the systems that are set in place to support them in their day at school.

The Welcome Gang – The Smiley Blues

The welcome gang is a newly formed group of children chosen to support new starters in school. Anna, Josh, Rhiannon, Scott, Sophie, Sarah, Daniel and Grace met with me to tell me about The Smiley Blues. **'Smiley Blues' is the name, which the group has chosen for themselves.** The children told me about how they voted for their new name, and this name was Scott's idea. Well-done Scott!

The role of the group is to welcome new children into Blue Coat Junior School. Ten new children started school in September and since January another ten have started. There are children from all over the world, some who can speak English, some who can't, and one little boy who chooses not to.

The group told me that they: -

- Design posters
- Make welcome cards
- Support the new children to get to know the school and help them make friends.

Anna told me ***"we have training to see if we can put ourselves in other people's shoes. We make the new people feel welcome."***

The whole team also includes – Daniel G, Caitlin, Gracie, Liam, James, Olivia, Alex and Chris. All of the children agreed that this was a good group to have in school and so far they think it is going well.

SNAG – School Nutrition Action Group

I met with Jessica, Mark, Sarah, Matthew, Daniel, Alex and Sophie, just some of the members of the SNAG group, to find out what they do.

Daniel told me ***"we talk to classes, we do surveys and try and change menus into what everyone likes and make it healthy."*** Daniel also went on to say, ***"since we've started this, quite a few of my friend's say that the school dinners have improved."***

Sophie told me that the children ***"get some paper and we ask questions in class about people's favourite foods and we try to put these into the menu's, we work with the dinner nannies and the cook."*** The SNAG meetings happen every month and all of the children agreed that they get listened to. Mark said ***"we try and encourage everyone to bring in a healthy snack and some water at break time."***

Daniel also told me about the ***"mashed potato testing."*** During the morning all of the children discussed one thing – the mashed potato!

The SNAG group told me that they did taste testing and chose the one the children liked the best, which was "smash" - **chosen by the children as the best mashed potato for the children.** However each group of children I met with mentioned the mashed potato. I did not ask – honest – it was a recurring theme! The mashed potato apparently "glows

in the dark.” I did speak with Mrs Cox after my meeting with the children and asked her to investigate this further. On my return visit Mrs Cox told me that she has spoken to Scholarest and hopefully things will improve. (I must say a big thank you to everyone for taking this as a bit of fun, but also respecting what the children said and dealing with it.)

Another idea the children have is to create a display about healthy foods, this idea came from some of the children who are part of the Healthy Schools Working party.

Buddies

Lucy, Niall, Daniel, Josh, Jessica, Bethany, Caitlin, Alex, Chloe, Becca, Lewis, Charlotte, Zoe and Erin were the Buddies I met with. They were all very keen to tell me about their role as a Buddy, and what they do. The Buddies have a rota, which can change every half term, **if the children want it to** but **“everyone is happy with it at the moment.”**

The group told me how they take care of the classes during indoor break. “The year 6’s are old enough to look after themselves but the Buddies set games up for the younger children.” The Buddies also organise games on a lunchtime. “We have a toy bag and we organise football.” “We also have a timber trail and markings on the school yard.”

The Buddies also told me about how they are trained by the Anti-Bullying Service and Miss Pickersgill. They also meet with Miss Pickersgill monthly to discuss any issues or problems they have. The children said **“we don’t always go to the teachers; we call another buddy over to help us. If we can’t sort it out, we write a note in the Buddy book.”**

I asked the children how they were recognised and they said, **“we wear a hat and we have badges.”** They also said **“we have a Buddy bench which the children can sit on if they want us to help them.”** The bench was donated to school in memory of Miss Pickersgill’s Grandparents.

The School Council

I met with Bethany, Josh, Sam, Emily Robbie, Alice, Rachel and Niall who represented the School Council. The group meets every Monday morning to discuss the issues that the children of their class have written on the suggestion board. The children discuss with Miss Pickersgill what might and might not be possible and after their discussion the reps give feedback to their classes.

The group also told me that they have assessed the responses from the pupil questionnaires, which have also resulted in change. The children highlighted some of the changes in school whist they have been involved, and some changes that were made by last year’s school council: -

- After school club – there are more after school clubs as suggested by the children.
- New ICT chairs
- More books
- New pieces on the Timber Trail
 - The children measured the space available for the Timber Trail.
 - The group chose swings, a bridge and a climbing wall and discussed the position of the equipment.
 - The picture prepared by the makers displayed a swing with chains, the children asked for it to be changed to rope.
- Creation of a Tidy Cloakroom Award – winning classes are chosen by the School Council.
- Charity Days – the School Council
 - Choose which charity to support e.g. NSPCC, special causes relevant to the children, for example the children took part in Jeans for Genes day in memory of a relative of Sam. Altogether the children raised £2895.73 last year. Well done.
 - Advertise the events e.g. make posters, tell children what to wear, choose an activity i.e. skipping, math’s challenge.

- Where to put the picnic tables in the school grounds.
- Markings for the playground – a space for multiskills, activity warm up area and a football court.

The last group of children I met with were the School **Monitors** who are a group of children that all have an important role to play in school. Dan, Adam, Hayden, Aaron, Gemma, Courtney and Bethany are just some of the children who have extra responsibility in school.

Bethany - OHP in Assembly now
Laptop – puts songs onto the screen
Mrs Cox's right hand woman

Courtney & Hayden – Office, answering phones
Greeting visitors.
Helping over lunchtime
There are 10 office monitors on a rota

Gemma & Andrew – ICT, responsible for turning on and off the computers and the screens.

There are 10 ICT monitors

P.E. Monitors – There are 5 P.E. monitors who pump up the footballs, collect the new stuff from reception and put it in the store cupboard and sort it out.

There are also:

Candle monitors – light the candles in assembly
Music monitors – music onto CD's for assembly
Light monitors – switch lights on and off

The children had to write an application for their job, saying why they thought they would be good at it. Mrs. Cox told me that visitors and parents who have encountered the monitors have rang to say how good the children are at their jobs.

'The Chosen Ones'

I also asked to see some children who do not have a role within the school. When I met with Joe, Allise, Becky, Jake, Connor, Neve and Will we briefly chatted about what to call this little selective group. Randoms? No - we decided on the Chosen Ones. All of the children were able and keen to tell me about what happens in school and how it happens.

Becky – ***“We don't tell the School Council, we write our ideas down on the suggestion sheet. The sheet is on a clipboard in class.”***

Joe – ***“The School Council takes it and ticks the good ideas.”***

“The feedback from meetings is good, they tell us what is going to be done and what isn't.”

“We are going to get climbing walls, log swings and a bridge on the Timber Trail.”

“This is a much better school for dinner than the infants cos you can sit with a packed lunches, we can sit anywhere.”

“We are trying bigger tables as well.”

“This school is much better.”

Will – ***“In the dining hall we have a choice of metal or plastic cutlery, both are there.”***

Ellise – *“I think its good how we have Buddies, there is a friendship bench outside. If the teachers are busy the Buddies are there to be your friend.”*

“We have lots of fun days at the end of term and we have votes on what to wear. We dressed in pink and red on Valentine’s Day, we came in out PJ’s and once in rainbow colours.”

Joe – *“We have new chairs in ICT, we picked the chairs.”*

“In Anti-Bullying week the School Council organise all the activities in the school.”

“We are involved in organising our 300th Birthday.”

“We are designing a t-shirt which will be available.”

“Our class has sponsored a dog call Chad (class 4P).”

“We have Simply Sport training with Craig every week each class has a different session.”

“Each year 6 has a football team.”

“We do performing arts and we take part in the end of year show. At Christmas we do a play and everyone has a part.” (That is 220 children altogether.)

“On Friday’s there is a star assembly. We can earn points and get prizes and certificates.”

“Year 6 go on a trip to Dalguise, they get to go after SATS, it’s a treat. They do canoeing, rock climbing, and go on a zip wire. It’s great.”

Conclusion

As you can see by the length of my report I met with lots of children who had plenty to say. All of the children were very confident in telling me about the roles that are available to them in school and how all of the systems work. It is clear that the children are involved in a big way in the life of the school and can affect change for the benefit of all. I think one thing that is clear from comments the children have made is that they are very proud of their school and their enthusiasm and energy clearly reflects this.

Mrs Cox as Headteacher, Miss Pickersgill who co-ordinates the School Council and other groups, and the staff team are committed to the children participating in school, in what happens and what changes. I believe that the children in Blue Coat Junior School very definitely are listened to and enjoy the changes that come about as a result of their discussions and hard work. The children have read and agreed with my report and therefore I have no hesitation in recommending that Bluecoat Junior School receives its Investing in Children membership.

Helen Mulhearn
Investing in Children
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