



investing in children

Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Cotherstone Primary School

I visited Cotherstone Primary school and met with several members of the School Council and the Headteacher. Over the past year the school council have been involved in lots of activities and various projects.

The school council is elected every term and is made up of one young person from each year group. This enables every child to be on, and experience the school council during their time at the school.

Young people wanting to stand for a position on the council make a speech and then allow pupils to vote in a secret ballot.

The group then meet fortnightly, *“we all got voted on in our class, we had suggestions of why we should get voted on and gave a speech.”*

“I just wanted to go on the school council so that I could make decisions” Alex

Opportunities for Dialogue and Change

Appointment of Staff

Members of the school council were involved in the appointment of the headteacher.

Friends of the School

The council links with The Friends of the School group to feedback any items raised at their meetings and vice versa. Every year the council receive a budget of £50 from Friends of the School to spend on whatever they like.

“We have bought playground games and a fish tank for the school”

“Friends of the School discuss the same as our school council”

“We have a certain amount of money that we have raised or have been given.”

“We look through the catalogues for playground equipment. We bought a big board for our playground rules to go on”

Playground Rules

The school council worked together to make some school playground rules. They include:

- Tell the truth
- Be kind – don't hurt or tease
- Be polite and thoughtful – don't be rude or bully others
- Share toys and play fair – don't use toys incorrectly
- Take care of equipment – don't spoil the playground games

“We came up with some playground rules and they are on the big board in the yard.”
Alex and Chè

“This year we put a new rule in that if you are naughty you have to sit in the hall for a full break in silence.”

Involving the whole school in decision making

The school tries to involve all the children in decision making at the school. There are lots of ways the children can be involved. These are:

- Before every school council meeting, each class discuss what agenda items they think should be discussed.

“We have class council meetings, and circle times in the lower classes so anyone can have a say.”

“We sit on the carpet and have a whiteboard in class. Miss Godard asks us if we have any suggestions”
Sarah

“We also have a book to write in”

“We have a suggestion box and bricks in the hall with questions that get changed all the time.”

Our Dream School

An event took place at the school where pupils got the opportunity to have a say about what would make their dream school.

A display was made and is up in the school hall and the council and the headteacher are trying to work towards getting what the children want.

The following ideas that the children came up with are:

- Have more non-uniform days
- A bike shed
- Vegi patch
- Lessons outside in nice weather
- Bringing music into school
- A healthy snack bar at breaks
- A cookery club or more cooking in class

Agenda items currently being discussed:

Football strips and footballs

“We are trying to raise money to get a new strip”

“We’ve lost millions of footballs so we are going to get some more”

“I have been in two meetings and we discussed getting footballs and getting a new strip”
Edward

Menus in Class

“Each class now have menus displayed in the class”

Clubs

“We have a say in what clubs are run after school”

“The school council decide on the clubs we have, we nearly have one on every day”

Toilets/Handwashing

A discussion had taken place because the children wanted the toilets to be nicer. It was decided that a different cleaning material was to be used and different prices for hand-washes would be investigated.

Other Projects

Bring and Buy Sale

“We had a bring and buy sale and raised £256.44. We used it to buy playground games. You brought stuff in after school and we had a big sale”

“We bought loads of playground games”

Blue Peter Appeal

“We got to make a box to try and get people to put things in”

“We had a box to put mobile phones and money in etc. to raise money for the Blue Peter Appeal. We took it to the post office and it went to children in Africa and a school over there.”

School Dinners

“We arranged a meeting with one of the school governors who is responsible for school dinners as we wanted a load of questions answered”

“Ages ago we got to decide what healthy food we like to be on the school menu and we get to have one unhealthy thing a week like cod and chips”

“We have a bowl of fruit at lunch for you to get some”

Other opportunities for Dialogue and Change

“We voted to see whether or not the older young people should bring in pencil cases or not”

“We had a competition at the school to design our own logo”

“The school council ran a stall at the school fair and also held a sponsored run to raise funds”

“We have talked about sponsoring and linking with a school in Africa”

“We have been thinking about taking away the French skipping ropes because people are not using them correctly. Instead we are thinking about getting big skipping ropes”

“Mrs Jellis did the London marathon so as a school we ran up and down the field, the same amount of times there is in miles for the marathon, to help and support her.”

Following our discussion on topics and projects they are currently involved in, I asked about any changes or ideas they had for the future and I was told:

“We have gym after school but not everyone can go so I would like it to be available to years 5 and 6, because it’s only for years 4 and under at the minute”

“We have a butterfly garden at the top of the field and used to have a Green fingers club but it’s gone now, so it would be good to have that back, and also a cookery club.”

“Last year they changed the way the sports day was run. It’s now really competitive, before it used to be fun and everyone encouraged each other. We would like it back to how it was before, because it was better then”

“It would be good if we got some more picnic benches so in the summer we could have dinner outside if we brought packed lunches”

“At Easter the year 6’s had an egg rolling competition which was really good for all the school. I think this should happen again”

“We are currently looking at the new law about booster seats and are trying to raise money to buy some. We have a lighthouse at the school which will light up when we have raised all the money.”

“Finally when I asked the children if they felt they are listened to at the school, the all said:

“YES, Definitely, we are a lot!!”

Conclusion

For the purpose of this evaluation, the information presented demonstrates the range of issues covered by the School Council. The discussions that took place with the members of the school council revealed that there is a lot of excellent work going on and that the children are involved and have every opportunity to have their say.

From the commitment of the school council and the supportive staff who work together to achieve change, I was extremely impressed with my visit to the school. The group I met with were all happy to endorse what I have written, so it’s on their behalf that I would like to recommend that Cotherstone Primary School receive Investing in Children Membership.

Eleanor Seed
Investing in Children
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