



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Hermitage Comprehensive School

Since the last Membership evaluation the work in Hermitage Comprehensive School has continued. The effective work of the school council has enabled young people to have an active voice and role in decision making at the school.

During my visits I met with both the school council and Mr Stout, the teacher who supports the school council.

This evaluation will detail the ways in which the young people are involved in dialogue and change at the school, the type of projects they are involved in and quotes from various school council members.

Opportunities for Dialogue and Change/ Young People's Views

I started my discussions by asking the young people how they got involved in the school council and was told;

'We are nominated by our form groups and elected onto the year council then onto the school council'

'Some people are just picked, depending on what year you are in'

'You are on the school council for a year and we have meetings every three weeks'

'Generally the agenda is set by the teachers but we can always add things if we want to'

Fundraising

The group told me about the numerous fundraising activities they have been involved in. These include:

The Hermitage Mile

This event takes place at the start of the year.

'The six formers get dressed up in fancy dress!'

'Each year we get to decide on what charity the money raised goes to'

Children in Need/Comic Relief

'During this day, we have fundraisers at lunchtime''

'We have all sorts of activities going on''

'We also do games and stalls to raise money'

African Day

'Every year we have an African Day at the school'

'You get to go into different classrooms and the teachers organise things like making boxes and rulers, learning how to cook African food, an African drummer and African dancers also come into the school. It's really Good!!!'

Non Uniform Day

'We have a non uniform day once a term - We get to decide where the money raised goes...'

'During the last week of term at the end of the year we all get a chance to do an activity'

'We get a letter which tells us all the things on offer'

'We can choose from Ice Skating, Arts and Crafts, trips out like the Forbidden Corner'

'Even the one's who are not well behaved get to do something but they have to stop in school'

Teacher Appointments

'We get to be involved in the appointment of staff'

'We appointed our Spanish Teacher'

'We also were involved in getting the new Technology Teacher'

'We get to write the questions for interview and other pupils are involved in the acting out a classroom situation'

Water Dispensers

'We got them put around the school; they are available for all the school to use'

Suggestion Box

'The suggestion box is still in existence at the school. Students can raise issues and concerns they have to the school council to be addressed'

'There is a sign up for people to bring ideas'

Mobile Phones

Following last years evaluation where it was highlighted that some teachers did not switch off their mobile phones during class. The members of the school council said this has now improved, however, they did mention that some teachers use their Bluetooth to search to see if pupils have their phones on during class.

Life Channel

There are TV's throughout the school that have rolling programmes on them all the time. The issues addressed on the programmes are bullying, stress, eating well etc... (The strands from Every Child Matters)

The young people thought this was a good idea but felt they would have liked to have been consulted more before it was installed.

'We can ask for things to be put on, but you have to do it yourself and this takes time'

'It would be good if we could put something on it a few times a year'

'The song "Crazy" is on all the time - They should change it!!!'

Film Clubs

In the hall during lunch times a full film is shown over the week and up to 300 pupils have, and do, regularly join in the activity.

Student Questionnaires

These continue to happen and offer students four to five opportunities a year to have direct conversations with the head teachers.

Family Learning

The five strands of the Every Child Matters outcomes have been developed as a training package for families. There is a bronze, silver and gold award. Parents have been invited into school for an evening to find out about the scheme.

School Uniform

'We complained about wearing a shirt and tie in the summer so we now have a polo shirt and we got to choose the colour'

Drama Hall

The drama hall is now completely refurbished. *'It's much better now as a dance studio, you are able to book it out if you want to practice things'*

Vending Machines

It was highlighted in last years report that pupils requested vending machines of some description. These are now in place. They do not sell chocolate and the school recently won the healthy school award.

'We would now like more vending machines'

Catering/School Lunches

Over recent years there has been a lot of complaints about the quality of the food and the standard of the food. It was decided that the school would withdraw from the Scholarest contract and manage their own catering. The school employs the same staff team but now

have more direct control over the food quality and what is offered. The school has also been able to provide a range of training for the catering team which is better in preparing them for working with children and young people.

The young people I met with to read through the report agreed that *'Since we changed in September there has been a big improvement'*.

'The prices of food are still expensive though. We have been told it's because they want to keep the quality of food good and they need to make a profit to cover costs'

'We don't like it that we can't buy two drinks or have a sweet on its own. We think this should change'

SNAG Group - School Nutritional Action Group

This is a group made up of pupils, teachers and catering staff. They meet to discuss issues around school meals etc...

Abbey told me *'We meet up as a group and feedback on dinners. We got the new contract in September and it's much better'*

Packed Lunch

The school council told me how they are able to now bring packed lunches into school - However in the past there has been difficulty with *'What you can and can't eat!!'*

'Some pupils were getting their lunches searched and if they had unhealthy food they would have a phone call home'

'It was an invasion of our privacy so we complained'

'Its much better now but could still be better'

Timetable Change

'We have a new timetable and our lunchtimes have changed''

'On Fridays we will finish at 1pm''

'Instead of having guidance and welfare as a lesson we will have 1/2 hour on a lunchtime each day then 1/2 hour lunch. Sounds like a good idea''.

'Lunch will be staggered on a Friday and students can choose to stay or go''

'There will be lots of activities on a Friday if people want to do them''

'Sixth formers will be paid to stay back and help''

'This was discussed with us first and the staff, then it was sent out for all students and parents to comment on''

Conclusion

Following my discussions with the pupils and staff it is evident that there is certainly opportunities for young people to be involved in dialogue and change. All the pupils I spoke to feel they are certainly listened to.

The Investing in Children principles are clearly demonstrated at the Hermitage School and in respect of the work done in partnership between the students and staff team, on behalf of the young people I met with, I have no hesitation but to recommend Hermitage Comprehensive School has its Investing in Children Membership Renewed.

This report has been endorsed by the members of the school council.

Eleanor Seed
Investing in Children
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