



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

St. Andrew's Primary School

St. Andrew's Primary School is located in Woodhouse Close area of Bishop Auckland.

For this evaluation I had the pleasure of talking to:

- Austin
- Leon
- Sandra
- Marc
- Lauren W
- Alex
- Demi

The school has a school council of young people which takes ideas and suggestions from all pupils. The Head Teacher Miss Yates recently wanted to find out how school could be made more enjoyable for pupils at KS2. Helen Jeffries from Specialist Support was approached to help out with this process. A survey was carried out asking questions relating to happiness, respect from adults and well being. Following this a one hour session took place with Class 4 asking quite open questions such as 'what makes school enjoyable?' and 'what would make school more enjoyable?' and 'what would make lessons more enjoyable?'

What makes school enjoyable / more enjoyable?

The young people listed playtime, friends, nice teachers, P.E. and after school club as some of the things they liked most. It naturally followed that in order to make school more enjoyable, they would like more of the things such as longer playtime and after school clubs. However, the young people also asked for better outdoor facilities including new benches and a wildlife area. They also made comments about lunchtime provision and wanted more water with their food; proper plates instead of a tray; and to get the pudding after so it didn't go cold.

- Austin – "Helen and group looked at how to improve the playground. Wanted a relaxation room and a garden club. Ideas came from all pupils and went to school council."
- Marc – "We decided to have a big fence to stop the ball going in river."
- Sandra – "We want games tables."
- Marc – "Some didn't like playtime because of the bullies."

What makes lessons enjoyable / more enjoyable?

When asked what made lessons enjoyable Class 4 mentioned amongst other things having a good teacher, using ICT in other lessons, and when its interesting. The things that they thought could improve lessons mostly related to treatment by fellow pupils, such as others "not laughing when answer a question wrong"; others "keeping their hands and feet to themselves"; others "not copying". Young people were also allowed to put suggestions in

a box if they didn't want to raise issues in the class. Most of these suggestions related to improvements to the outdoor areas.

Empowering young people

When the young people decided they would like to improve the outdoor areas, the school wanted to empower them with as much relevant knowledge as possible. The school arranged for them to visit other schools to look at what they had done, and also gave them catalogues of play equipment and outdoor resources to help them make decisions.

- Leon – “We went to different schools with Martin and Helen to get ideas how we could improve playground.”
- Sandra – “We went to Evenwood and Escomb schools and we liked the friendship bench so you can tell buddies what is wrong.”
- Lauren – “We wanted a chair we could swing. We wanted giant pencils but they could be dangerous.”
- Alex – “Evenwood had climbing frames and a nursery.”

The school is currently responding to this piece of research and the ongoing work of the school council by working with young people on solutions:

- Alex – “Helen and Miss Yates looked at the survey results with the school council to get ideas for changes.”
- Lauren – “We want a cake stall to raise money for improvements.”
- Austin – “They tell us when we can't have what we want and it's usually because it costs too much.”
- Sandra – “I am happy the way we have been involved.”
- Leon – “Did a display from pictures taken at other schools during research.”

The young people were really excited and ran to get the plans from the Headteacher to explain to me what was happening next. They talked me through the plans drawn up by the County Council Architects and the reasons for Health and Safety for installation of the play equipment and Access issues for people with disabilities. The plans are to be formally presented in a school assembly on 17th October.

I asked the young people if there was anything they wanted to add about the work they had been doing or the school in general:

- Leon – “We should not have buddies cos we shouldn't need them!”
- Lauren – “Some plans are quite good and should take place.”
- Austin – “Feel good and excited because playground needs new things and will be better.”
- Marc – “Need more activities we have got gaps.”

Examples of dialogue and change:

Dialogue	Change
Young people felt intimidated to answer questions in class as people sometimes laughed	The class held a 'Getting along better' session and devised a code of conduct for the class
Young people wanted better outdoor facilities	Plans have been devised based on young people's research and ideas
Young people wanted a gardening club and a wildlife area	Helen wrote a bid for money (awarded £500) to buy gardening tools and Groundwork West Durham are helping the young people to set up a garden and wildlife area

Conclusion

St. Andrew's Primary has a very good attitude to involving young people at the school in open dialogue and making real changes based on the issues raised. Empowering the young people with enough knowledge to help make informed decisions and involving them in solutions, shows the school has adopted a fully rounded model of participation.

Recommendations

For the future I would expect that this good example of dialogue continues with the young people and that they are fully involved in making decisions about all aspects of the school.

There are other issues which were mentioned by the young people, such as the lunchtime issues, but I have not been told how the school is going to deliver on those. I would like to see that some of these and other issues are addressed by the next evaluation.

Endorsement

I visited the school again on 20th November to ask the young people for feedback on this report and for their agreement. At this meeting Demi told me that since my last visit "we did an assembly about what we'd been doing including talking to you (Angela); about the buddies; the research at Escomb and Evenwood and the playground plans. We showed everyone the plans using laptop and whiteboard. Got good feedback from children in assembly." Marc gave me his copy of the presentation notes to go in the IiC file of evidence.

I again explained to the young people what the Investing in Children award was all about and asked if they thought their school should get it. On the back of a draft report they wrote the following:

- Alex, Marc, Austin and Sandra wrote "Yes."
- Lauren – "Good, I would like it if we got the award."
- Demi – "I think it will be good if we get the award because we have tried very well."
- Leon – "Yes and we've put a lot of effort into it."

Based on what the young people have said about how they are listened to and how change occurs as a result, and with their endorsement of this report on 20th November, I am happy to recommend that St. Andrew's Primary School is awarded Investing in Children status.

Angela Stobbart
Investing in Children
December 2007