



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Elemore Hall School

For the purpose of this evaluation I met with Aaron, Jonathan, Steven, Liam, Leslie, Chelsey, Kevin and Stephen who are members of the school council.

Elemore Hall School is a Special Education Needs school offering support to young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties and is situated on the outskirts of Durham. The school provides both a formal education curriculum and a vocational education programme to meet the needs of young people who attend the school. It also has a six night residential provision, offering support for some young people who attend the school.

Most young people who attend the school are boys aged 9-16 years who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school use a structured behaviour management system to reduce behaviour incidents and improve the wellbeing of the school.

This report will highlight opportunities the young people have had, to be active members of the school and be responsible for some aspects of decision making through dialogue with the school council. It will identify any changes that have occurred as a result of this.

Opportunities for Dialogue and Change.

School Councils Meetings

The school council is made up of the pupils who are voted in as representatives for their class. They are voted on by the class during school elections by everyone in September. The school council meets every Friday after break to discuss different issues raised by pupils and staff.

Jonathan a member of the school council, explained **“We all speak to our mates in the class about what they want to do and bring them to the meeting, like wanting a full monty breakfast for non residential pupils”**.

Aaron added, “The class vote you in”.

The school teachers lead by the Deputy Head of the school, Mr Fearnside responds to all requests and ideas the school council raise during these meetings. The following is a list of examples of issues addressed by the Council.

Breakfast

‘Full monty’ breakfasts for non residential school pupils; Mr Fearnside explained that a full English breakfast could not be made available for financial reasons. The council then asked for toast and drinks to be provided for breakfast, which has now been put into place, highlighting what can be achieved when pupils and teachers work in partnership on decision making. It would be interesting if the school council met more regularly to further enhance the positive start Elemore Hall School Council has made in its first year.

Football Strips

The school council looked at many different football strips and spoke to their class mates about what colours and design they should have to represent the school and they decided a blue body strip with red and white sleeves.

Games/Gym Basement

Elemore Hall School suffered a major flood in 2005 and many parts of the school had to be closed until all work could be completed, which included building work to the basement.

School council members were encouraged to discuss with other pupils what they would like to see the basement made into and came up with some ideas to make thing better.

Aaron explained, "Most young people decided they wanted a play station and some games for the basement". There is now a playstation and games in the basement.

Leslie did add, "We still want some more games as these are now getting old, and pupils have been asking for new games"

Notice Boards and Cabinet

Kevin explained, "I wanted to see more pictures around the school of the football team and stuff". The school responded to Kevin and other members of the school council's request by ordering the cabinet for the front hall at Elemore Hall School. This was chosen by the school council and more display boards were also added. Kevin went on to add, "I have been looking at where to place the notice boards in school".

Behaviour Management/School Council Budget

When the school council was established they were told there would be £1000 available every term to spend. However incidents of vandalism or damage to the school property, where they could not identify the person responsible, must be fixed by the money from this fund. This initiative is to improve behaviour among the pupils and was agreed by the school council and staff of the school

Steven explained, "When we met last time we spoke about what damage had been done to the school because we wanted to buy some snooker cues and new play station games "

The school are hopeful that less vandalism will take place in the school and that pupils and school council members can work together and direct how the money is spent. Since the introduction of this behaviour management system the school council have not had any money available due to reports of vandalism. It will be interesting to discover over the next year if this system improves behaviour and how young people identify where the funding could be spent.

Charity Box

This was another idea which has led to change through the school council.

Steven told me, "I came up with the idea for the charity box, McMillan Nurses, because they help people with cancer and they helped my Grandad"

It was discussed at the school council meeting to have a charity box at the tuck shop. The school council decided this was a good idea to help raise money as some pupils and staff might put their spare change in it.

Five a side Court

Another idea discussed at a school council meeting was to extend the height of the fence surrounding the Five-a-side court, as some young people had mentioned that the football was always going over the fence. Dialogue has started between school pupils, the school council and senior members of staff over the possibility of extending the height of the fencing surrounding the five-a-side court and they are looking at funding opportunities. They have also obtained some quotes for local building firms to carry out the work.

Elemore Hall School Council is only in its first year of life and is in the process of encouraging and developing an environment to allow young people the opportunity to get more involved in decision making at the school. The staff and pupils of Elemore Hall have made an encouraging start over the last year, and it will be interesting to discover next year how they build on this

For the above reasons I recommend that Elemore Hall School receives Investing in Children Membership. I look forward with anticipation to further developments and improvements the School Council and the rest of the young people make to school life over the next year and finish by saying well done to all the young people and staff at the school.

This report has been read and agreed by the following young people from Elemore Hall school:- Aaron, Liam, Stephen, Jonathan, Chelsey, Leslie and Steven.

Rob Johnson
Investing in Children
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