



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Durham Community Business College

Durham Community Business College has approx 600 students. It was formerly known as Deerness Valley Comprehensive and can be found in Ushaw Moor. For the purpose of my evaluation I met with the Student Council. When I arrived I was greeted by two of the Council who were waiting for me at reception alongside Mr Barras. Luke and Connor introduced themselves and took me to their Student Council meeting.

The Student Council meeting was chaired by Becky. Becky volunteered at the beginning of the session, as the Chairperson was unable to attend. The group worked through the agenda, discussing minutes from their last meeting, making decisions about their next move and putting new issues on the agenda. The meeting was relaxed and informative. All 30(ish) young people had a say at some point. No one shouted, they talked reasonably, discussing points raised. If a new idea was suggested the other students could answer then they did. For a large group, the meeting flowed really well. The group had decided that they would demonstrate a meeting for my benefit, then some students stayed to talk to me and others returned to class.

Becky, Lauren, Connor, Sophie, Zack, Dylan, Chris, Adrian and David talked me through their involvement with the Student Council and changes that have been made and what is happening at the moment.

This provides the evidence of dialogue and change for my evaluation.

The Student Council – The group have all been on the Council for a varying amount of time. Mrs. Elliot (my main contact in the school) facilitates the Student Council. I felt this Student Council was quite distinctive. I think it was the most relaxed Student Council that I have ever been to.

Dylan started by telling me about how he was elected onto the Student Council and has been on it since last September. Becky and Lauren attended a conference with Mrs. Elliot recently and asked about joining up, so they did. Similarly Connor asked about joining, which he did earlier this year. You can join the Student Council in three ways: -

- ❖ be elected
- ❖ volunteer
- ❖ be asked

This allows young people regardless of their background or ability to be involved if they want to be.

Sub –Groups – As the Student Council is so big the students' split up into sub groups working on parts of the agenda that are particularly interesting to them.

The New Rewards System – Sophie told me about what she was working on with the leadership team. The school has run a reward system in the past, which students were not entirely happy with. Sophie, working with students across Federation and senior leaders has developed a new **STAR** system. Please see the student tracking and rewards document attached.

Sophie, Rachael, Hannah, Cameron and Mr. Jones all got together at Chester-le-Street cricket ground to finalise the details of the document. Sophie is now preparing to brief teachers on the new system.

One of the issues now being dealt with by the Student Council across Federation is where to go on trips, when they are cashing in their rewards.

Student Governors – young people are invited to put themselves forward for the role of Student Governors. Please see the manifesto of the two Student Governors. Sophie stands alone at the moment, as Rachael has recently stepped down due to the pressure of exams. ***Sophie told me that she attends leadership meetings and takes part in all discussions, especially to do with site issues and the curriculum.***

During the Student Council meeting Sophie introduced the idea of STAR (the new reward system) and the students made further suggestions which Sophie will feedback to the others.

Website – David told me that the group are working with someone who specialises in website design. Across federation the students are designing a website. The students are looking at creating a forum for students to chat with others across Federation.

Interviews – Members of the Student Council are always involved in interviewing. The young people's panel discusses their choices and reasons with the Head Teacher.

Teaching and Learning – In order to make informed choice about what makes a good teacher all Student Council members have been involved in a teaching and learning conference. At the beginning of the academic year they went to Ramside Hall to discuss learning styles and learn how to complete lesson plans.

As with all aspects of the work of the Student Council, the group involved fed back to the whole school, through assemblies and learning mentor sessions. Therefore all students are able to think about lessons, what they like and what works for them. Student Councillors are now involved in curriculum reviews and are able to critically analyse teaching styles. ***The group I met with were keen to point out that they discuss these issues with the Senior Management Team and that all discussions are confidential.***

Fundraising – is another sub-group of the Student Council. All of the fundraising is student led. As part of the Education Welfare Service evaluation I met with Sam and Aaron who told me about the coffee mornings they organise on a break time and lunchtime. They raise money and sponsor children in third world countries, please see certificates attached. Year 11 students organised an extravaganza for Children in Need. Collectively the group organise non-uniform days and Community Days. Keep up the good work!

Enterprise Week – is a week of events to introduce students to business work and life. Part of the Student Council meeting held on the day of my visit was to organise what to do in Enterprise Week. The Council have £1500 to organise the week. The group told me about "Duck Day" – an introduction to business and enterprise for year 8/9 when they made ducks and had to sell them. The group are looking forward to planning the whole week.

Anti- Bullying Steering Group – Durham Community Business College has achieved its Anti-Bullying Accreditation by student involvement in the campaign against bullying. Students and staff worked together to produce an action plan to stop bullying in the school. ***Adrian told me about the Peer Support Group that meets at lunchtime and breakfast time. They are all peer mentor volunteers who are available to support other students if they have a problem. The group have their own room and they have advertised their service by putting posters up around school; posters the mentors created.***

On my visit to check out my evaluation Tom Cunningham the Anti Bullying Officer was also present. He was keen to point out that part of the success of the service is the time that school are prepared to give to students to develop their work. As with Education Welfare, Durham Community Business College commit space and time to the outside services to be effective in school. The young people reading the report totally agreed with these sentiments. ***They agreed that they feel supported by the school and that they do not have any problems in negotiating timeout for meetings and that everything is discussed with them.***

Youth Club – the Student Council have been involved in discussions with an Outreach Youth Worker. Becky and Lauren said that Rob is their youth worker at New Brancepeth and he is great. Connor and Adrian said that they go to Meadowfield and it's not great! The group told me that they are in the process of negotiating what they would like after school.

More evidence of dialogue and change:-

Over the past few years: -

- ❖ **The Café has changed with student involvement.**
 - School dinner contract has been changed
 - Prices were changed
 - Quality and portion sizes
 - Through discussion, taster sessions and evaluation, students were involved in choosing the new provider.
- ❖ **Paths have been widened**
 - Students felt that the pathways between buildings were too narrow to cope with the rush of students between lesson and at breaks.
 - Handrails have also been added for student safety and to make the school tidier.
 - Automatic doors have been added for easier access.
- ❖ **Toilets**
 - Key stage 3 toilets have been refurbished with student's involvement.
 - Chris said they chose the new colours, doors, seats etc.

Plans for the future:-

- ❖ **Fist Aid Training**
 - The Student Council has asked for this and it is hoped they will all be First Aid trained by the end of the term. The Red Cross is providing training.
- ❖ **To have a brighter school**
 - The Student Council has asked for the school to be decorated in brighter colours. This has been agreed and the Student Council are collecting views on colours for walls.
- ❖ **Changing in Tutor Groups**
 - The group had a lengthy discussion about 'tutor'. The first session of the school day, currently organised by mixing year groups for form a 'tutor'. The students discussed the pro's and con's
 - Pro** -Year 7's get to mix with older students making them feel more comfortable and confident in and around school.
 - Con** – year 7's don't know their year group. This issue is up for debate and the Student Council will be liaising with all students through tutor and learning groups to find out what everyone thinks.

When checking out my evaluation we had a little more discussion about this issue. The group talked about that because the groups were mixed age groups it stopped young ones coming to the school on the first day being frightened of the older ones. All the usual myths and stuff didn't seem to arise because the young people who attend the school are used to being mixed groups so it doesn't appear to be an issue.

Student participation is also highlighted throughout school by student involvement in areas, which come out of PHSCE.

ESD – Educational Sustainable Development. Recycling has been organised throughout school. The Student Council also play an active role in planning 'Sustainability Week.'

SMPC – Spiritual, Moral, Philosophical and Cultural. Sophie and Rachael organised this Multicultural Day with Mr. Motie. A day for all of KS3 to enjoy with people from around the world, Zulu dancers, Chinese dancers and Rappers. Please see photographs attached.

International Links – An exchange project with other countries. Students had to apply to go. Three were successful and shared their experience through assemblies.

A word which was used throughout the meeting with the group was “family”. Durham Community Business College does seem to have a family atmosphere within a family environment. Students are involved in real dialogue which brings about real change for students at DCBC and at Fyndoune.

Other services offered at Durham Community Business College are offered with the same kind of ethos.

EWO – A service which has just been evaluated for Investing in Children. Since his placement within the school offering students a more informal route to discuss attendance, it has now raised to 93%. As highlighted in their report and earlier in this report. ***Dave Robbins the Education Welfare Officer has his own office, and is seen as an integral part of the staff team. The young people agreed with this and said that they do know him and go to him for different things.***

The School Nurse – uses PSHE to discuss relevant issues with young people. Young people have had the opportunity to discuss delicate subjects relevant to them, such as STI’s and contraception as well as getting help to stop smoking.

All of the young people I met with, Adrian, Sophie, Becky, David, Chris, Lauren, Connor, Zack and Dylan felt that their Student Council is effective and it works.

Sophie said, “**The school has improved a lot with the Student Council and the introduction of the Student Governors**”. Becky agreed and said, “**definitely having a Student Council means that more gets done and quite quickly, like the painting, we only mentioned it last week and we’re already sorting.**”

Everyone contributed to our discussion and everyone had something positive to say. I have been back to DCBC and everyone has agreed my report. Therefore I would very much like to recommend that Durham Community Business College does indeed become an Investing in Children member in respect of their very active Student Council.

I would also like to say a special thank you to Mrs. Elliot, Miss. Jackson, Becky, Lauren, Sophie, Christopher, Dylan, Zack, Adrian, and David who also agreed to help me out at short notice and agreed to meet with Fran Farrer from the NYA and take part in the consultation about the Blueprint for Excellence for libraries. The group had a really good session with Fran and gave some valuable feedback for further discussion.

Thank you all and well done.

**Helen Mulhearn
Membership Co-ordinator
Investing in Children
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