



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Grange First School

Grange First School is in Gosforth, Newcastle, and the head teacher is Mr Easton. Grange First School is for children from nursery up to year 4. For this evaluation I had the pleasure of meeting with Maria, Daniel, Daniel, Sam, Emily, Victoria, Hizzar, Steven, Nathan, Declan, Jessica and Simone and also Mrs Gregory who works with the school council. They had a file prepared to show me with all of the work the school council have been doing, it had lots of photographs and pictures of everything they've been involved with, and they plan to keep this in the reception area of the school for visitors to look at.

Evidence of Dialogue & Change

School Council

There are four representatives from every year group, apart from the reception, in the school council. The school councillors change termly so that most children in the class can take a turn.

Daniel told me how the children can become a school councillor. **"We say a little speech, and then people can vote."** Nathan added, **"Your whole class vote, for one boy and one girl."**

Victoria told me how they get ideas from their class about what they think is important, **"We have suggestion boxes."** Nathan went on to say, **"When we have meetings we tell the people in our class that we are trying to sort it out."**

The school council meet every Friday after dinner, for an hour and a half and work hard on the suggestions made by the rest of the school, sometimes planning what to do, writing letters, and often actually getting on a doing the jobs that need to be done.

As well as asking their class for ideas anyone can go and see a school councillor with ideas. Sam told me, **"There's a notice board with pictures of us and what class we're in."**

Victoria told me that the school councillors always make sure they tell their class what has happened.

The Garden

One of the projects the school council has worked on has been the garden, because as Nathan told me, **"It was all ratty and manky."** The children went to Jesmond Dene and found out about composting and thought it would be a good idea to get a bin to put their weeds in. The children wrote to parents and asked them to help with the weeding. Steven told me, **"It was hard work."**

Victoria, Sam and Emily told me about the plants they chose for the garden, **"Apple tree, cherry tree, carrots, a nature area, flowers, a herb garden and a path."**

The children also planted a very special tree in the school grounds, **"It's special because it's rare,"** Daniel told me. It will take 60 years to be fully grown and will be taller than the school.

Daniel said, **"We planted the carrots and looked after them,"** and Nathan went on to say, **"Anne-Marie the cook cleaned them and cooked them for everyone."** There was a sign up to tell everyone that the carrots were grown by the school council and they'd like people to try them.

The school council raised money for a storage shed for the reception class toys and equipment. They asked parents to help them to paint it and they showed me the before and after pictures, and they did a great job of decorating it.

The Fence

The fence around the school was an issue brought to the school council, Sam told me, **“It was all black and boring.”** It was decided that it should be painted in bright colours, **“We painted it yellow, blue and red. I got yellow paint in my hair!”** Sam said. It is now very bright and eye-catching and the children are very pleased with it.

Interviews

When the school needed a new deputy head and a head teacher the children from the school were involved in the selection process.

The children who were in the school council at the time worked together and made a web chart with their ideas of what would make a good head teacher. Emily said, **“We asked them questions.”** Victoria went on to say, **“Things like, ‘What do they like? Why do they want to work in our school?’ Then the governors asked who we thought was best.”**

The Jubilee Room

The Jubilee Room was a big project the school council worked on. It is a fairly large room which the children felt was being wasted. Sam told me, **“The room was messy before and not nice colours.”** Victoria added, **“From outside it looked like a prison!”**

Sam told me there were lots of books and things that weren't used in the room. **“We tidied up and sorted them out, and we picked what people would like to read.”**

Everyone in the school was asked about how they thought the room should be used. All of the designs were put up in the hall with a sheet attached, and everyone, children and parents could look at them and put a tick next to the design they liked the best. The room was cleared and painted by the children and some parents who volunteered to help.

The children took me to see the Jubilee room and explained how everyone's ideas were incorporated into the room. There is a great soft play area which was a very popular idea, a lino slide and a sensory area. On the other side of the room is a library area, and across the middle of the room is a large curtain to divide the room for quiet time and fun time.

Toilets

The toilets at Grange First School were a problem for the children. Victoria told me, **“In the girls toilets people kept drawing on the walls and kicking the doors, so we told the school council.”**

The school council invited the school caretaker, Mr Mitchell to a meeting to help them sort out the problems. Mr Mitchell has put some locks on the doors that are high up, so that the older children can lock the doors, but the youngest children can't lock themselves in, as this had been a problem in the past. Mr Mitchell also painted over the marks on the walls. The children I met began to talk about the boys toilets and it seems there are some problems there so they decided to tackle them. Daniel suggested, **“We could make notices and put them up in the toilets,”** and Declan suggested, **“We could ask Mr Easton to talk about it in assembly.”**

When I returned only two weeks later to show the children this report all of this work had already been done!

Playtime Equipment

Emily told me that the school council raised money to buy playtime equipment for the school. Sam told me that they found out the kinds of things that everyone wanted and Victoria added, **“The school council looked through catalogues to pick out the equipment.”**

Maria told me, **“The school council look after the equipment.”** Sam added, **“We bring them out and put them back.”**

Playground Area

The development of the playground area is the new project for the school council. They have begun by visiting another school to see what they have, to get some ideas. Declan and Maria told me, **“It was really, really good. A big football place and basketball, an igloo, logs to walk on, and a section for little children.”**

Steven told me, **“We don’t have all the money for it yet.”**

The school council will continue to work on this and raise the money they need.

Fundraising

The children at Grange First School have lots of plans and ideas of ways they’d like to improve their school, and to be able to make sure these things happen, they always need money. The school council takes the lead on raising money, and they have done this in lots of ways. Daniel told me, **“We had fun fairs, and sold cakes and biscuits in the hall before concerts.”**

Sam went on to tell me, **“We raffled an England top, the school council sold tickets. We did a name the teddy as well.”**

When the children are running a raffle they come to school early and set up a table and ask parents when they walk past on the way to school.

It is clear that all of the children at Grange First School get to contribute their ideas about what they want for their school. Many children get the opportunity to be part of the school council and they clearly enjoy this. The school council is very pro-active and busy, and very much valued by the staff at the school. This was clear when I asked the children I met if they felt that they were listened to, and they said, **“The school council gets to run the school.”** And Steven added, **“We look after people.”**

The children understand that there may be some ideas that they have that aren’t possible, **“Like tree houses, they’re too much money, and other things we could vote for.”**

The children are fully involved in the development of their school and have made some great changes and contributions and were all in agreement that their school should get Investing in Children membership, and so with their endorsement I would like to recommend that Grange First School gains Investing in Children membership for the first time.

Lisa Lines
Investing in Children
February 2008

