



## Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

### Walkergate Primary School

Walkergate is a large school in the east of Newcastle. Approximately 450 pupils attend the school. On my visits to the school I met with Mr Walton who gave me lots of background information about the school. However for the purpose of this evaluation I also had the pleasure of meeting Natasha, Nicole M, Adam, Georgia, Faye, Hollie, Kyle, Megan, Darius and Nicole F who are all members of the school council.

The children told me the idea behind the School Council is so that the children come up with ideas to improvement the school. Faye informed me of how they are voted onto the council. **“Every year we vote in class for who we want on the school council.”** Adam added **“After every school council meeting we tell our classes what has been decided to make school better.”**

All of the children are actively encouraged and have the opportunity to put forward their ideas and make changes. Natasha stated **“we have suggestion boxes in each classroom and each member of the council has a book.”** Adam added **“the books are really good; we have them with us all the time. It works we get the ideas from people not on the council. We talk about what people want and it helps us decide.”**

The importance of the suggestion boxes / books to the children on the school council is clear. Georgia said **“I like the suggestion book, because we don’t always have a lot of meetings and I would forget what people said to me. But now I write everything down.”** The process of dialogue the children have set up works effectively for them. They have put mechanisms in place whereby as many children as possible can be included in improving the school. Hollie informed me **“the suggestion boxes and our books told us that children were unhappy about bullies. We wanted to tell someone without the bully finding out.”** Faye added **“we have now got the bully box. It is outside the head teacher’s office. We write on a piece of paper the name of the bully and what has happened. The teachers then do something about it.”** The children were very happy about this development. They were all adamant that there idea worked and has helped to stop the bullies.

The children were very excited to inform me of the changes they have made this year to the school yard and playtime.

The council and the teachers discussed their concerns over the issue of safety during play and lunchtimes as some children were falling over and hurting themselves.

This has been an ongoing discussion in school. Adam, Hollie and Nicole M are all Sport Leaders. Adam told me about the role of the school sport leaders. **“Sports leaders are for when someone is sad in the playground. You need to go over and see what is wrong and cheer them up and play with them and make them happy. Then just look for more people to cheer up.”** Natasha added **“we all play together in the yard now. We teach other children how to play different games.”**

There is an ongoing process to find out what the children at Walkergate Primary want and need. Adam said **“we send out questionnaires to see what other children in schools would like.”**

Adam continued to tell me about the changes made to lunch times as a result of questionnaires. **“We asked what people thought of lunch time because a lot of children didn’t like dinners.”** Nicole M was very excited to tell me of the changes they made as a result of the questionnaire. **“We used to get our dinner on horrible plastic trays; we also had plastic knives and forks. We changed them; we now have proper plates, knives and forks.”** Natasha also added **“before we done the questionnaire it was mad in the dinner halls. Everyone complained and said it was messy. We now have a one way system. We have our main meal and then we have our pudding second.”** Adam added **“pudding in proper bowls”**.

One issue that stood out to the school council was that children were very unhappy with the choice of dinners. Being such a proactive group the school council took this issue to the head teacher and the kitchen staff. Nicole F told me that they decided to change things. **“The whole school got involved. Every class picked their favourite meal and it was put on the school menu.”** Adam added **“we also got the smoothie bar. The smoothies are changed by people voting.”** Every child within the school has a smoothie card. For every smoothie they have, they are given a star. When they have enough stars they go to Benfield School for a PE lesson.

All the children I spoke to are very excited about their New School. Adam said **“our new school will be ready in September 2008. So we have come up and thought of lots of ideas for it.”** Hollie added, **“We are working on a games area and a cover. We asked for it so when it rains we don’t get wet. That’s what we want.”**

Some of the children have been working alongside the architects to ensure that they listen to what they want from the new building. **“Some of the school council who have now left went to visit other schools to see what would be good in our school.”**

The children are currently planning what colours they would like the school to be painted. The children are voting in their classes what the best colours would be. I look forward to seeing the results.

During my visits to Walkergate Primary I was made to feel welcome. I would like to thank everyone for helping me write this evaluation. The children and staff at Walkergate Primary work well together ensuring that everyone feel safe and comfortable to express their valued ideas and opinions. Members of the school council are involved in running their school and make real decisions about issues that affect them.

There is no doubt that Walkergate Primary provides the opportunity for all children to have a say and bring about meaningful change. When I asked the children if they agreed with this evaluation, there was a resounding YES. I therefore have no hesitation in recommending Walkergate Primary School receives Investing in Children membership. Well done and good luck in the new school.

**Kim Kyle**  
**Investing in Children**  
**January 2008**