

Pupil Voice at James Young High School

Rationale

At JYHS, in line with a Curriculum for Excellence, we want all our children and young people to be fully supported as they grow and develop into successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. By encouraging pupils to participate in any pupil voice activities we follow the Education for Citizenship agenda:

“Education for citizenship addresses the exercising of rights and responsibilities within communities at local, national and global levels. It encompasses the development of informed decision making, and the ability to take thoughtful and responsible action, locally and globally.

Young people are citizens of today, not citizens in waiting. Education for citizenship is about developing in learners the ability to take up their place in society as responsible, successful, effective and confident citizens both now and in the future.”

Pupils have many opportunities to become involved in our learning community. We have an active Rights Respecting Schools Group; Pupil Councils for each year group and a successful Eco-schools group. Pupils can also participate in numerous other activities throughout the school ranging from multiple sporting activities to debating groups and library monitors.

Getting It Right for Every Child (“GIRFEC”) and the United Nations convention on the Rights of the child promote pupil voice to ensure pupils feel respected and are given responsibility to take an active role our school community. Children are at the centre of decision making through pupil voice by having their views listened to and allowing them involvement in some decisions that affect them. We use pupil voice to promote opportunities for pupils to take part in a variety of activities and this enhances personalisation and choice for extra curricular activities.

West Lothian Pupil Voice guidelines advocate that pupil voice should be developed over a range of school experiences from involvement in their own learning to consultation on aspects of school life.

Background

Pupil council began in 2001 at JYHS. In this time it has undergone two reconstructions in the structure used. Since August 2011 we now have two representatives from each tutor group / personal support group who represent their peers at year group council meetings.

Pupils are given information about pupil council through assembly and PSE and are then asked to consider themselves as candidates for their year council. If more than two young people want to commit to the role then tutor groups/ personal support groups allow the candidates to campaign for a brief period of time and then hold elections to nominate their two representatives. Elected members run for 1 year of office. If they wish to stand again for the following year and there is no opposition then this is the case.

Information / campaigning / elections and training all occur in June for year groups S2 – S6 and the programme is repeated for S1 around September/October. Training on Pupil Council is based on “Building Democratic Literacy” training that WLC provided to all representatives in 2011.

From August 2013 onwards we have held whole school pupil council meetings including representatives from all year councils on a regular basis. The purpose of those meetings was to address issues that affect all year groups.