

# Camden Children's Fund

## Consultation and participation in schools

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### Why we need to consult and involve

**Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child** states that children **have the right to participate in decision-making processes** that may be relevant in their lives and to influence decisions taken in their regard -- within the family, the **school** or the community.

**Every Child Matters** includes participation of children and young people in the outcome: Making a Positive Contribution: ***engage in decision making and support the community and environment***. The children's trust approach places a strong emphasis on the involvement of children, young people and their families in local planning for the integration of services for children and young people.

### PHSE and citizenship

**National Healthy Schools Programme** criteria for participation:

- Pupils' views influence teaching and learning in PHSE and citizenship
- Mechanisms are established for involving pupils in policy development
- Pupils take responsibility for some aspects of the school
- Pupils' needs assessment informs curriculum planning

**Working Together: giving children and young people a say.** In 2004 the DfES published this guidance document which LEAs and schools are required to have regard to under the **Education Act 2002**.

**The Children's Fund** has participation of children, young people and their parents as a key principle.

**Single Education Plan.** Camden's plan has three key objectives that refer to consultation and participation:

Priority 2, Key aim 4:

- Objective 2: to increase children and young people's participation through school council and other forums.
- Objective 3: to ensure that children and young people are consulted on issues that affect them, and have an increased involvement in service planning, development and evaluation.
- Objective 4: to take account of the views of learners when planning the curriculum and on the delivery of services

**The National School Survey 2005** consultation proposes that a question will be asked about the opportunities provided to pupils to make their voices heard on decisions which affect them.

**Inspections of children's services** are to place 'significant emphasis...on the views of children, young people, parents and carers'.

**The Children’s Commissioner** is currently being appointed. This post was introduced through the Children Act 2004. The Commissioners role will be to ensure that the views of children and young people are heard in the national public arena.

### What is ‘children’s participation’?

It’s asking children and young people what works, what doesn’t and what could work better, and involving them on an ongoing basis – through development, implementation and evaluation. That often means cutting across issues and using effective channels of communication, so that the end result is better services and a good relationship.  
([www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk))

A large number of models of participation have been developed. Shier (2001) developed a model of **pathways to participation**:

1. Children are listened to.
2. Children are supported in expressing their views.
3. Children's views are taken into account.
4. Children are involved in decision-making processes.
5. Children share power and responsibility for decision-making.

### Benefits of participation

The benefits of involving pupils include:

<b>Better services</b>	School improvement Teaching and learning
<b>Promoting citizenship and social inclusion</b>	Ethos Feeling of being respected Feeling of belonging
<b>Social personal education and development</b>	Sense of achievement Changes in attitudes towards school and learning Encourages reflection and critical thinking Develops skills such as communication and negotiating skills Increase confidence and self-esteem Increased commitment to school

**How children and young people can be involved in schools**

*(from: Consulting young people in schools. Ruddock and Flutter  
www.consultingpupils.co.uk and National Healthy Schools Standards)*

<b>Aspects of classroom learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What gets in the way of their learning in the class and what helps them to learn?</li> <li>• What are the qualities of a good teacher?</li> <li>• What makes a good lesson?</li> <li>• How do they see feedback and how do they use it to improve their work?</li> <li>• Which friends do they work well with in class?</li> <li>• Whether they know what working hard and working harder mean in different subjects</li> <li>• Why boys seem to do less well than girls in some subjects e.g. English</li> </ul>
<b>School policies and structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What pupils think of the merits/rewards system and how it might be improved</li> <li>• What pupils think of the school rules and sanctions and whether there are any grounds for modifying them</li> <li>• What the school might do, or do more of, to help pupils who find it difficult to catch up and keep up</li> <li>• Aspects of school that pupils would like more information about or more opportunity to discuss, whether with teachers or with older pupils</li> <li>• How pupils see years 3 and 8 (identified as years when performance can dip)</li> <li>• Involvement in staff selection</li> <li>• Reviewing, auditing and developing policy and practice and giving feedback to Ofsted</li> </ul>
<b>Relationships with teachers, pupils and the community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent bullying happens, what form it takes and what might be done to diminish it</li> <li>• Ideas for special events that would encourage parents to come into the school</li> <li>• Ideas for special events or activities that would strengthen the links between the school and its community</li> <li>• How opportunities for dialogue about learning, with teachers and/or with older pupils, might be structured</li> <li>• Pupil advocacy, support and mediation</li> </ul>

### Methods and Activities

- Questionnaires/Surveys
- Interviews
- Diaries/log books
- Group discussions/circle time
- Friendship pairs
- Peer research
- Observation
- Drama (role plays)
- Art (e.g. making posters/storyboards)
- Photography and video
- Notice boards/postboxes/listening posts
- School councils/children's advisory groups
- Writing articles (Camden Fever)

### Participation challenges

- Time
- Genuine sustainable consultation
- To embed consultation in daily practice
- Identifying priorities
- Setting the agenda with pupils
- To carefully consider the pupils views
- Making changes
- Taking risks
- Sharing power
- Establishing a culture of participation
- Feeding back and following up (explaining decisions)

### Resources

There are a vast range of resources available on consultation and participation. Listed below are some of the key sources for information on consultation in schools.

[www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)

Working Together: Giving children and young people a say (DfES 2004)  
Statutory guidance for developing a culture of participation in LEAs and schools

Promoting children and young peoples participation through the National Healthy School Standard (2004) [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk)

Learning to Listen: Core principles for involving children and young people (CYPUP 2001)

Young Voices. A training pack for involving children and young people. (London Borough of Camden, 2003)

A toolkit for consulting children and young people on SRE Policy and Programmes. Gill Morris. London Borough of Camden.

Children, Young People, parents and carers' participation in children's fund case study partnerships. National Evaluation of the Children's Fund. DfES 2004.

Hart, R. (1992) Children's Participation: from tokenism to citizenship, UNICEF

Kirby, P et al (2003) Building a culture of Participation. Involving children and young people in policy service planning, delivery and evaluation. DfES

UN Convention on the rights of the child [www.uncrc.info](http://www.uncrc.info)  
[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

[www.consultingpupils.co.uk/](http://www.consultingpupils.co.uk/)

Homepage of the ESRC Network Project: Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning. This project has produced a range of materials:

Consulting Pupils Project Newsletters. Articles include:

- pupils observe lessons and give feedback to teachers
- How we feel about learning – a student research project (includes classroom observation checklist)

Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning

John MacBeath, Helen Demetriou, Jean Rudduck, Kate Myers, Michael Fielding, Sara Bragg, Madeleine Arnot, Donald McIntyre, David Pedder and Diane Reay:

- Consulting Pupils: A Toolkit for Teachers (2003)
- Students as Researchers: Making a Difference (2003)
- Consultation in the Classroom: Developing Dialogue about Teaching and Learning (2004)

Flutter, J. & Ruddock, J. (2004) Consulting Pupils - what's in it for schools? RoutledgeFalmer.

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