Leicestershire
healthy scho☀️ols
programme

The Voice of Children & Young People

School Council Toolkit

NHS

Healthy Schools

Leicestershire County Council · RATED A COUNCIL

CONTENTS

Why involve children and young people?

It is possible to identify a number of drivers and arguments for involving children and young people in decision making processes.

- *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC), ratified by the UK Government in 1991, provides children and young people under the age of 18 with a comprehensive set of rights. In particular, Article 12 affirms their right to express their views in all matters affecting them and requires that those views be heard.

- 'Children and young people are not citizens in waiting – eager for the day they turn 18. They are active members of their communities well before they reach this magic age. They use a huge range of council services from parks, playgrounds and leisure centres to schools, housing and social services. Their lives are as affected by the state of their environment as those of their older counterparts. An increasing body of evidence is also building up to prove that whilst children and young people may not be interested in local party politics they are very interested in the issues that affect them and their community.' Sir Jeremy Beecham, Chairman of the Local Government Association, July 2001.

- In *'Learning to Listen'* (CYPU 2001) the Government sets out its commitment to designing policies and services around children and young people in a way that involves them. It also states categorically that 'promoting early engagement in public and community life is crucial to sustaining and building a healthy society.' It continues, 'listening is a powerful means of persuading disadvantaged young people that they count and can contribute … good participation opportunities produce more confident and resilient young people.'

- *'Working Together: giving children and young people a say'* (DfES 2003) provides advice for Local Education Authorities, governing bodies and schools, and a number of principles that should 'underpin work to develop pupil participation.'

- In Spring 2004, the DfES produced guidance for school governing bodies and Local Education Authorities to encourage the involvement of children and young people in decision making processes.

- 'Promoting Children and Young People's Participation through the *National Healthy School Status'* (DfES 2004) presents the concept of the 'journey of participation' in which 'children share power and responsibility for decision making,' and are, 'encouraged to understand and exercise their right to be involved in all aspects of school life.'

- Introduced as a compulsory subject in the Secondary School Curriculum in September 2002, Citizenship offers schools a framework for supporting children and young people in becoming active citizens in the wider community, requiring them to develop 'skills of participation and responsible action.' The National Curriculum says that 'pupils should be taught to negotiate, decide and take part responsibly in both school and community based activities,' and that they should 'reflect on the process of participating.'

- The new Programmes of Study for Key Stages 3 and 4 (to be taught from September 2008) emphasise that 'Education for Citizenship equips young people with the

knowledge, skills and understanding to play an effective role in public life…, pupils learn about their rights, responsibilities, duties and freedoms… They learn to take part in decision-making and different forms of action. They play an active role in the life of their schools, neighbourhoods, communities and wider society as active and global citizens.'

- Citizenship has been part of Personal, Social and Health Education in primary schools since 2000. Although it is non-statutory, the guidelines state that pupils should be prepared to play active roles as citizens and 'make real choices and decisions.'

  Specific units address children's participation in and contribution to school life, the local community and council, and basic human rights.

  The guidelines also state that, 'As well as offering possibilities for subject-specific lessons, PSHE and Citizenship have cross-curricular implications as they are concerned with the development of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that permeate school life across all key stages.'

- *'Every Child Matters*: Change for Children' (DfES 2004) sets out the national framework for local change programmes to build services around the needs of children and young people. There are five outcomes –

  1. Being Healthy: enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle.
  2. Staying Safe: being protected from harm and neglect and growing up able to look after themselves.
  3. Enjoying and Achieving: getting the most out of life and developing broad skills that will be useful in later life.
  4. Making a Positive Contribution: to community and to society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour.
  5. Achieving economic well-being: overcoming socio-economic disadvantages to achieve their full potential in life.

  Outcome Four, Making a Positive Contribution, encourages children and young people to 'engage in decision making and support the community and environment.' One of the indicators of success or failure of this is the percentage of young people in secondary schools participating in (a) the election of school/college council members and, (b) mock elections.

- The National Youth Agency has stated that an entitlement of this outcome should be 'a youth council or youth forum for each locality with more than 10,000 residents of all ages with the intention of supporting youth engagement in local democracy in a wide range of ways.'

- The Ofsted Framework *Inspecting Schools* (2003) requires inspectors to report on how well a school seeks to involve its pupils or students in its work and development, assessing the extent to which it seeks, values and acts on their views. Framework 2005 requires inspectors to go further than in previous guidelines towards seeking the views of pupils through the use of questionnaires and meetings with the elected school council.

- *'Together We Can'* (Civil Renewal Unit 2005) provides an action plan to establish a 'new relationship' between 'citizens and public institutions.' Of eight key public policy areas, 'Together we can ensure that children and young people have their say' looks for an outcome whereby 'Children and Young People are given opportunities to participate and influence decision making as confident, responsible citizens.' 'Together we can strengthen our democracy' seeks to encourage 'communities and citizens of all ages and backgrounds' to become 'more confident, able and interested in understanding public policy issues and influencing the governance of public institutions and services.'

- *The Children Act 2004* underpins the National Framework for Change and gives legal force to the five outcomes referred to in ECM. One of its requirements is that the single Children and Young People's Plan should be drawn up by the Local Authority. Section 1.30 of the 'Guidance on the Children and Young People's Plan' states that, 'children and young people … should be given equal opportunities to participate in the development of the CYPP. This can be achieved… through existing mechanisms such as Youth Parliaments and Councils…'

- In a speech for the Barclays New Futures Conference, David Bell, (formerly Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools), promoted the view that 'community should be regarded flexibly as local, national and even international and that through identity and interest, pupils will want to participate and become involved in a range of ways.' He also refers to John Potter, Director of Community Service Volunteers until 2001, who explained, 'that there is a significant difference between form of citizenship education that simply encourages decency and good behaviour and one that is rooted in political awareness and a commitment to social justice and opportunity.'

- In March 2005, Sir Al Aynesley Green was appointed as the first Children's Commissioner for England. His role is to give children and young people a voice in public life, paying particular attention to gathering and putting forward the views of the most vulnerable.

- On the 11 November 2008, a duty was placed on all maintained schools in England & Wales to consider the views of children and young people. This change in the law should help transform the culture of schools, with children being firmly at the centre of policy and practice.

National Healthy Schools Programme

The national quality standards for the Healthy Schools Programme requires schools to have a clear strategy for involving children and young people in planning which is responsive to their expressed needs. As a consequence, they need to establish an appropriate process for consulting them.

To achieve recognition as a Healthy School for a specific theme, schools must demonstrate that they are giving children and young people a voice and produce evidence that:

- Pupils' views influence teaching and learning in PSHE and Citizenship.

- Pupils take responsibility for some aspects of school life.

- Mechanisms are established for involving pupils in policy development and practice.

Emotional health and wellbeing

Schools should openly address issues of emotional health and wellbeing by helping children and young people to understand their own feelings.

A policy and code of practice for dealing with incidents of bullying (in all its forms) should be owned, understood and implemented by **all** members of the school community.

The drivers and arguments outlined above can be summed up under four different headings:

- *Children's (and young people's) rights* which recognises that children (and young people) have rights, including the right to have their opinions taken into account in decisions that concern them.

- *Active citizenship*, which highlights how pupil (and student) voice can contribute to preparation for citizenship by improving pupils' (and students') knowledge and social skills and, in doing so, enhance the quality of democracy.

- *School improvement*, which recognises that consultation with pupils (and students) can lead to better school performance, whether in terms of improved behaviour, engagement or attainment.

- *Personalisation,* which utilises pupil (and student) voice to ensure that schools are meeting the specific needs of their pupils (or students) as consumers or 'co-producers' of education.

  (Whitty. G and Wisby. W. Real Decision Making. 'School Councils in Action' 2007).

What is pupil/student voice?

Within schools, the involvement of children and young people in decision making is often referred to as pupil or student 'voice'. It entails children and young people 'playing an active role in their education and schooling as a result of schools becoming more attentive and responsive, in sustained and routine ways to their views. (Hargreaves, D. (2004) Personalising Learning – 2, student voice and assessment for learning).

Frequently, there is confusion around the meaning of CONSULTATION and PARTICIPATION when talking about pupil voice. The latter is regularly used to describe school council activity when, in reality, the former is a more realistic definition.

Save the Children defines CONSULTATION as – a process which requires the commitment to take on board children and young people's views and present detailed information back to them. Consultation can be an ongoing process.

While asking children and young people what they think about specific issues is to be applauded (and is often the first phase of school council activity), experience suggests that it is all too common for their views to be subsequently disregarded or no provision to be made for any follow up. As a consequence, the whole process becomes TOKENISTIC and is meaningless.

If children and young people are to be truly empowered, they need to be able to identify how they are making a difference by working in partnership with adults through PARTICIPATION.

In *'Working together – giving children and young people a say'* (DfES 2004) participation is defined as adults working with children and young people to develop ways of ensuring their views are heard and valued, and encouraging them to:

• Make a difference in their schools, their neighbourhoods and their wider communities.

• Contribute to a cohesive community.

• Learn from an early age to balance their rights as individuals with their responsibilities as citizens.

• Develop through the way they are involved, the knowledge, understanding and skills they will need in adult life.

Save the Children promotes the following definition:

'Participation involves much more than consultation, it assumes an ability to influence and change. It provides children with the opportunity to think for themselves, to express their views, and to expect that those ideas will be listened to and taken seriously. It entails working effectively with others and interacting in a positive way. Above all, it is an inclusive process that encourages the active engagement of all children, regardless of background or identity.'

The Participation Works Network for England (PWNE) states that, 'Participation is a fundamental right of citizenship. It is the process by which children and young people can influence decision making which affects their lives to bring about positive change… Participation is not solely the act of expressing an opinion and having that taken seriously, but, of being able to construct that opinion freely, access information to inform that opinion and the freedom to meet and to discuss with peers freely that opinion.'

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

- The Convention on the Right of the Child is an international agreement adopted by the United Nations (UN) in November 1989. Every country that signs up to it must make sure that the laws and rules affecting children and young people in that country uphold all their rights.

- Every child and young person has all of the rights in the Convention on the Right of the Child. (Article 2)

- The Convention has 54 parts; each part is called an **article**. Each article has more than one right.

- Article 1 defines a child as a person under the age of 18 years.

- Article 12 gives every child and young person the right to express and have their views given 'due weight' in everything that affects them. This means that adults have to do more than listen. They must give weight to the child's or young person's view, taking into account their age and maturity.

- Article 42 says government must let everyone know about all the rights in the Convention.

There are other articles that relate directly to children and young people's participation in decision making:

Article 3 -   The child or young person's best interests must be a top priority whenever decisions are made that affect them.

Article 13 -   The child or young person has the right to receive and give information through speaking, writing, printing, art or any other way.

Article 14 -   The child or young person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Article 15 -   The child or young person has the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly.

Article 16 -   The child or young person has the right to privacy.

Article 17 -   The child or young person has the right to information, especially information that helps build his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being, and physical and mental health.

What are school councils for?

Everyone in the school needs to know what the school council is for and what it hopes to achieve. Setting up a council should be a whole school initiative.

Senior Management Team

If the council is to be successful, it needs the full support of the SMT who will determine what it can and can't do. If the role of link teacher (see page 10) is not taken on by the head teacher, it is a good idea to hold regular meetings between the chairperson, other members of the executive committee (see page 33) and the head teacher. It should also be possible for the chairperson of the school council to arrange a special meeting with the head teacher if the need arises.

The class teacher

It is essential that the class teacher provides effective support for the school council through holding an election for class representatives and providing a regular time for class discussion. The latter will allow pupils to talk about issues that are of concern to them, to explore ways of dealing with them and to identify things that they want their class representatives to take to school council meetings. This is a two way process so the class representatives will also need time to report back to the class after a council meeting.

If the class teacher displays a positive attitude to discussion and reporting back, this will send a clear message to pupils that the council is important and taken seriously.

It must be stressed that the class teacher's role is not to lead discussion but to encourage and support pupils particularly at first when help might be needed in organising and structuring what happens.

It is also important that class teachers know when school council meetings are taking place and pupils are reminded that they need to attend.

The whole staff

The commitment of the whole staff to the school council can be demonstrated in a number of ways:

• As a regular agenda item at staff meetings so everyone can be updated on school council business. This will also provide staff with an opportunity to raise their own concerns or to make suggestions.

• At Parents' Evenings or other events, parents or carers can be told about the contribution their child has made to discussion and the issues that have been covered.

• Similarly, these events also provide an opportunity for parents and carers to be told about school council activities and achievements.

• Non-teaching staff such as the caretaker (or premises officer), school cook, dinner ladies, lunchtime supervisors and others can be invited to school council meetings if and when the need arises. They should also be informed about any school council activities or issues.

Governors

The enthusiastic commitment of a school's governors to its school council will give it recognition and status. By including council members in appropriate decision making processes, consultation and information giving, they are able to become more active partners in the school community. To facilitate this in a more focussed way, a governor can take on the role of the official link between the governing body and the school council.

The Link Teacher

This is the only role that requires a significant amount of time on the part of a teacher. Therefore, in deciding who this person should be, the SMT not only needs to take into account the qualities and skills that are needed, but whether this person has sufficient time and the resources needed to do the job properly.

(The issue of when meetings are held is a thorny one and schools approach it in different ways. This is examined in more detail below).

The link teacher should be present at all council meetings, regardless of whether they chair them or not, follow up issues raised in the meetings and keep an overview of the council's progress and direction. However, as members become more confident and the council more effective, it is highly likely that the link teacher's role will change and that many of the things they had to do initially will be taken on by the members.

The link teacher must –

- Ensure that democratic elections are held across the school to ensure that all classes have one or two representatives.
- Facilitate appropriate training for elected pupil representatives.
- Attend all school council meetings and, when necessary, help members to write agendas, chair meetings and write minutes.
- Offer advice and guidance and provide information when required.

From time to time, the link teacher will need to reflect on the following –

- How the council is progressing.
- What steps might need to be taken to raise its profile.
- Whether the issues being discussed are broadening and developing in content.
- Whether all pupils (not just members) are seeing results as a consequence of the activities of the council.
- Whether the council is influencing the way in which the school is run.
- Whether any members of staff are having difficulty with class council meetings.

Parents/carers

It is important that parents/carers understand that the council is an integral part of the school, how it works and what it contributes to the whole school community. Parents/carers should be provided with opportunities to discuss the school council and its activities and be kept up to date with what it's doing.

<u>Guidance For Teachers</u>

The units contained in this toolkit have been developed over a number of years and are well tried and tested. However, it has to be emphasised that, as with many things, it is not always the case that 'one size fits all'. There needs to be a degree of flexibility when using them, taking the age and ability of school council members into consideration and the implications this has for suggested timings. As a consequence, teachers and other adults will need to use their professional judgement and knowledge of their pupils to determine what is and isn't appropriate. To this end, the units can be adapted as required.

While a flexible approach can be adopted when using the units, there are a number of underlying principles regarding school councils which are generic and have to be followed.

Link Teacher

The function and importance of the link teacher have been discussed elsewhere but it is worth reiterating that this is a pivotal role on which the success of the school council depends. Inevitably, people move on or are given other responsibilities. However, there is a powerful argument for continuity, not least of which is that it conveys an important message to pupils and staff alike that the school council is valued and has a significant role to play in the life of the school.

Things to think about

When setting a school council up or reviewing how an existing one is working, a number of key questions have to be asked

- How big will the council be? Will each class have one or two representatives?

- How will a gender and ethnicity balance be achieved? Will the council be genuinely inclusive and representative?

- How will the school council be elected?

- Where, when and how often will the school council meet?

- Will the school council have a budget? If so, how much and where will it come from?

- What system/s need to be put in place to ensure that other pupils and adults know what the school council is doing? How will other pupils influence decision making?

- If the school has Foundation and Key Stage 1 pupils, will these be involved in the council?

- Will there be limits on the power that the school council has? Will certain topics be difficult for discussion?

Structure

One of the first decisions that has to be made is, how big will the school council have to be to ensure that all pupils have equal representation? Traditionally, each class will elect one or two representatives but, in larger schools, this could, potentially, make the council unmanageable. Once it reaches 20-25 members, issues arise around accommodation and seating. Frequently, discussion becomes difficult and younger or less confident pupils might feel excluded from this.

Possible solutions include –

- Restrict the number of representatives to one per class.

- Sub-divide the council into two tiers, depending on the number of year groups. For example, Foundation and Year 1, Years 2 and 3; Years, 4, 5 and 6.

- Exclude Foundation and Year 1 from the council but establish a regular meeting pattern for them and older council members so that the formers' opinions can be represented at school council meetings.

- If a more creative approach is used, for example, a two tier system, it will be necessary to ensure that the two groups communicate with each other. Minutes and agendas are an obvious way to do this but it could also be through a joint Executive Committee (see Student Council Roles 2) or a termly whole school council meeting. Implications of this approach are that it would be more time consuming for the link teacher and would require more careful management.

Balance

The school council will not be fulfilling an important role if it isn't representative of all pupils in the school. However, it has to be recognised that this might be difficult to achieve, for a number of reasons –

- Some pupils are naturally more confident and articulate than others and will be 'self-selecting'.

- Pupils have an automatic tendency to vote for their friends in an election.

- Certain pupils will not want to engage with the school council.

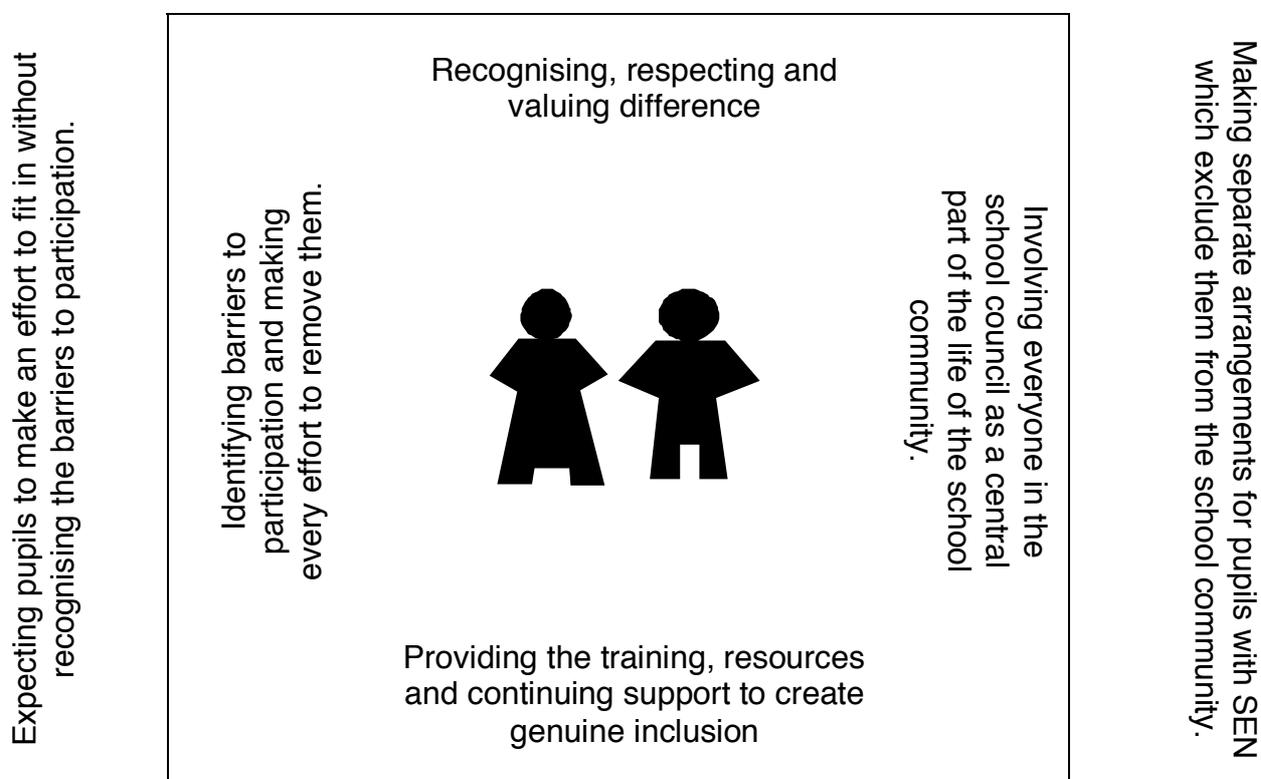- Barriers exist to prevent some pupils from standing for election.

Therefore, the challenge for the school will be to address as many of these issues as possible. Even if they can't be totally eradicated, they can be minimised:

- Maintain or raise the profile of the school council through effective communication and publicity.

- Ensure that the school council achieves what it sets out to do, particularly if it has a positive impact on other pupils.

- Ensure that there is obvious support for the school council from adults.

- Show that school council members are valued by giving them specific privileges.

- Build work about participation and democracy into PSHE and Citizenship lessons.

- Ensure that school council elections become an important annual event and create a real sense of excitement around them.

- Prepare pupils properly for voting so that they choose candidates on merit.

- Ask pupils to vote for a boy and girl as class representatives, addressing the gender issue.

- Consider the needs of individual pupils and address these.

- Encourage particular pupils to stand for election.

This isn't an exhaustive list but does provide some suggestions as to what can be done.

'Inclusive' School Council

Ignoring differences

Expecting pupils to make an effort to fit in without recognising the barriers to participation.

Recognising, respecting and valuing difference

Identifying barriers to participation and making every effort to remove them.

Involving everyone in the school council as a central part of the life of the school community.

Making separate arrangements for pupils with SEN which exclude them from the school community.

Providing the training, resources and continuing support to create genuine inclusion

Putting pupils together without any preparation, resources or support.

Class 'councils'

Representatives must report back to their classes as soon as possible after a school council meeting and time should be built into the school day for this. By doing so, teachers are sending out a strong message that they value the council and its work.

In order to achieve this, feedback can be incorporated into a weekly 15-20 minute time slot in which all pupils take part in discussion and decision making – in effect, a class council. Circle Time would be a good way to facilitate this. During this session, pupils can talk about school-based issues that are of concern to them.

This has a number of benefits –

- All pupils are able to take part, thereby widening participation and providing experience of democratic processes.

- Pupils develop their speaking and listening skills.

- Pupils' confidence and self-esteem will be boosted.

- Pupils develop a sense of responsibility and community.

- The experience will be a positive one and will impact on behaviour and attitudes generally.

- Issues can be identified to take to school council meetings.

For this activity to be successful, consideration will have to be given to –

- Who will lead the meeting.

- How the room will be laid out.

- Ground rules.

- What will be discussed.

Sub-commitees

Inevitably, some pupils will stand for election but be unsuccessful. There will be others who might have something of value to contribute in a setting other than a whole school council meeting or will benefit from being involved.

A sub-committee is a group that is formed to deal with a particular issue or to carry out a specific task. It is, therefore, a good way to widen participation by engaging pupils who might not otherwise have got involved.

Elections

The school council will obtain more credibility through a properly run, school-wide election, rather than an ad-hoc arrangement whereby each class elects representatives using different methods or criteria and at different times. The worst case scenario is when a teacher 'chooses' a pupil to represent the class because this lacks any legitimacy and, as a consequence, the pupil will have little or no credibility.

Units of work on 'Class Representatives' and 'The Election' can be found elsewhere in this toolkit. However, the following points need to be considered –

- When will the election be held and what needs to be done to ensure that it runs smoothly?

- How will the election be publicised?

- What preparation and support will pupils receive so that –

    a)   They know how to vote.

    b)   They can decide whether they want to stand as a candidate.

    c)   They can write their manifestoes.

- Will nomination forms and ballot papers be used?

- When and where will voting take place?

- What will be done to ensure that the election is fair and no cheating takes place?

- How and when will the votes be counted?

- When and where will the results be announced?

The first school council meeting should take place as soon as possible after the election. However, members will need to be trained so that they are able to carry out their role to the best of their ability.

School Council Meetings

There are always constraints on when and how often meetings are held. Ideally, they should take place every two weeks so that a pattern is established in the minds of members, pupils and staff and other activities can be planned around them. A two weekly 'cycle' can be put in place.

School council meets.
Minutes are published.
Class representatives feedback and identify issues to take to the next school council meeting.
These issues are passed to the Link Teacher.
Link teacher meets with Chairperson and Secretary to set the agenda for the next meeting.
School Council meets.

Regular meetings also help to foster a sense of being members of a 'team' and enable school council business to be dealt with efficiently and effectively.

Two key issues will need to be addressed –

1. If meetings are held in lesson time, when is it most appropriate to do this? Should pupils always miss the same lesson?

2. If meetings are held at lunchtime, will council members be prepared to attend? (It is important that they understand they will have to give up some of their own time before they agree to stand as a candidate).

The amount of time that is devoted to a meeting will be determined by when the meeting takes place. However, this needs to be long enough to allow items on the agenda to be covered. Short agendas (three or four items) will help but if pupils don't have enough time to discuss and consider the issues, they will not be able to make informed decisions.

In a school where space is at a premium, it is not always possible to find a convenient place for meetings. However, how this is dealt with will convey a very important message about whether the council and its members are valued.

The following points need to be considered –

- Will the space accommodate all of the school council members?

- Is it flexible enough to allow for a variety of seating arrangements and activities?

- Is the space always available when the school council meets?

- Does it provide an appropriate 'business-like' atmosphere?

- Will the meeting be able to proceed without any interruptions?

Initially, it is highly likely that meetings will be led by the Link Teacher but, with appropriate training, a pupil chair should soon be able to take over. Often, there are three stages in this process –

- Meetings are teacher led.

- Meetings are led by a pupil, supported by the teacher.

- Meetings are led by a pupil with the teacher sitting in as an observer.

How pupils can be trained to take on this role will be found in School Council Roles 1 and School Council Roles 2.

Budget

No matter how small the sum, a budget will give the school council a degree of financial independence and enable it to carry out various tasks. These could include buying badges and folders, covering reprographics costs or buying resources for a specific activity. Additional money can be raised through a sponsored event and be used to top-up the budget or donated to charity.
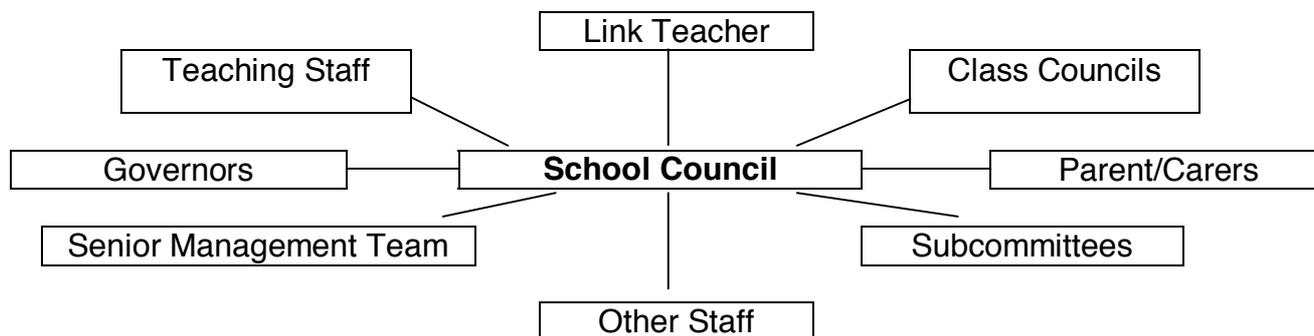
It would be unreasonable, and unrealistic, to give a pupil sole responsibility for managing the school council's finances but, with support from an appropriate adult, they can take on the role of Treasurer.

The following points will need to be considered -

- Will the school council have its own bank account?

- Which adult will support the Treasurer and provide any appropriate training?

- Who will be able to decide what the school council's money is spent on?

- How regularly will the Treasurer report to the school council?

- Who will audit the school council's account?

Communication

This has been dealt with in other sections of this toolkit but can be summed up through the following diagram.

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                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │ Link Teacher │
┌────────────────┐  └──────────────┘  ┌────────────────┐
│ Teaching Staff │                    │ Class Councils │
└────────────────┘                    └────────────────┘

┌────────────┐      ┌────────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
│ Governors  │──────│ School Council │──────│ Parent/Carers│
└────────────┘      └────────────────┘      └──────────────┘

┌────────────────────────┐          ┌────────────────┐
│ Senior Management Team  │          │ Subcommittees  │
└────────────────────────┘          └────────────────┘

                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │ Other Staff  │
                    └──────────────┘
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Limits on power

The school council will be as effective as it is allowed to be. It needs whole school support but, at the same time, pupils must understand that there might be limitations on what it can actually achieve.

From the outset, there needs to be honesty and transparency. If pupils know that making significant change is going to need agreement from all interested parties, they won't raise their expectations and be disappointed. Small, easily achievable outcomes are as important as bigger, more ambitious ones.

School Council Skills 1- Activity

Time – 5 – 10 minutes

AIMS

To provide pupils with an understanding of –

- the skills they need to be an effective member of the school council

- the jobs they could do and the roles they might have

- the part they play as a member of a team.

OUTCOMES

All pupils will understand that –

- there is more to being a member of the school council than simply attending meetings

- they all have strengths and weaknesses; training and experience will help them to develop their skills.

RESOURCES

Handout – School Council Skills 1

PLAN

- The handout lists a number of things that a school council member might be asked to do, either individually or as part of a team.

- Pupils should consider each task and tick the appropriate box to indicate how they feel about having to do it.

- Two empty boxes are provided for pupils to add further tasks if they can think of any.

- The exercise can be done by the group as a whole, with each task being considered individually or, alternatively, pupils can work on their own. Younger or less able pupils might require some assistance.

- At the end of the exercise, pupils can discuss how they feel about the tasks and consider what sort of help they might require to help them to tackle some more easily or confidently.

HANDOUT - SCHOOL COUNCIL SKILLS 1

What are you good at? Tick the box that applies to you.

TASK (either on your own or as part of a team)	No Thanks	I'll give it a go	Easy!
Talk in front of other pupils			
Lead (chair) a meeting			
Write a letter from the school council			
Organise an event to raise money for charity			
Run an assembly about the school council			
Look after the school council notice board			
Design a poster about the school council			
Talk in front of adults			
Ask other pupils what they think about something			
Help younger pupils in school council meetings			

School Council Skills 2 - Activity

Time – 10 – 15 minutes

AIMS

To give pupils an understanding of –

- the skills they need to be an effective member of the school council

- the jobs they might do or the roles they might have as a member of the school council.

OUTCOMES

All pupils will have had an opportunity to –

- consider which jobs or roles they might feel confident about undertaking

- consider what help or support they might need to develop their skills

- consider which systems or structures might need to be in place to support them.

RESOURCES

Handout – School Council Skills 2.
Paper and pens

PLAN

The handout lists a number of statements about things that a school council member might be required to do.

Working on their own

- Pupils should consider each statement separately and think about whether any are more important than others.

- Once they have done this, they can proceed in one of several ways, depending on how the statements have been presented and how much time is available.

  1. If the handout has been cut into strips, a ladder of priority can be created with the most important statement at the top and the least important at the bottom.

  2. If the handout is presented as an A4 sheet, pupils can number statements in order of priority.

3.   If the handout is presented as an A4 sheet, pupils can indicate what they think are the most important three or four statements by underlining or circling them.

At the end of this exercise, pupils can discuss the outcome with other members of the school council and provide an explanation for their decisions.

Methods one and two are equally effective if pupils work in small groups rather than individually.

As an extension to method three, pupils can be asked to work in a small group and, from their own individual choices, agree on three statements that, collectively, they consider to be the most important.

Both of the above suggestions require pupils to discuss and negotiate, listening carefully to alternative points of view. These are important skills for members of the school council to develop.

Listening to other pupils' ideas

Talking in front of other pupils

Talking to a teacher

Turning up to meetings on time

Telling your class what you talked about in meetings

Sharing your ideas

Working with other pupils

Helping other pupils

What makes a good representative? - Activity

Time – 10 minutes

AIMS

To give pupils an understanding of –

- the skills they need to be an effective member of the school council.

OUTCOMES

All pupils will have had an opportunity to –

- consider which skills they possess and which they might need to develop

- begin to formulate a set of ground rules for the school council.

RESOURCES

Handout – What makes a good representative?
Paper and pens

PLAN

- The handout lists a number of skills and attributes that a member of the school council should possess.

- Pupils should consider each of these and decide which is applicable to them. This can be done by underlining or highlighting the words.

- The exercise can be done by the group as a whole, considering each skill or attribute individually; alternatively, pupils can work on their own.

- At the end of the exercise, pupils can discuss which they feel are appropriate to themselves and whether any are more important than others. This could be developed into small group work during which pupils have to put the words and phrases into an order of importance, or choose three or four which they think are more important than the others.

- This exercise is potentially more difficult than 'School Council Skills' and might be better suited to older or more able pupils.

Handout - What makes a good representative?

Reliable	You do everything that you promise to. You always go to meetings.
Fair and impartial	You can represent the views and ideas of your class clearly at council meetings, even if you have don't agree with them. You think everyone has the right to express a point of view.
Thoughtful	You take time to think about your own feelings and thoughts on certain issues before discussing them.
A good listener	You really listen and take in both sides of a debate (discussion). Everyone feels comfortable talking to you.
A good speaker	You take an active and effective part in discussion. You can express a point of view clearly.
Accurate and efficient	You can make notes at meetings and report the ideas and views of the school council back to your class.
Organised	You make sure that meetings happen in your class on a regular basis.
Assertive	The opinions of your class are just as important as everyone else's.
A good communicator	You can work with pupils, staff and other adults from across the school.

School Council Roles 1- Activity

Time – 20 minutes

AIMS

To help pupils to understand how a school council could be organised by –

- thinking about the issues that the council could discuss or deal with.

OUTCOMES

Pupils are prepared for school council meetings because they understand –

- that the council has to be led and managed

- that the council can be reactive and pro-active.

RESOURCES

Handout :   Topics for discussion
             Running a discussion – pg 44
             School Council Roles, a & b – pg 33 & 34
             Flip chart or whiteboard
             Pens

PLAN

- Topics for discussion lists a number of things that a school council could talk about or take action over.

- Working individually, pupils should consider each one and then choose three that, if given the choice, they would like to discuss at a school council meeting. They can indicate these by highlighting them.

- Pupils should then be asked to form or put into a group of five or six members. This should reflect the age range of the school council.

- Through a process of discussion, negotiation and compromise, pupils will choose one topic they would like to discuss as a group. It is important that they are given time to think about their views regarding this topic once it has been chosen.

- One group is asked to volunteer to discuss their chosen topic. Other pupils will observe what happens and are told that they will have to report back on what they liked about the discussion (or what worked well) and what they didn't like (or what didn't work as well).

- The discussion should be allowed to run for four or five minutes. However, it might be necessary to move on to the reporting back stage more quickly if pupils run out of things to say.

- Once the discussion has been concluded, the pupils who were observing should begin their feedback. This might require some prompting from the teacher but should be recorded on the board or flipchart.

- Following this, there are several possible follow-up activities -

    1. The pupils could begin to develop a set of rules for how a discussion should be run (see Running a discussion handout).

    2. Another group of pupils could discuss their chosen topic, paying attention to what was said during the earlier feedback.

    3. The pupils could begin to consider specific roles for members of the school council (see School Council Roles handout).

Handout - Topics for discussion

Uniform

**School council
Money**

School rules

Litter

Charities

Assemblies

Bullying

Rewards systems

Lessons

Homework

Discos/parties

School dinners

Corridor displays

Discipline/ punishment

Elections

Water fountains

Environment

Library

School journeys

Playground/ school field

Wet break times

School Council Roles 2 - Activity

Time – 10 minutes

AIMS

To provide pupils with a model of how a school council could be organised by –

- finding out about the roles of the chairperson and vice-chairperson, secretary and treasurer

- practising leading a discussion.

OUTCOMES

Pupils are prepared for school council meetings because they understand –

- the responsibilities that each leadership role involves

- how a discussion should be led.

RESOURCES

Handout – School Council Roles, a and b.

PLAN

- Following School Council Roles 1, pupils should understand that meetings have to be properly led and organised if all members are going to contribute to discussion and their decisions turned into actions.

- In order for this to happen, pupils will have to be elected to perform specific roles.

- Each pupil should be given School Council Roles, a and b. Then, they should read a set of bullet points and decide which role they describe. This role can be written in the empty box above the bullet points.

- Once pupils have completed this task, the results can be compared. A discussion could follow as to which skills or attributes each role might entail. This should help pupils to make up their minds about which school council member might be best suited to a specific role.

- Pupils should be made aware that this group will form the School Council Executive Committee.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

It is important that once pupils understand what specific roles entail, the Chair and Vice-Chair are elected as quickly as possible, followed by the Secretary and Treasurer. (The latter post depends on whether the school council has a budget and an understanding from the school council that there might be limitations on what the post holder can and can't do.)

If only one pupil wants to Chair school council meetings there will be no need for an election. However, it is likely that several will want to take on this role so other members will have to make a decision about the best person for the job, particularly because it carries a lot of responsibility.

- Each pupil who wants to chair meetings should choose an issue that will be discussed. Suggestions include

  - How we could improve the school playground.
  - How we could improve our school dinners.
  - How we could help the local community.
  - How we could improve our school environment.
  - How we could improve our dining room.
  - How we could make the road outside our school less dangerous.
  - How we could prevent bullying.

- These could be presented on cards which are turned face down to make the choice process a little more exciting.

- Each potential chair should lead a discussion for five or six minutes.

- At the end of this time, other members of the council should consider what the person did well as chair and what they could have done better. This could be fed back.

- Once each potential chair has had an opportunity to lead a discussion, members should vote for their preferred candidate. The pupil with the most votes will become Chair; the pupil with the next highest vote will become Vice-chair.

See – 'Running a discussion sheet'. This can be given out before this process begins and should be kept by pupils for use in meetings.

NB: The role of Chair could be rotated so that every pupil who wants to take on this role has an opportunity to do so. It might be necessary to discuss this with school council members and allow them to arrive at a decision by voting.

Secretary

Chairperson

Treasurer

Vice-Chairperson

Handout - School Council Roles (b)

[ ]

- I run meetings and make sure that all council members have a chance to say something.

- I talk to adults about what the school council thinks and its ideas for new activities.

- I help to prepare the list of things (agenda) that are going to be talked about during the meeting.

[ ]

- I help to look after the school council's money.

- I let the school council know how much money has been spent, what it's been spent on and how much is left.

- I suggest ideas for fundraising.

[ ]

- I run meetings if the Chairperson is away.

- I help the Chairperson to prepare the list of things (agenda) that are going to be talked about in the meeting.

- I help to make sure that all council members have a chance to say something.

[ ]

- I take notes (minutes) at meetings and make sure that everyone has a copy.

- I make sure that everyone knows when the meetings are.

- Sometimes, I have to sign letters from the school council.

Communication 1- Activity

Letting everyone know about the school council

Time – 10 – 15 minutes

AIMS

To give pupils an understanding of –

- their role as an elected representative

- how to make the school council more effective

- the importance of keeping other people informed about what the school council does.

OUTCOMES

Pupils understand that –

- they are elected representatives and have a responsibility to keep other people informed about what the school council is doing

- there are people who can help to support the work they do, in a variety of ways.

RESOURCES

Handout – Letting everyone know about the school council
Pens

PLAN

- Pupils should reflect on the meaning of **REPRESENTATIVE** and **COMMUNICATION.** This needs to be adult led and can be tackled in a number of ways, depending on the age range and ability of the council –

  1. **REPRESENT** and **COMMUNICATE** could be written on a board/flipchart and pupils asked to think about what each word means. They could then discuss this with a partner (and then with another pair) to arrive at a definition. These could then be fed back to the whole group and recorded on the board.

  2. The two words could be printed on A4 sheets of paper and pupils asked to write down what they think each means. They could check these against a dictionary definition provided by the adult, or by looking them up themselves.

  3. If time is an issue, pupils could simply be asked to put their hands up to volunteer a definition.

NB: It is important that pupils understand who they represent.

Whichever method is used, it is a good idea if these words are displayed prominently during meetings to remind pupils of two key aspects of their role.

- Following the above activity, pupils should be asked why they think it is important to communicate with other people in their role as school council members. The reasons they give can be acknowledged verbally or recorded on a board/flipchart.

- The handout provides an opportunity for pupils to think about who needs to be kept informed about what the school council is doing, and why. Pupils and teachers have already been identified. Under each of the other figures, pupils should write the name of an individual or group of people (e.g. parents, family, governors, caretaker …). They should be discouraged from writing 'brother' under one, 'sister' under another and so on.

- Once they have done this, they can feedback their ideas to the rest of the group. They should be asked to explain why an individual or group of people should be kept informed and consider how they might be able to help the council.

- During this feedback, pupils can add names to any figures they haven't identified.

Handout - Letting everyone know about the school council

Pupils

Teachers
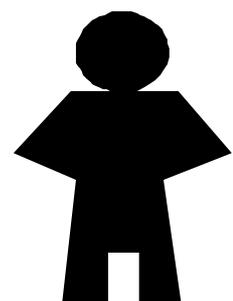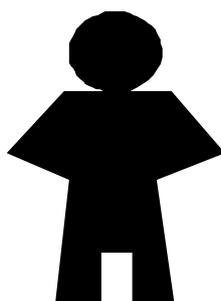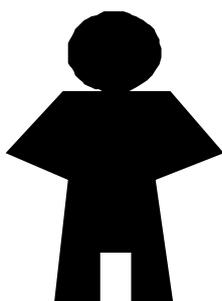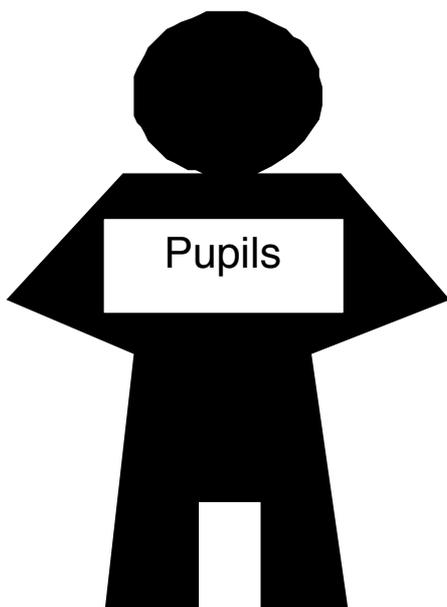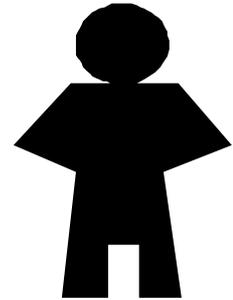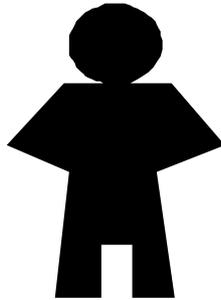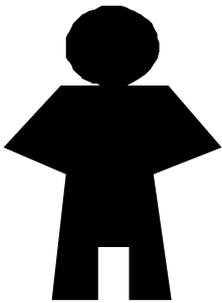
Communication 2 - Activity

Informing People; Being Informed

Time – 10 – 15 minutes

AIMS

To encourage pupils to consider –

- the most effective ways of communicating with others

- the advantages and disadvantages of these methods.

OUTCOMES

Pupils understand that –

- as elected representatives, they have a responsibility to keep others informed and to canvas their opinions

- there are a variety of ways in which they can communicate with others

- effective communication raises the profile of the school council

RESOURCES

Handout – Informing People; Being Informed
Pens

PLAN

- Revisit the words **REPRESENTATIVE** and **COMMUNICATION**.

- Remind pupils that there are two strands to their role –

  o To represent the views of their classmates at a school council meeting

  o To feed back to their classmates what happened at the school council meeting (see – Reporting back to the class).

  It would also be helpful at this point to ask them who else they might also have to keep informed (refer to Communication 1 – Letting everyone know).

- Pupils should be asked to think about their own experiences of receiving or finding information. Which method/s do they prefer and why?

- Once a variety of methods have been volunteered and considered, pupils should be asked to complete the worksheet, thinking specifically about the school council. One method should be written in each box until they run out of ideas.

  NB: It is important that pupils are reminded that part of the communication process is also about finding out what people think.

- Once the exercise has been completed, pupils should feedback to the group. During this process they should be asked to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each method, including time management and cost implications.

  NB: It is important that, following this activity, some of the outcomes are implemented.

Handout - Informing People
Being informed

Reporting back to the class - Activity

Time – to be determined by teacher

AIMS

To help pupils to –

- project their voices and speak clearly

- distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information/details.

OUTCOMES

Pupils will have had an opportunity to

- practise reporting back to a group

- consider what they need to remember to do this effectively.

RESOURCES

Handout – Reporting back to the class
Handout – Running a discussion
Pens
Paper

PLAN

This activity could follow on from School Council Roles 1. Otherwise, another opportunity for a discussion will have to be set up.

- It is important to recognise that, for some pupils, feeding back to their class might pose significant challenges. Therefore it will be necessary for the teacher to discuss with them why this is a vital part of their role and to identify what their concerns might be. Once this has been done, strategies can be developed to equip them to do this to the best of their ability.

- Working in small groups, pupils should be asked to compile a list of rules or tips for reporting back to a class after a school council meeting.

- Once this activity has been completed, each group should volunteer a number of suggestions which can be recorded on a board/flipchart.

- Through discussion and negotiation, pupils can decide on a definitive list, which can then be checked against the handout. This can be adopted as the council's checklist or, alternatively, a new one can be typed and distributed.

- It is important that pupils are able to practise reporting back to a group before they do so to their own class. However, bearing in mind that some school councils are quite large, it might be impractical, if not downright tedious, for each member to report back on the same issue during a training session. Therefore, there are a number of ways in which this could be tackled.

1. Working in pairs, pupil A is given thirty seconds to introduce themselves and to tell their partner three pieces of information about themselves. Once this has been done, the process is reversed – pupil B does exactly the same. Once this has been completed, each pupil has to introduce his or her partner to the group and repeat the three pieces of information e.g.

    This is _____

    His/her favourite food is _____

    His/her favourite TV programme is _____

    The best place he/she has ever been on holiday is _____

2. Following the first four steps in School Council Roles 1, a small group of pupils makes a decision about a topic they would like to discuss. During the discussion, each member of the group has to record what they consider the most important points to be as they arise. (Alternatively, after a briefer discussion, they could record the points at the end). Once this has been done, each member has to share what they think the most important points are to the rest of their group. (Alternatively, they could read these to the larger group, which might then lead to questions or requests for clarification).

3. Following the first five steps in School Council Roles 1, one group volunteers to discuss their chosen topic. The remaining pupils observe the discussion but, at the same time, have to record what they think the most important points are as they arise. Once the discussion has finished, the observers are asked to report back on what they heard, picking out the most important points.

    NB: It is important to remember that younger pupils could struggle with this task. Therefore, they might need to be supported by older pupils or the class teacher.

When reporting back to the class, a pupil should have access to the minutes from the meeting.

Handout - Reporting back to the class

Remember, you have been elected to represent the pupils in your class at a school council meeting. Therefore, you should report back to them after every meeting.

Tips –

- Report back as soon as possible after the meeting while it is fresh in your mind.

- Use the minutes (notes) from the meeting to help you.

- Only read out the main points.

- If your class has two school council members, share the reporting back.

- Speak in a clear, loud voice.

- Give people in your class a chance to ask questions.

- Write down any ideas or comments so you can take them to your next meeting.

Remember, each person in your class should feel that the school council belongs to them.

Handout - Running a discussion

- The chairperson leads the discussion.

- Each item on the agenda should be discussed separately.

- Only one person speaks at a time, when asked to do so by the chairperson.

- Everyone who wants to speak should be given an opportunity to say what they think.

- At the end of a discussion, the school council must reach a decision. (This might be that members need to find out more information before they can make a final decision.

- The chairperson should ask for someone to make a suggestion about what should be done (a **PROPOSAL)** and for someone else to say they agree (to **SECOND** it).

- Pupils must then vote either for or against the proposal. If the majority (more than half) agree, the proposal becomes an action that has to be carried out by a designated pupil or pupils.

- The secretary should make a note of the decision in the minutes.

<u>Writing an Agenda - Activity</u>

Time – 20 – 25 minutes

AIM

To enable pupils to decide

- how to plan what is going to be discussed at a school council meeting.

OUTCOMES

Pupils will understand

- why it is necessary to have an agenda

- how an agenda is used in meetings

RESOURCES

Topics for discussion - handout pg 29 & 30
Example of agenda
Agenda word game - handout
Agenda Templates
Paper
Pens

PLAN

- Ask pupils to volunteer suggestions as to why they meet as a school council.

- If this doesn't produce an appropriate answer, ask them what is needed before a discussion can begin.

- Either of the above suggestions can be developed so that pupils understand that they will need to know what they are going to talk about before a discussion can begin

- Introduce the word **AGENDA** – a list of topics that will be discussed during a meeting (although there are other elements).

- Ask pupils to make a list of things they would like to talk about at a school council meeting (alternatively, use Topics for discussion handout). Only allow two or three minutes for this activity.

- While pupils are feeding back, their suggestions should be recorded on a board/flipchart.

- Working with a partner, pupils will produce a school council agenda. This should include no more than three or four items from the collective list (too many will prevent any worthwhile discussion). These should be listed in order of importance or priority.

- Pupils can read out their agendas, explaining why they have chosen the items and prioritised them in the way they have.

- It might be worth explaining at this point that, normally, an agenda is drawn up (written) before a meeting by the chairperson, secretary and link teacher.

- Distribute the Agenda word game handout. Pupils should be made aware that an agenda includes other things as well. This game provides an opportunity for them to discover what they are. The sheet can be cut up so that pupils have to match a description with the right words. Alternatively, they can be colour coded or connected with arrows.

- Once pupils have had sufficient time to complete the game, their answers must be checked by asking for feedback. The agenda handout will support this activity.

Example of Agenda

School Council Agenda

1.   Apologies for absence

Any school council members who are unable to attend a meeting should let the group know. This is called an APOLOGY and must be recorded in the minutes.

2.   Minutes of the last meeting

One of the jobs the Chairperson has to do is to make sure that everyone has read the minutes from the last meeting and if they are correct. If something is wrong, or anything has been left out, the minutes must be corrected. The Chairperson should always sign them to show they are an accurate record of that meeting.

3.   This meeting's business

This is the main part of the meeting and will take up most time. The Chairperson should introduce each item on the agenda in order and make sure they are discussed properly. At the end of each discussion, the council should reach a decision about what it is going to do. Sometimes, members might want to report back on how they are getting on with any jobs they agreed to do at a previous meeting.

4.   Any other business (AOB)

Sometimes, things are left off the agenda or happen at the last minute. This part of the meeting provides a chance to have a short discussion about these.

5.   Date and time of next meeting

School council members need to know the date and time of the next meeting. These should be written down in the minutes.

Handout - Agenda word game

| This week's business | Apologies |

| Any other business | Minutes |

| Date of next meeting |

- A chance to find out why some pupils couldn't come to the meeting.
- Their names are all listed in the minutes.

- Council members and subcommittees report on how they are getting on with the jobs they have agreed to do.

- A chance to have a short discussion about something that wasn't put on the agenda.

- The chairperson makes sure everyone has read the minutes from the last meeting and asks if they are correct.
- If the minutes are correct, the chairperson signs them.
- If something is wrong, or has been left out, the minutes are corrected and then the chairperson signs them.

- Look at the new issues that the council has been asked to talk about.

- When is the council going to meet again?
- This date should be written in the minutes.

Template

<u>School Council Meeting</u>

Date: _____

<u>A G E N D A</u>

Apologies for absence

Minutes from last meeting

Agenda items

     1. _____

     2. _____

     3. _____

1. We discussed: _____

Ideas: _____

_____

Action: _____

2. We discussed: _____

Ideas: _____

_____

Action: _____

3. We discussed: _____

Ideas: _____

_____

Action: _____

Date of next meeting

Any other business

Template

<u>School Council Meeting</u>

<u>AGENDA</u>

Date:

Apologies

Minutes of the meeting held on _____

- Agreed they are an accurate record.

- Matters arising

Signed _____

Agenda item	Action
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Date of next meeting

Any other business

Taking and Keeping Minutes - Activity

Time – 10 – 15 minutes

AIMS

To provide pupils with an understanding of

- why it is necessary to keep a record of what happens at a school council meeting
- how to keep a record of what happens at a school council meeting.

OUTCOMES

Pupils will understand

- why minutes are important
- how to keep a record of what happens at a meeting.

RESOURCES

School Council Roles, a and b – pg 33 & 34
School Council Roles 2 – Extension activity - pg 32
Taking and keeping minutes handout
Paper
Pens

PLAN

- Ask pupils how they will be able to remember what happened during a meeting – discuss ways of doing this.

- Introduce the word **MINUTES** – a permanent written record of what happened during a meeting.

- Working with a partner, ask pupils to decide why it is necessary to have a written record; during feedback, a list could be made on a board/flipchart.

- At this point, it would be a good idea to establish whose responsibility it is to take minutes – everyone's or a particular member? (See School Council Roles 2, a and b.)

  NB: The role of Secretary frequently prevents a pupil from participating in discussion. Therefore, the school council might decide it is a job that each member does in turn (depending on age and ability). Alternatively, a pupil might be happy to take on the responsibility permanently. If two or three pupils are prepared to do this and the school council decides it should be a permanent post, there will have to be an election.

- If the latter option is preferred, an opportunity should be provided for members of the school council to make up their minds about who is best for the role. During a discussion, pupils who have presented themselves as candidates should take notes and then, at the end of the discussion, report back to the group. A decision as to who is the best person for the job can be decided by a simple show of hands.

NB: The activity described above could take place at the same time as the election of the Chair (School Council Roles 2 – Extension Activity). As far as is practicable, a candidate for the role of Chair could be paired with a candidate for the role of Secretary. Each pair would then have four or five minutes to lead a discussion and take notes. This process would be repeated until there are no more candidates. At this point, members of the school council would vote for who they consider to be the strongest candidates.

NB: It must be stressed that the Secretary should not try to write down everything that other members of the council say. (See Taking and Keeping Minutes handout).

Handout - Taking and Keeping Minutes

MINUTES are a RECORD of what was decided at meetings.

Minutes are important

- The **CHAIRPERSON, SECRETARY** and **LINK TEACHER** need them when they're planning the next meeting.

- **SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS** need them when they report back to their class.

- They remind school council members whether they have promised to carry out a task.

- They let the **HEADTEACHER** and other adults know what is going on.

Taking minutes

- Always include the **DATE** of when the meeting is being held and the **NAMES** of the **PUPILS** who are at the meeting.

- **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** – the names of the pupils who have told you they cannot attend.

- **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** – once it has been decided that these are **ACCURATE** or need **CORRECTING**, this should be **RECORDED** in the minutes that are being written for the present meeting.

- **MAIN AGENDA ITEMS** – for each item that is being discussed –

  o write down the item
  o write down the main points that are made
  o if there is a PROPOSAL, write down the exact words that are used, the name of the PROPOSER and the name of the SECONDER
  o write down how many pupils voted **FOR** the proposal and how many voted **AGAINST** the proposal
  o write down any ACTION that the school council wants to take and the name of anyone who agrees to do this.

- **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** – treat any other items that pupils want to raise in the same way as the main items.

- **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING** – write these down so that people won't forget!

Class Representatives - Activity

Time – up to one hour but this can be broken down into smaller units.

AIMS

To provide pupils with an understanding of

- how classes elect representatives to become members of the school council

- how council members represent their class

- the skills a school council member needs

OUTCOMES

Pupils have had an opportunity to consider

- how democratic processes work

- the skills a school council member needs

- whether they would like to stand for election.

RESOURCES

Electing School Council Members handout
Electing a Class Representative handout
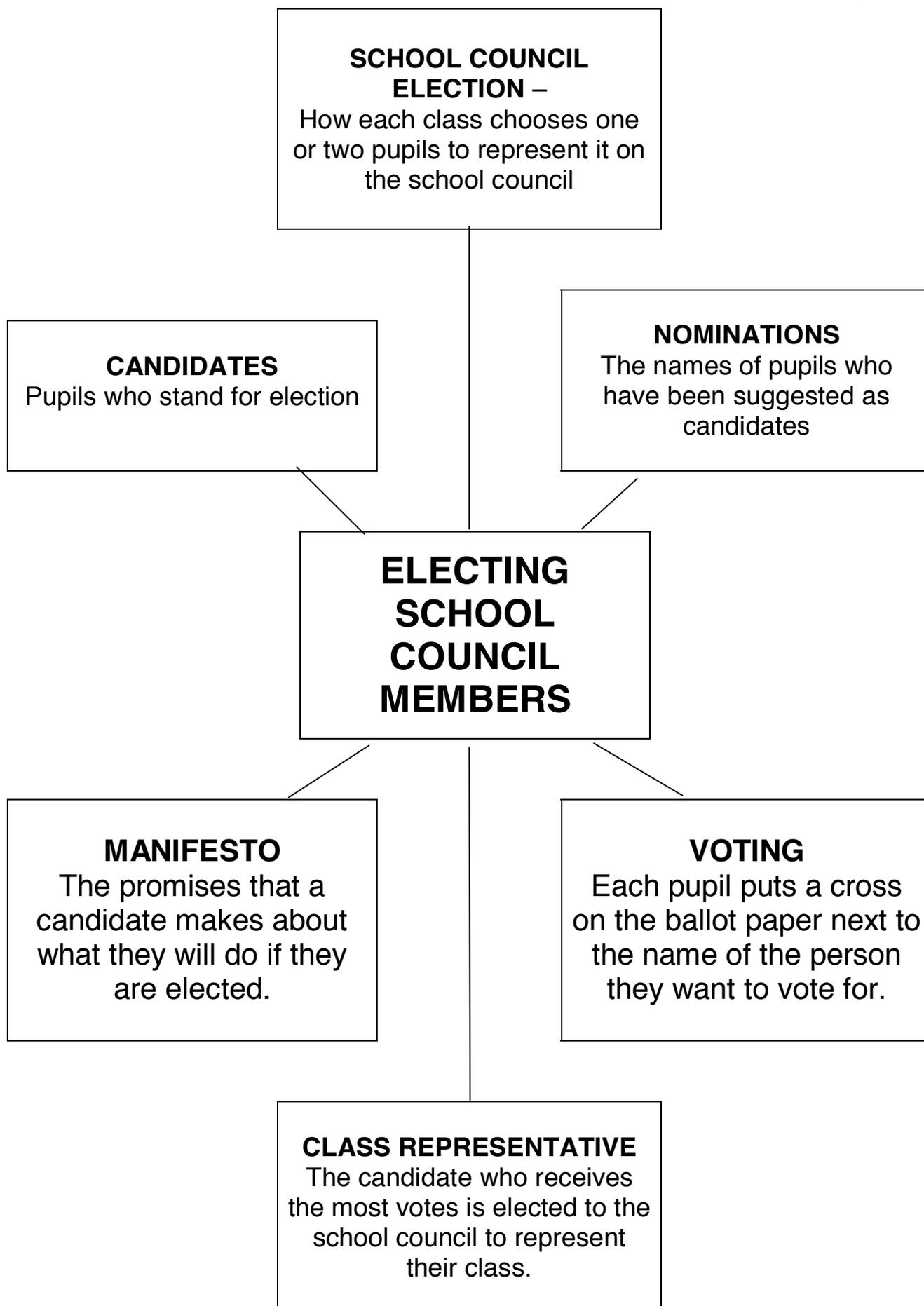Paper
Pens

NB: Citizenship at Key Stages 1 and 2

Unit 01 – Taking part – developing skills of communication and participation
Unit 10 – Local democracy for young citizens

PLAN

Once it has been decided when the election will be held, the following process should be followed –

- As a first step, pupils will need to be reminded that there is a school council and asked what they know about it. Working individually or in pairs, they should make a list of reasons why it is important to have a school council. Their answers can then be fed back and recorded on a board/flipchart. It is important to allow time for discussion around this subject, particularly if pupils' understanding needs to be developed.

- It will be necessary to explain what democratic elections are. If there is a tradition of electing school council members in this way, less time will have to be spent on it. However, if there isn't, or for new pupils, this is an absolute must. Clearly, the approach that is taken will be determined by the age and ability of the pupils but references could be made to the **city council and councillors, local elections, national elections, the government and parliament.** Teaching materials can be prepared beforehand using the citizenship units of work referred to above.

- The process for electing class representatives to the school council can be outlined by referring to the Electing School Council Members handout.

- There should be a discussion about what skills and qualities a representative needs. In order to do this, pupils will need to consider what **REPRESENTATIVE** and **TO REPRESENT** mean.

- Distribute Electing a Class Representative handout and ask pupils to complete it. It is important to allow time for discussion once this has been done.

  NB: It must be emphasised that pupils should not automatically vote for their best friend.

- As an extension to the above activity, pupils can be asked to list the three or four most important skills or qualities a class representative should have. This should help them to arrive at a decision about whether they would like to be nominated, or who they would like to nominate.

SCHOOL COUNCIL ELECTION –
How each class chooses one or two pupils to represent it on the school council

NOMINATIONS
The names of pupils who have been suggested as candidates

CANDIDATES
Pupils who stand for election

ELECTING SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS

MANIFESTO
The promises that a candidate makes about what they will do if they are elected.

VOTING
Each pupil puts a cross on the ballot paper next to the name of the person they want to vote for.

CLASS REPRESENTATIVE
The candidate who receives the most votes is elected to the school council to represent their class.

Handout - Electing a Class Representative

How should you choose who to vote for?

Which of these are good reasons to vote for someone?

Discuss each of these reasons and then tick whether it is good, back or you are not sure.

	Good	Bad	Not sure
The most popular person			
The strongest			
The most confident			
The one who talks the most			
Very good at discussing and debating			
Involved in everything, lots of clubs and sports			
Has lots of good ideas			
Always pleases teachers – has never been in trouble			
Honest – tells the truth			
Very good at supporting friends in trouble			
Gets highest marks in all tests			
Listens well and can understand different points of view			
Dresses smartly			
Reliable – always does what they say they will do			
Feels strongly that everyone is equal and should be treated in the same way			

Write any other good points you can think of here:

The Election- Activity

Time – up to one hour but this can be divided into smaller units.

AIMS

To provide pupils with an opportunity to

- nominate pupils as representatives

- write a manifesto

- vote for their preferred candidate/s

OUTCOMES

Pupils will have

- selected candidates for election to the school council

- explained why they are standing for election and what they will do if they are elected

- elected their class representatives

RESOURCES

Nomination form
Ballot paper

PLAN

- The class should be reminded about what being a representative means and which skills/qualities are required to do this well.

- Each pupil should be given a nomination form and told that they can nominate one other pupil. (A decision will have to be made as to whether they can nominate themselves).

- Once a pupil (the **PROPOSER**) has decided who they want to nominate, they must check that this person (the **NOMINEE**) is willing to stand for election. If this person agrees, the proposer should find someone else (the **SECONDER**) to support the nomination.

- The nomination form must then be completed and signed by the proposer, seconder and nominee.

- The nominees have now become **CANDIDATES** and have to write their manifestoes. This could be done immediately or the candidates could be given time, with a specific deadline.

- Once the manifestoes have been written, each candidate should read his or hers to the class so that pupils can make a decision about who they are going to vote for.

- Once ballot papers have been distributed, members of the class should cast their vote's for their preferred candidate/s.

  NB: A decision needs to be made regarding the format of the ballot paper. The names of the candidates can already be printed on it or, alternatively, pupils can write in the name/s themselves. Whichever method is chosen, voting must be done in secret so that one pupil does not know who another has voted for. It is strongly recommended that a ballot box is used.

- Once the election has been completed, the votes are counted and the result is announced.

- The results must be given to the school council link teacher as soon as possible after the election.

  NB: If all class elections are held on the same day, the event can be managed to heighten the sense of importance and excitement. A publicity campaign can be launched to precede election day and an official results declaration can be held in a specially arranged assembly.

Nomination Form

Class   _____

We want to nominate   _____
to represent our class as a member of the school council.

Proposed by   _____

Seconded by   _____

I agree to be nominated to represent my class as a member of the school council.

Signed _____ Date _____

Ballot Paper

Class   _____

Date of election   _____

Put **X** in the box next to the name of the pupil you want to represent your class as a member of the school council:

_____ ☐

_____ ☐

_____ ☐

_____ ☐

_____ ☐

_____ ☐

Principles of Participation

The DfES guidance, *Working together: giving children and young people a say*, sets out a number of principles that should underpin work to develop pupil participation. These are reinforced and developed here.

1.	Clear and visible commitment to involving children and young people with a route map of how to make it happen.	• The school works within the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child, fulfilling the child's right as set out in Article 12 to participate in all decisions that affect them. • The way in which children and young people participate is clearly laid out in all policies. • A governor and member of the school's SMT are identified as champion and monitor. • The contribution of participation to emotional and social development, reducing bullying, developing key skills, raising attainment and raising achievement is recognised and understood.
2.	Children and young people's involvement is valued.	• Children, families and the whole school community recognise the importance of participation, the contribution it makes to education, inclusion and health targets and all work in partnership to develop a supportive culture and environment. • Links to the taught curriculum (particularly PSHE and Citizenship and pastoral support) and other relevant processes (such as personal education planning) are recorded and reported, and accreditation is sought where applicable e.g. active citizenship programmes and Millennium Volunteers.
3.	Children and young people have equality of opportunity to be involved.	• A wide range of activities is established and all children and young people are encouraged, supported and enabled to access participation opportunities - these activities include identifying issues and areas of development as well as contributing to solutions - they start where children and young people are at and often require explicit and creative targeting of those who may not normally volunteer or be nominated to participate - extra support is offered where necessary for children and young people to access opportunities.

4.	Children and young people's participation and involvement are continually evaluated and reviewed	Children and young people are given explicit feedback about how their views and ideas have been listened to, what action has been taken in response, and next steps. This is particularly important where decisions go against the wishes and ideas of children and young people. Adults, children and young people in school start at a level at which they feel confident and are able to build on by celebrating successes, valuing and learning from mistakes and maintaining creativity and motivation. Opportunities for reflection and evaluation are integral to the work.
5.	Quality standards	Children, young people and staff receive training and support to develop their skills and confidence in organising, facilitating and participating in the full range of activities.

National Healthy School Status – Promoting children and young people's participation – DfES 2004.

Useful Websites

There is a plethora of websites devoted to children and young people's participation, as well as citizenship. However, the following are some of the most useful:

www.schoolcouncils.org

'School Councils UK is an independent charity which promotes and facilitates effective structures for pupil participation in every school. Our vision is of young people as decision makers, stakeholders and partners in their schools and communities.

School Councils UK produces a range of resources (some of which are free and can be downloaded and printed), provides training and has a national network of schools.

www.savethechildren.org.uk

Practice Standards for Children's Participation.

www.participationforschools.org.uk

(This is a Save the Children website but with a specific schools focus).

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications

'Social and emotional aspects of learning …'

This publication is a curriculum resource to help primary schools develop children's social, emotional and behavioural skills. It includes assemblies and follow up ideas for work in class.

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DCSF Publications Centre,
PO Box 5050,
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Tel: 0845 60222 60
E.mail: dcsf@prolog.uk.com

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2/KS2-1citizenship

Units of work for citizenship at Key Stages 1 and 2.

www.participationworks.org.uk

'Participation Works is a consortium of six leading children and young people's organisations that provides expert advice to anyone wanting to give a voice to children and young people.'

www.crae.org.uk

The Children's Rights Alliance for England is a coalition of over 380 organisations committed to the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. 'Ready Steady Change' is a resource that provides a package of training and a toolkit to put children's and young people's wishes, feelings and ideas at the centre of public services.

www.nya.org.uk/participation

The National Youth Agency promotes young people's participation in democracy, decision-making and the community. It provides a number of resources for those working with young people.

www.teachingcitizenship.co.uk

The website for ACT, the professional subject association for those involved in citizenship education.

www.mylife4schools.org.uk/mylife

My Life is a free Citizenship and PSHE teaching resource for children aged 7-11, produced by The Children's Society.

www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/library/activecitizenship