

Rhiwbeina Primary School

Pupil Voice Policy



RHIWBEINA PRIMARY

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OVERALL PRINCIPLES

Rhiwbeina Primary School values the views of all its members. This policy outlines how learning at Rhiwbeina Primary School is enhanced by exploring the thoughts and feelings of pupils within the school. Pupil Voice is embedded in all aspects of school life. We provide children with opportunities to contribute to school improvement because we believe listening to learners is fundamental to their wellbeing.

Our school aspires to enhance each child's self-esteem; providing a safe and secure environment in which they feel confident to take risks and strive to reach their full potential. Through recognising and celebrating achievement, we encourage every child to view themselves as a successful learner.

We believe that engaging our children in 'learning about learning' enables them to develop a deeper understanding of themselves as learners and therefore equips them with a greater capacity to learn. Our school ethos and the positive relationships established within our school community promote the value of learning and create a desire for children to become Lifelong Learners.

Rhiwbeina Primary School believes:

- Every child has an entitlement to personal, social and intellectual development and must be given an opportunity to achieve his/her potential in learning.
- Every child is unique in terms of characteristics, interest, abilities, motivation and learning needs.
- Our school systems should be designed to take into account these wide diversities.
- Those with exceptional learning needs and/or disabilities should have access to high quality and appropriate education.

OUR VISION

"The development of Pupil Voice will enable learners to explore and share their views of the school learning environment and their experiences as learners. This will enable the school community to ensure pupils have greater involvement in establishing an ethos of mutual contribution and increased ownership of their learning experiences, therefore engaging and motivating learners to achieve."

The underlying vision of child-centred schools is of a system that helps to create a democratic, people-oriented society that respects the differences and dignity of all beings.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- **Entitlement:** Children have a right to participate and to be listened to. When developing educational policy, local and central government must ensure that consulting with children is at the heart of all multi-agency planning.
- **Empowerment:** All children need to feel that they are valued and important and can make a difference. Being consulted and allowed to make choices from an early age helps to develop emotional growth and self-awareness. Directly involving pupils in their education enhances their engagement and promotes active learning. This expands their horizons and increases the choices open to them about their future. It helps to ensure that the education they receive is relevant to their needs.
- **Raising Attainment:** Pupil participation can help to raise academic standards. Progress is also supported by a curriculum that meets individual needs. Careful consideration should be given to pupil's groupings to ensure that those with learning, emotional, social or behavioural difficulties do not feel marginalised or de-motivated.
- **Protection:** Promoting pupil participation is an important aid to their self-protection. Apart from parents and carers, it is staff in schools that are best placed to notice early signs of distress and symptoms of abuse. A recurrent theme of successive inquiries into abuse has been the failure to listen to children.
- **Democracy:** Involving pupils in decisions about their learning and the educational environment will help to prepare them for making important choices as adults. Giving more power to pupils can lead to more motivated and engaged children and less staff/pupil contact. Representative democracy is strengthened as young people gain greater skills in communication, listening, negotiation, and peaceful conflict resolution.
- **Respect:** Pupil Participation can only flourish in an environment where teachers and other staff have a shared sense of responsibility for supporting and learning from one another and where young people are encouraged to build collaborative relationships with their peers.

PUPIL PARTICIPATION AIMS

Rhiwbeina Primary School believes that we should:

- Regard the involvement of pupils in decisions about their education as essential to good practise.
- Include pupils in assessing and monitoring their own progress. This involves reducing barriers to participation, with attention to language and level of understanding. Pupils should be helped to set targets for their learning and behaviour and be provided with opportunities for on-going review and feedback.
- Foster a whole school ethos in which all pupils are valued and encouraged to express their opinions, and take decisions from an early age. Create structures and mechanisms for listening to pupils and responding to their views, and monitor their effectiveness. Develop

constructive alliances between pupils based upon tolerance and respect of individual differences.

- Recognise that pupil participation can only become a reality in an environment where all staff are valued and involved in decisions affecting the school community. Relationships between adults should act as the model for the desired relationships between young people.
- Provide training and professional development to assist staff in developing models of good practise that support the inclusion of children with disabilities and those with emotional and social needs, e.g. 'Circle of Friends'.
- Carefully prepare pupils when attending reviews so that they can fully participate, offering facilitation for those less able to cope with meetings. Create a positive climate where children and parents are made to feel welcome.
- Ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum, properly resourced with a wide range of social opportunities. Put in place systems which allow pupils to have a greater say in the content of the curriculum and how it should be taught.
- Offer guidance and support to both new and experienced staff in managing diverse classrooms and in developing individualised learning programmes.
- Act as an empathic guide and advocate for the child equipping him/her with skills to respect different opinions and diverse cultures. This includes learning how to negotiate with others, and to make compromises when appropriate.
- Work in a partnership with parents whilst, at the same time, exercising sensitivity when pupils views differ from those of their parents.
- Collaborate with other agencies to ensure a 'holistic' approach. Exercise care and sensitivity when sharing information, in order to respect confidentiality without compromising the safety of the child. Help other agencies to recognise that there are usually educational implications when children are experiencing health or social problems.

"Pupils who participate in decision-making enjoy enhanced self-esteem and motivation, gain important personal, social and organisational skills, and become familiar with group and democratic processes. At the organisational level, pupil involvement in decision-making leads to better relationships, more relevant and effective policies, and better learning. In the best scenarios, pupils and adults work together as partners to ensure that their school provides the best possible learning environment for all. Pupils have an important part to play in helping their school to improve in every aspect of school life." (Pupil Voice Wales Website, 2010)

Rhiwbeina Primary School Council

Our School Council provides pupils with the opportunity to express their views about school life in a forum where they will be listened to and action taken when appropriate. It will also enable them to actively participate in improving the school community. The School Council meets regularly to formulate and then implement a school action plan for improvement. Rhiwbeina School Council is made up of representatives from each KS2 class. A Chairperson and Secretary will be elected by

school council representatives. During meetings a teacher representative will be present (non-voter). School Council meetings are held regularly with each meeting following a set agenda, which includes addressing issues raised at the last meeting and bringing to the meeting any new suggestions. A School Council Suggestion Box is accessible to all pupils within the school if they would like to make suggestions or raise issues. Minutes will be taken at every School Council meeting. These will be displayed on the school council notice board. School council representatives will be given the opportunity to report back from meetings and discuss issues with their classmates at regular class meetings.

Rhiwbeina Eco-Council

The school's Eco Council meets regularly to formulate and then implement a school action plan for environmental improvement. Children discuss ways of improving their school environment from litter collection to establishing ways of conserving energy. They also work alongside teachers, parents and governors to implement initiatives such as our school travel plan. Rhiwbeina has received their fifth Platinum Green Flag Award for continued work in the environment. Eco-council members elect a Chairperson and Secretary who oversee the meeting format. Minutes are completed with agendas on-going. This is a valued activity as it gives students a voice in a different setting where they are able to directly affect the sustainability of the school environment.

Rhiwbeina Peer Mediators/Playground Buddies

Peer Mediation is a process in which two pupils who have been trained in mediation skills encourage pupils who are in conflict to find ways of solving the problem they face or to explore new ways of looking at the situation. At the beginning of Year 5/6 children are given the opportunity to apply if they would like to undergo peer mediation training. They are asked to complete an application form and to give a reference from member of staff, stating why they would make a good Peer Mediator. These applications are then approved by relevant staff and parents. Once qualified, the peer mediators are available on the yard at lunchtimes to guide other pupils through a structured mediation process with the aim of helping those involved to find their own solutions to the conflict.

Pupils will be able to:

- Understand and resolve conflict more constructively without intervention from staff.
- Take ownership of problems.
- Develop skills to enhance their social, emotional and mental well-being.
- Transfer these skills outside school and later on in life.
- Be more accepting of people's differences.
- Show empathy to their peers.
- See other people's points of view.
- Learn to respect and value themselves and others.
- Recognise the effects of their actions on others.

The training links in with PSE and ESDGC education. It fosters a healthy school environment which will help to reduce absenteeism and bullying. The training promotes positive life skills such as: speaking and listening, critical thinking, negotiation, teamwork, respect and tolerance.

Criw Cymraeg/Helpwr Heddiw

Children from each class are elected to form our Criw Cymraeg to promote the use of the Welsh Language in our school.

Pupils can:

- come up with ways to promote the language.
- run playground games in Welsh.
- reward the use of Cymraeg being spoken through Tocyn Iaith.

Our Aspirations for the framework:

- Encourage independent learning
- Improve achievement
- Develop skills and confidence for active participation
- Improve pupil/teacher relationships and behaviour
- Encourage sense of belonging and increase self-esteem
- Develop links with the community and increase school profile
- Recognise wide range of achievement and promote inclusion
- Improve school democracy
- Deliver the PSE/ESDGC curriculum
- Develop enterprise skills

OUR CURRICULUM

Involving Parents - When beginning a new context for learning, a curriculum letter is made available to parents, sharing forthcoming learning opportunities. This encourages opportunity and suggestions for children to discuss with their parent what they would like to learn. The children's responses are recorded on a Thinking Map and displayed in the classroom so they can be referred to throughout the project.

At the beginning of each project the children will experience a Launch Day. The Launch Day should be used as an opportunity to elicit the children's existing skills, knowledge and understanding and motivate pupils. Approaches such as: Thinking Maps, KWL grids, thought bubbles, etc, are used to record what the children know and what they want to learn. Choices about HOW they want to learn should also be considered. This activity will usually be recorded in the children's project books or in some cases a class portfolio. Ideas and questions generated should be added to the class Learning Wall of questions or to ongoing project displays.

Informing Planning - Short Term Planning: includes pupil voice opportunities based on the children's initial and on-going interests/suggestions. Alongside influencing curriculum content, pupil voice opportunities may also include children choosing HOW to learn and WHO to learn with.

'Flexibility and choice need to be encouraged as part of the personalisation of the curriculum at all phases, as they promote motivation.'

Evaluating Learning - Throughout a project and at the end of a project, children are given opportunities to evaluate their learning and reflect on the questions they raised at the beginning of the project. Questions and ideas may be added at various points during a project as learning takes place. Children should use AfL strategies, Thinking Skills, Habits of Mind, etc, to reflect on their learning (meta-cognition). Opportunities for children to evaluate their learning should be planned for and evident within their project books/class books.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Pupil Voice is embedded in all aspects of our school life. We provide children with opportunities to contribute to school improvement because we believe pupil participation is fundamental to children's wellbeing and development as successful individuals and to the success of our school. Through pupil participation we encourage all pupils to think about their rights and responsibilities and those of others.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people a comprehensive set of rights. It sets out in detail what every child needs to have a safe, happy and fulfilled childhood regardless of their sex, religion, social origin, and where and to whom they were born.

The Convention gives children and young people over 40 substantive rights, including the right to:

- special protection measures and assistance
- access to services such as education and healthcare
- develop their personalities, abilities and talents to the fullest potential
- grow up in an environment of happiness, love and understanding
- be informed about and participate in achieving their rights in an accessible and active manner.

At Rhiwbeina Primary School we are committed to the UNCRC and to its implementation. We aim to ensure that pupils are aware of their rights as stated in the UNCRC. We encourage the children to recognise and value their own rights and the rights of others. We believe our pupils are treated fairly and with respect; we strive to support children in overcoming challenges and give them the confidence to reach their full potential, in a safe and secure environment.

The Welsh Assembly Government's approach to children and young people's participation is based on the principles enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales have been developed to improve the process of children and young people's participation in decision-making. The Participation Standards measure the 'quality' of the process of children and young people's participation against key agreed indicators. At Rhiwbeina Primary School we use the National Participation Standards as a framework against which to self-evaluate pupil participation in our school.

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE BECOME BETTER LEARNERS

Through "Habits of Mind" children are given opportunities to learn about their learning.

The 16 Habits of Mind are the characteristics found in independent, self directing learners. They offer a framework for learners of all ages to decide how they can behave intelligently when facing many choices, when stuck, when planning a complex task, when working collaboratively or when needing to tackle a new challenge. They provide a framework or compass for pupils to refer to when needing to direct the next steps in their learning. They remove dependency on the teacher and overtime become internalised, habituated approaches to taking the lead in one's own learning even when the way forward is not clear or is in unfamiliar territory.

"Habits of Mind are the characteristics of what intelligent people do when they are confronted with problems, the resolutions of which are not immediately apparent."

A.L.N.

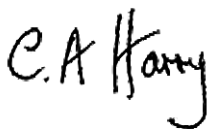
For learners working significantly below the expected levels we use the needs of the learner as a starting point and adapt the curriculum accordingly. Sufficient flexibility exists within the curriculum to meet the needs of learners and promote inclusion. For more-able and talented learners working at higher levels, we provide greater challenge by using material in ways that extend breadth and depth of study and opportunities for independent learning. The level of demand is also increased through the development and application of literacy, numeracy, thinking, and ICT across the curriculum.

EQUALITY STATEMENT

OUR VISION FOR EQUALITY AND COMMUNITY COHESION

We seek to remove barriers to learning with imaginative curriculum design and delivery. We seek to provide an inspirational learning environment based on a personalised style of learning. Learning is at our core and we believe it will broaden horizons, raise aspirations and enhance students' self-confidence as successful learners, both now and in the future. Pupils will have every opportunity to achieve standards that match their potential and to gain successes as effective lifelong learners. We are committed to equality of opportunity and access for all our learners and to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equalities Act 2010.

Signed:



Carol Harry

October 2022



Matthew Sutton – Chair of Governing Body

October 2022