

School Councils and Every Child Matters

We believe that if every child can have their voice heard, understood and responded to, they will become active participants in their communities. School Councils UK has welcomed the Every Child Matters priorities, and has seen first hand how school councils' work within the categories improves children's lives.

A summary version of this table is available on www.schoolcouncils.org

Outcome: Be Healthy	
BH1 Be physically healthy	Effective school councils get involved with sports subcommittees and activities. Many school councils organise sports days, clubs, etc. These often link up with sports leadership programmes.
	A common achievement for school councils is the acquisition of sports equipment and the creation of playground markings.
BH2 Be mentally and emotionally healthy	Democratically elected student councils instil confidence in students, due to the appreciation of their contributions and implementation of their ideas. Confidence and improved personal efficacy improves mental and emotional health.
	The communication skills learnt in school councils enable children and young people to interact better with others, creating better relationships and thus supporting good mental and emotional health.
	Negotiation skills are an important part of the qualities developed by students working as part of an effective council. By learning that what one person wants is not always best for the group and that sometimes compromise is the best option, relationship building skills are strengthened.
	Effective school councils are embedded at the heart of a happy whole-school ethos. Schools that are safe, secure and open communities nurture happier and more confident students; enjoying mental and emotional health support.
BH3 Be sexually healthy	In schools where student voice is a central aspect, an open and frank approach to issues impacting on children and young people follows. Creating an atmosphere such as this encourages young people to ask questions and gather knowledge on sexual health and other important social and health issues.
	An effective school council, if consulted appropriately, can help staff to ensure that the PSHE curriculum, covering such matters as sexual health and drug use, is appropriately

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	pitched.
BH4 Live healthy lifestyles	<p>School councils across the country regularly address matters relating to food and nutrition in school.</p> <p>Subcommittees of the council will help staff to ensure that a good variety of affordable food options are available, including healthy ones.</p>
	<p>School environment has a lasting effect on students' lifestyle and health.</p> <p>School councils can work with management and local community groups to ensure safe and secure plans for traffic calming, school buildings and extended school provision.</p> <p>They will also be concerned to ensure that playgrounds and playfields are used fairly and fully.</p>
BH5 Choose not to take illegal drugs	<p>Effective school councils create open and frank discussion and information sharing communities.</p> <p>Through sharing the responsibility for their educational community, young people are treated with respect, developing their self-esteem and emotional resilience to peer pressure.</p>

Outcome: Staying Safe	
SS1 Are safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation	<p>Effective student councils engender an open and secure atmosphere in school.</p> <p>This type of atmosphere encourages children and young people who are at risk of, or are experiencing harm to disclose their safety concerns to someone.</p>
SS2 Are safe from accidental injury and death	<p>Pupil councils regularly work with community groups, local government and senior school management to improve safety conditions in and around school.</p>
SS3 Are safe from bullying and discrimination	<p>A truly effective school council is by definition inclusive.</p> <p>Each pupil in school has their views and opinions represented by an elected peer.</p> <p>Creating a school of emotionally literate and responsible students reduces bullying and discriminatory behaviour.</p>
	<p>Schools that engage their students in the creation and implementation of an anti-bullying policy will be the schools that are most effective at tackling this widespread problem.</p>
SS4 Are safe from crime and anti-	<p>Democratic schools that involve and respect pupils provide safer environments for their students.</p> <p>Violence is reduced as student frustration is minimised</p>

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social behaviour in and out of school	and conflict resolution skills are developed. Relationships between teachers and students improve and more co-operative behaviour can be observed.
SS5 Have security, stability and are cared for	A school community that cares for others and has high regard for student rights will normally be more stable and secure than other schools. School councils enable schools to become this type of community. Students will be much more likely to look out for, and look after, each other.
	Effective school councils create vehicles for students to voice their need for care and support more easily. Voicing their needs ensures a child's chance of receiving care either from peers or adults.

Outcome: Enjoy and Achieve	
EA1 Are ready for school	Children are never too young to be made to feel that their opinions matter and that what they have to say is important. Developing confidence and emotional literacy in this manner through pupil councils at Foundation and Key Stage One means children are prepared for school as they understand the concept of groups, communication and self-worth.
EA2 Attend and enjoy school	Once young people are included and respected, they develop positive feelings of ownership towards their community. Professor Lynn Davis, University of Birmingham carried out research into pupil councils and exclusions, concluding that schools with effective structures of pupil participation have less truancy and exclusions. (School Councils and Pupil Exclusions: Davies, Lynn 1999) Becoming involved with school life, and successfully initiating change opens up new areas of enjoyment for children and young people.
EA3 Achieve stretching national educational standards at primary school	School council skills include: communication - speaking, listening, writing and presenting; negotiation, emotional literacy, enquiry and basic budgeting. These life skills contribute to KS2 understanding in English, Maths and Science.
EA4 Achieve personal and	Developing essential life skills of communication, negotiation and problem solving contribute positively to the personal and social development of children and young people.

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<p>social development and enjoy recreation</p>	<p>Volunteering to be on a school council is recreation to many children and young people. A common practice of school councils is to work with local councils and school management to improve recreation facilities and environments for children and young people.</p>
<p>EA5 Achieve stretching national educational standards at secondary school</p>	<p>Derry Hannam carried out a research project into 'School Attainment and Pupil Participation', 2001.(www.csv.org.uk)</p> <p>The project found higher attendance and higher levels of attainment at GCSE in participative schools when compared to other schools in similar circumstances (using OFSTED free school meal bands).</p> <p>By getting feedback and ideas from students with regards to the implementation of the national curriculum; teachers are encouraged to improve their teaching and are supported in making teaching and learning as interesting, relevant and successful as possible.</p> <p>School councils are concerned with peer leadership, support and democracy.</p> <p>These qualities and skills stretch educational standards by instilling confidence in young people to invest and achieve in their educational career.</p> <p>Schools become safer places when effective structures of student voice are in place.</p> <p>If a school is safer, fear and anxieties are reduced and the focus on academic achievement can be increased.</p>

Outcome: Make a Positive Contribution

<p>MPC1 Engage in decision-making and support the community and environment</p>	<p>Effective school councils are democratic and inclusive. They are developed as decision-making bodies, enabling all children and young people in school to have a system to channel their voices through.</p> <p>This inclusive model of youth democracy and decision-making support Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; that a child has the right to express their opinions and to have them taken into account in any matter affecting them.</p> <p>Community involvement and support is a constant part of school council work.</p> <p>Minsthorpe Community College in Wakefield worked with the community forum to develop a road safety action plan presented to the local MP.</p> <p>Mulberry Bush School in Oxfordshire, like many schools, have an Environmental Resource subcommittee on their</p>
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	<p>The school council received £200 from Thames Valley Partnership to build a conservation area on school grounds.</p>
<p>MPC2 Engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school</p>	<p>A central concept reiterated by effective school councils is one of connection to peers and community.</p> <p>Once an awareness of connection and responsibility to others is developed, negative behaviour decreases.</p>
	<p>Many school councils are involved in developing and adapting school rules.</p> <p>When engaged in the process of rule-making, young people realise that rules are there to support the community rather than being primarily about victimising individuals.</p> <p>When young people understand and appreciate rules, then they are more likely to abide by them.</p>
	<p>Preston Manor School in London has a behaviour panel run by the school council which discusses issues around negative behaviour and suggests sanctions to those peers who are behaving badly.</p>
<p>MPC3 Develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate</p>	<p>Positive communication encouraged by student councils, fosters positive and healthy relationships between students and their peers, as well as between staff and students.</p> <p>Inclusive atmospheres promoted by school councils reduce bullying and discrimination.</p>
<p>MPC4 Develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges</p>	<p>Children and young people develop self-confidence through exercising their student voice through school councils.</p> <p>Being trusted to develop ideas and solutions for the school and their peers, and seeing some of these ideas come to fruition, develops respect and self-worth in students.</p> <p>Utilising life skills such as communication, action planning and negotiating wider social needs, children and young people are better prepared for the challenges of growing up.</p>
	<p>Young people who are used to school council systems are familiar with debate and discussion.</p> <p>The understanding that there is always more than one point of view and multiple readings of an event help engender a mature outlook and attitude to challenges.</p>
	<p>The ultimate challenge for school councils is that students are told to try to solve and manage their own issues, rather than expecting a member of staff to manage everything for them.</p>

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	This is an excellent preparation for dealing with life's challenges.
MPC5 Develop enterprising behaviour	Because they work to improve the school and wider community, school councils are by nature a social enterprise. Consulting peers and working together to improve a range of situations encourages enterprising behaviour.

Outcome: **Achieve Economic Well-Being**

AEW1 Engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school	Effective school councils develop children and young peoples' confidence by using their ideas and opinions to improve school and the wider community. Being trusted and respected shows young people the positive reasons to consider all opportunities carefully where they find them. This reasoning will lead to better decision-making and confidence to develop oneself further.
AEW2 Are ready for employment	School councils provide children and young people with speaking, listening and writing skills, negotiation, debate and enterprise skills as well as team working, action planning and relationship building experience. All of these skills are essential to working life, making schools with effective school councils better able to prepare their students for future employment.
AEW3 Live in decent homes and sustainable communities	N/A
AEW4 Have access to transport and material goods	N/A
AEW5 Live in households free from low income	N/A

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