Pontypridd High School

Student Participation Policy

July 2022

'Learning and achieving together'
'Dysgu a chyflawni gyda'n gilydd'

Student Participation Policy

Date of policy:	July 2022
Adopted:	Learning and Teaching Committee Meeting, 5th July, 2022.
To be reviewed:	Summer 2024
Member of staff responsible:	Emerging Leader for Learning and Teaching
Committee Responsible:	Learning and Teaching

1. Definition

Student participation is about children and young people having their voice heard when decisions are being made that affect them and being actively involved in the decision-making processes. The Welsh Government has adopted the following definition;

"Participation means that it is my right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing any action that might affect me. Having a voice, having a choice."

Participation is a process rather than an event, with varying degrees of involvement, from being consulted on a predetermined issue to young people choosing their agenda, making their own decisions and taking them forward. Pontypridd High School aims to develop participatory practice so that all students have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of consultation and decision-making activities.

2. Student Participation in context

International

The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** is an international agreement that protects the human rights of children under the age of 18. The UNCRC sets outs these rights in 54 articles. Several of these articles are particularly relevant to educational settings. Article 13 and 17 set out the right of children and young people to access and share reliable information; whilst Articles 28-30 set out the right to an education which develops every child's personality and talents to the full, in the context of their language and culture.

The basis for student participation and student voice is to be found in **Article 12 of the UNCRC,** which sets out the right of children and young people to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account when decisions are being made on any matter that affects them. This Article is seen as particularly important, in that it is an enabling right, empowering and supporting children and young people to access the broader rights under the UNCRC. Pontypridd High unequivocally supports this.

National

Wales is the first country in the United Kingdom to embed the principles of the UNCRC into legislation. The Children and Young Persons (Wales) Rights Measure (2011) places a duty on Welsh ministers to have "due regard" to the rights and obligations within the UNCRC when making any new policies or laws. The first **Children's Commissioner** in the United Kingdom was created in Wales in 2001 with an independent role in protecting children and young people's rights.

The Welsh Government's **National Standards for Children and Young People's Participation** have been developed for and with young people, setting out how children and young people can be involved in decision-making in meaningful and effective ways.

3. Rationale

Pontypridd High School recognises that children and young people 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. We believe that student involvement in decision-making leads to better relationships, more relevant and effective policies, and better learning. Our school is committed to developing effective student participation with people of all ages working together as partners, ensuring that the school provides the best possible learning environment for all.

We recognise the importance of ensuring opportunities to participate in decision-making processes are made accessible to **all** students, including those who are more vulnerable, so that they feel included and involved in the school community and know that their views count.

4. Strategic aims

Pontypridd High School believes that we should:

- Foster a whole school ethos in which all students are valued and encouraged to express their opinions and take decisions from an early age.
- Create structures and mechanisms for listening to students and monitor their effectiveness.
- Include students in assessing and monitoring their own progress. Students should be helped to set targets for their learning and behaviour and be provided with opportunities for on-going review and feedback.
- Recognise that student 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.
- Ensure that all students have access to a broad and balanced curriculum, properly resourced with a wide range of social opportunities.
- Allow students to learn how to negotiate with others and to make compromises when appropriate.
- Work in a partnership with parents and carers whilst, at the same time, exercising sensitivity when students views differ from those of their parents / carers.
- 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.
- Promote student participation as an important aid to their self-protection. Apart from parents and carers, it is staff in school that are best placed to notice early signs of distress and symptoms of abuse.
- Involve students in decisions about their learning and their educational environment, preparing them for making important choices as adults together with gaining greater skills in communication, listening, negotiation, and peaceful conflict resolution.
- Acknowledge that student participation can only flourish in an environment where young people are encouraged to build collaborative relationships with their peers.

"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, students and adults work together as partners to ensure that their school provides the best possible learning environment for all. Students have an important part to play in helping their school to improve in every aspect of school life." (Student Voice Wales, 2010)

5. Principles
Student participation and student voice activities should;
- make a positive and demonstrable contribution to the life of our school
- not undermine teachers' professional authority and must not compromise other fundamental rights of children and young people
- value and respects the views of all members of the school community
- reflect the capacity of students to participate in particular activities and the extent to which they can reasonably be held to account for the results of their action
- be consistent with, and support work to promote equality and diversity and tackle discrimination and prejudice.
- be inclusive and give all students an opportunity to participate

At Pontypridd High School we recognise that student participation is closely linked to the safeguarding of children and young people. Students who are empowered to raise concerns are better safeguarded, and any potential issues can be dealt with more effectively and promptly.

6. Developing a whole school approach
Student participation is embedded in our improvement plan, regularly discussed at staff meetings and reviewed at Governing Body meetings. We encourage a consistent and positive attitude to student participation by ensuring that all staff, including non-teaching staff;
- understand what is meant by student participation;
- understand the benefits of student participation
- are clear about their role in terms of supporting student participation;
- are kept well informed about issues being discussed and proposals put forward by the school council and other student representative groups.

7. Key roles and responsibilities
In order to ensure that student participation is taken forward in a way that is strategic and holistic and that pupils are included in decision-making processes as a matter of course, Pontypridd High has established the following key roles;

7.1 : Designated Governors for Student Participation
There will be a designated governor for Student Participation. The designated governor assumes the following responsibilities;
- Ensuring that the governing body is aware of the benefits of developing a whole-school approach to student participation;
- Ensuring that the school council and other representative student groups contribute their views and ideas;
    Ensuring that students are actively involved in a timely and appropriate manner when

- Work with senior leaders to promote a whole-school approach to student participation and to communicate this approach to staff, partners/carers and local partners;
- Encouraging the governing body to celebrate the role of students as active citizens in improving their learning and environment.

7.2 : Named member of the Senior Management Team
The named member of the Senior Management Team responsible for student participation is responsible for;

- Liaising with the designated governors to ensure that student participation is promoted and developed as a whole-school approach in line with the Welsh Government's National Children and Young People's Participation Standards;
- Working with the designated governor and Senior staff to ensure that effective approaches to student participation are incorporated into relevant school policies; identified in the school improvement plan; reflected in strategies and methodologies for teaching and learning; discussed at Senior Management and staff meetings; a standing item on Governing Body termly meeting agendas
- Encouraging understanding of and positive attitudes towards student participation among staff through the sharing of information, training and good practice;
- Ensuring that channels for communication and feedback are working effectively, so that information is shared in ways that are timely, inclusive and appropriate;
- Promoting and celebrating the achievements of students through participation; eg. through regular or special assemblies, the school newsletter/website, awards ceremony, notice boards.

7.3 : The School Council Link Teacher
The School Council link teacher supports the school council by:
- Arranging and attending meetings;
- Helping students to prepare agendas, minutes and action plans;
- Offering support and guidance;
- Reporting back to colleagues;
- Informing parents/carers and governors;
- Helping to raise the profile of representative groups
- Monitoring and evaluating progress made.

7.4 : All Class Teachers and Support staff
Class teachers and support staff share the responsibility to;
- Raise awareness of a range of opportunities for students to actively participate in decision-making;
- Ensure that all students are encouraged to participate;
- Allow regular time for student-led meetings and to facilitate these meetings;
- Allow time for school council members to feedback promptly after meetings;

8. Finances
Money is raised for school council activities through fund raising activities organised by the students. An allocation from the School budget is used to facilitate the work of the student council and other student representative groups.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation
Our Student Participation Policy is monitored and evaluated annually, in consultation with students and staff. An action plan is developed highlighting the areas for further improvement which forms part of the school improvement

10. Student Participation – Whole School

There are many different ways in which we gather the opinions and thoughts of students, parents, carers and people in the wider community

Every time a child takes part in this type of activity it will be recorded so that we are able to monitor those who are involved and in doing so we can ensure that we engage with as many different students as possible. The type of activities include:

1.   School Council meetings
2.   Whole school surveys
3.   Student 'focus' group meetings led by Leadership staff
4.   Student voice led by Faculty teaching staff
5.   Student voice led by Wellbeing staff
6.   Student involvement in staff appointments
7.   Assessment of student's work
8.   Student Led conferences
9.   Suggestion boxes
10.   Parent and carer meetings
11.   Parent and carer surveys
12.   Evaluation meetings and reports with different partners and agencies

Appendix 1 provides an outline of a typical school year calendar when these different sources of evidence may be collected.

1. **School Council**
   The School Council is a group of students who represent all areas of the school. They are elected by their peers and meet at least termly. For all other students they provide:
   - a democratically elected leadership team
   - a forum for discussing all aspects of our work in school
   - a system and process which can instigate positive change for students
   - an appreciation of mutual respect and value for the opinions and thoughts of everyone

2. **Whole school surveys:**
   Whole school surveys which include every year group are usually undertaken online through Microsoft teams. They are completed at least once a term for every child. Learners will be asked a series of questions, primarily based on their own wellbeing, progress in school and the quality of our support and provisions.

3. **Student 'focus' group meetings led by Leadership staff**
   Following school surveys, groups of students are selected to discuss the main points that are raised by the school community. This may include matters relating to:
   - School policies which link to positive behaviour and rewards
   - The quality of support and experiences for ASPIRE / ALN children
   - Learning experiences in and out of the classroom
   - Early morning, break and lunchtime facilities, including healthy food choices
   - Attendance and wellbeing support
   - Dealing with student concerns and knowing who to talk to

4. **Student voice led by Faculty teaching staff**
Every Faculty will meet with students in different year groups to have more specific discussions about the lessons they attend, the assessments they complete and how well they are progressing. Students will also be asked what the strengths of the provision are and if appropriate, how things could be improved.

5. **Student voice led by Wellbeing staff**
Wellbeing Managers will meet with students in their respective year groups to discuss their opinions and thoughts on the different types of support offered and how it is helping them or could help them more. This may include discussions about attendance in school, friendship or family issues.

6. **Student involvement in staff appointments**
When we appoint members of staff to our school we ask students to be a part of the appointment process. When we appoint a teacher this usually takes place in two different ways.

   Firstly, we always ask the interviewee to teach a lesson and the students in the class they teach are asked for their opinions on the quality of learning that takes place.

   Secondly a panel of students from different year groups will ask the interviewee a series of questions which they have discussed and agreed on. Feedback from both groups is provided to the School governors before they make their final decision on who to appoint.

7. **Assessment of student's work**
All staff will look at student books as they mark and assess them regularly through each term. In addition to this there will be whole staff meetings which look at a selection of students work and books to check that the quality is consistent between teachers and subjects.

   As a part of this process, smaller focus groups of students will be involved in talking about the different learning experiences they have had, their understanding of the work they are producing and any opinions and thoughts about making positive changes.

8. **Student Led conferences**
Selected students will be selected at different times through the year to complete a 'student led conference'. This is an occasion whereby a student is asked to prepare for a meeting between themselves and a member of staff. The focus of this 'conference' meeting is for the student to showcase their work in different subjects and to discuss their strengths and celebrate standards achieved. The meeting is led by the student.

   When appropriate the parents or carers will also be invited to this student led conference.

9. **Suggestion boxes**
These are located on the wall outside Pupil Services in the Lower (STEM) Block and the attendance office in Upper Block.

Students can write down any opinion or suggestion they may have about our work.

Staff will collect any messages each week and these will be discussed by the appropriate staff. If a student also includes their name they will be contacted about the response made.

10. Parent and carer meetings

At least once per year, parents and carers will have the opportunity to meet with staff who teach their child(ren) and also those staff who provide the wellbeing, safeguarding and ALN support.

11. Parent and carer surveys

At least once per school year, every parent and carer will have an opportunity to complete an online survey.

Parent and carers will also be invited to join a parent and carer forum which are set up at different times of the year to discuss aspects of our work. This could be a discussion based on a school policy such as positive relationships (behaviour) or the design of our school reports.

12. Evaluation meetings and reports with different partners and agencies

We work with different partners and agencies who support the work we do as staff in order to provide all the different types of challenge and support our students need. This may include meetings and discussions with colleagues from RCT, local politicians, local health boards, attendance and behaviour support, counselling services, sports clubs and many others.

We speak regularly with colleagues to check that the quality of the work we are undertaking and delivering with them is having the positive impact we all want.

Appendix 1 : School calendar of 'Your Voice matters' activities

1. School Council meetings (Fortnightly)
2. Whole school surveys
3. Student 'focus' group meetings led by Leadership staff
4. Student voice led by Faculty teaching staff
5. Student voice led by Wellbeing staff
6. Student involvement in staff appointments
7. Assessment of student's work
8. Student Led conferences
9. Suggestion boxes
10. Parent and carer meetings
11. Parent and carer surveys
12. Evaluation meetings and reports with different partners and agencies

	Autumn Term		Spring term		Summer Term	
	Half-term	Half-term	Half-term	Half-term	Half-term	Half-term
Student Participation activities	7	2	4	2	4	2
	8	3	5	3	5	3
	9	8	7	8	7	8
	10	9	8	9	8	9
	12	11	9	11	9	12
		12	12	12	12	

Appendix 2 : Suggested Pupil Voice Proforma

The Pontypridd High School

Whole School – Year ***

Pupil Voice
DATE

Focus on:	
Pupils Involved (Year group and any specific information):	

Words that could be used to indicate EXCELLENT				
Outstanding Excellent Very Good	Superb Superior Exemplary	Highly imaginative Highly creative Accomplished	High quality Perfect Extensive	Innovative / Inventive Well above expectations Exceptional
Words that could be used to indicate GOOD				
Comprehensive Successful Skilful	Good Beneficial Used well / Useful	Able / Powerful Thorough Worthwhile	Consistently good Pleasing Valuable	Effective Particularly (add a word from the list of adequate)
Words that could be used to indicate ADEQUATE				
Effective Appropriate Suitable	Competent Relevant Enough	Satisfactory Sufficient Efficient	Acceptable Useful Solid / Consistent	Valid Average Sound
Words that could be used to indicate UNSATISFACTORY				
Insufficient No / None Inadequate	Invalid Inappropriate Ineffective	Inefficient Unable Weak	Incorrect Inconsistent Irregular	Unsuitable Limited Poor
Words that need to be QUALIFIED : Consistent		Regular		Coherent
Quantities and Proportions				
Nearly all = with very few exceptions Most = 90% or more	Many = 70% or more A majority = over 60%		Half = 50% Around half = close to 50%	A minority = below 40% Few = below 20%

Question	Responses/Write up
Do you enjoy school and your lessons?	
Do you feel safe and happy in school?	
Do you know what our current Year 7 Learning Theme is?	
Do you think that our current Learning This is interesting? Why/Why not?	
What subjects do you enjoy the most and why?	
Is your work marked regularly?	
Does teacher marking help you to improve your skills?	
What skills are you focusing on improving in your lessons so far this term?	
Do you complete your Discover More homework?	
Is behaviour good in lessons? If behaviour is not good, do your teachers deal with it?	
Do you check your Class Charts regularly?	
Do you feel supported in school?	

Who would you go to if you needed support?	

Strengths:	*Actions:*
Areas to develop:	*Actions:*

Pontypridd High School

School Council Application Form

Why do you want to join the school council?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What would make you a good representative?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What changes or improvements would you like to make at school?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Please return this form to pupil services.