

Top Tips for improving participation



The Children's Commissioner has worked with her Advisory Panel of Young People to create suggestions for how a great school council could be created in a secondary school.

These suggestions are based on the principles of [The Right Way: A Children's Rights Approach for Education in Wales](#).

The following suggestions show how you can use the principles of a children's rights approach:

Embedding children's rights – making sure children's rights are at the centre of participation in secondary schools

- The Head teacher makes sure all members of the school community (staff, pupils and governors) understand that the school council is set up to help pupils have a voice - Article 12 of the UNCRC.

Equality and non-discrimination – ensuring that ALL pupils have an equal opportunity to take part in decision making in school

- The school council runs an anonymous survey of their school community to see if there are any groups of young people that feel less able to take part in decisions and why they don't feel able to take part.
- The lead teacher for participation works with young people to try new approaches to increase diversity in the school council and ensure it is representative e.g. place for LGBTQ+, ALN reps.
- The school makes sure that voting can take place by secret ballot.

Empowering children – giving young people the information they need to be able to take part in decisions and work with their school leaders and school governing body

- School Councils use the Children’s Commissioner’s [Make A Difference – A Young Person’s Guide for Taking Action](#) for ideas and tools to hold meetings, consider different ideas, and make changes that they want to see.
- The school council considers the structure of the council and specific roles for pupils and ensures they feed into the governing body and understand how it works
- The school council lead teacher has enough time to develop participation in the school

Participation – ensuring that young people views are taken meaningfully into account

- The school council has a say about wellbeing in the school, in line with the [Framework for the whole school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing](#).
- School councils and school leadership teams use a structure for the school council to engage with the wider school population to inform and to feedback decisions.

- Teachers don't choose school council members or pupil associate governors.

Accountability – making sure governing bodies and school leaders are accountable to school councils

- Chairs of governing bodies involve the school council and associate pupil governors in their work.
- The Head teacher and Chair of the Governing Body create opportunities for the school council to find out how their participation has influenced decision making.