

Milford Haven School

Pupil Voice Policy

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Policy created and reviewed by: Deputy Head teacher Inclusion and ethos

Pupil Voice

1. **Definition** - Pupil Participation is about children and young people having their voice heard when decisions are being made that affect them and being actively involved in decision-making processes. The Welsh Government has adopted the following definition, which itself came from consultation with young people: "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."
2. **Pupil Participation in context** - 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 out 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 pupil 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.
 - a. 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. (Appendix 2)
 - b. Pembrokeshire has set out its priorities and actions for improving and enhancing children's and young people's rights and participation in the strategy document – A Strategy for the Participation and Rights of Children and Young People in Pembrokeshire. The strategy commits Pembrokeshire County Council to formally adopt the UNCRC and ensure it is incorporated into everything the council does that may impact upon the lives of children and young people living in Pembrokeshire. A Pledge for Children and Young People has been developed in 2014 which reflects Pembrokeshire's commitment to upholding rights under the UNCRC. A Children's and Young People's Rights Office has been established which will support schools to meet national standards in participation by achievement of the national Kitemark award for the National Standards for Children and Young People's Participation.
3. **Rationale** - Our 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 pupil involvement in decision-making leads to better relationships, more relevant and effective policies, and better learning. Our school is committed to developing effective pupil participation with pupils and adults 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 pupils, including those more vulnerable pupils, so that they feel included and involved in the school community and know that their views count. We recognise that pupil voice in schools is closely linked to the safeguarding of children and young people. Pupils who are empowered to raise concerns are better safeguarded, and any potential issues can be dealt with more effectively and promptly.

4. **Strategic aims** - 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. Our school aims to develop participatory practice so that all pupils have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of consultation and decision-making activities. Roger Hart, in his 1992 essay “Children’s Rights and Participation – from Tokenism to Citizenship”, developed the concept of a “ladder of participation”. In line with the Pembrokeshire Participation Strategy, where Hart’s ladder is illustrated, our school aims to use the Hart’s ladder concept to challenge ourselves to work at the highest possible levels of the ladder in everything we do.
5. **Developing a whole school approach** - Pupil participation is embedded in our school improvement plan, regularly discussed at staff meetings and reviewed at Governing Body meetings. We encourage a consistent and positive attitude to pupil participation by ensuring that all staff, including non-teaching staff:
 - a. understand what is meant by pupil participation;
 - b. understand the benefits of pupil participation for individual pupils and staff and for the whole school community;
 - c. are clear about their role in terms of supporting pupil participation;
 - d. are kept well informed about issues being discussed and proposals put forward by Senedd MHS and other pupil representative groups.
6. **Key roles and responsibilities** - In order to ensure that pupil 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, MHS has established the following key roles:
 - a. **Designated Governor for Pupil Participation** - The designated governor for Pupil Participation is Mr Dayle Gibby
 - b. The designated governor should undertake Pupil Participation training and has the following responsibilities:
 - i. Ensuring that the governing body is aware of the benefits of developing a whole-school approach to pupil participation;
 - ii. Encouraging the governing body to adopt the Welsh Government’s National Standards for Children and Young People’s Participation for Wales to underpin their ways of working when involving pupils in decision-making;

- iii. Maintaining active links between the governing body and pupil representative groups. This may entail attending Senedd MHS or other meetings, and - in secondary schools - ensuring that the school council is aware of their right to nominate two pupils from amongst their membership as Associate Pupil Governors to represent pupils' views on the governing body;
 - iv. Ensuring that pupil participation is a standing item on governing body meetings, and encourage the school council and other representative pupil groups to contribute their views and ideas;
 - v. Ensuring that pupils are actively involved in a timely and appropriate manner when policies and procedures which affect them are being planned, reviewed and evaluated;
 - vi. Ensuring a good flow of communication and feedback between the governing body and pupils, using the networks and channels of communication that are in place;
 - vii. Working with senior leaders to promote a whole-school approach to pupil participation and to communicate this approach to staff, partners/carers and local partners;
 - viii. Encouraging the governing body to celebrate the role of pupils as active citizens in improving their learning and environment.
- c. **Named member of the Senior Leadership Team** - The named member of the Senior Management Team for Pupil Participation is Mr Rob Berry and is responsible for:
- i. Liaising with the designated governor to ensure that pupil participation is promoted and developed as a whole-school approach - including the development and implementation of a pupil participation policy - in line with the Welsh Government's National Children and Young People's Participation Standards;
 - ii. Working with the designated governor and the Senior Leadership Team to ensure that effective approaches to pupil 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 Leadership and staff meetings; a standing item on Governing Body meeting agendas and monitored and evaluated by staff and pupils;
 - iii. Encouraging understanding of and positive attitudes towards pupil participation amongst the whole staff, including non-teaching staff, through the sharing of information, training and good practice; promoting inclusive policies and methods of participation which encourage all pupils to participate in decision-making processes, including marginalised pupils, and those with Additional Learning Needs;
 - iv. Ensuring that channels for communication and feedback are working effectively, so that information is shared in ways that are timely, inclusive and appropriate;
 - v. Promoting and celebrating the achievements of pupils through participation - e.g. through regular or special Assemblies, the school newsletter/web-site, prize-giving ceremonies, notice boards, etc.

- d. **The Named SLT member** supports the Senedd MHS by:
- i. organising elections;
 - ii. Training class/year group representatives;
 - iii. Arranging and attending meetings;
 - iv. Helping pupils to prepare agendas, minutes and action logs; offering support and guidance;
 - v. Reporting back to colleagues;
 - vi. Informing parents/carers and governors;
 - vii. Helping to raise the profile of the school council;
 - viii. Supporting staff to facilitate class/form Senedd meetings;
 - ix. Briefing staff on timings of meetings and Senedd elections;
 - x. Monitoring and evaluating progress made.
 - xi. Designated members of SLT support our other pupil participative groups including the Senedd MHS committee groups.
- e. **The Class Teacher/House Tutor** - The class teacher/House Tutor has an important role in supporting pupil participation by:
- i. Raising awareness of a range of opportunities for pupils to actively participate in decision- making;
 - ii. Ensuring that all pupils are encouraged to participate;
 - iii. Allowing regular time for pupil-led class/form meetings and supporting pupils to facilitate these meetings;
 - iv. Allowing time for Senedd Ty/Senedd MHS members to feedback promptly after meetings;
 - v. Supporting and facilitating a variety of ways for pupils to collect and present the views of pupils e.g. through questionnaires, pictograms, suggestion boxes, focus groups.
 - vi. All staff should be supported and encouraged to promote pupil participation through awareness raising and training. Although some staff and governors have a key role in promoting and supporting a holistic approach to pupil participation, it is everyone's responsibility.
- f. **Associate Pupil Governors (APGs)** - The Senedd MHS nominates 2 pupils, from Year 11 from amongst their membership to sit on the governing body, as stated in the School Councils (Wales) Regulations (December 2005). APGs represent the voice of the school council (as representative of the views of all pupils in the school) at governing body meetings and, in turn, communicate matters from the governing body to the school council and to the wider pupil population. Our APGs this year are Harry Young and Mari Owen
- Responsibilities include:
- i. Attendance at full governing body meetings. (These often take place at the end of the school day);
 - ii. Attendance at governing body sub-committees as appropriate and manageable; involvement in consultation and discussion prior to and at school council meetings, as to what issues pupils may wish to include at governing body meetings;
 - iii. Liaison with the Designated Governor to discuss the inclusion of items on the governing body agenda;

- iv. Feedback to the Senedd MHS regarding issues arising at governing body meetings, which are of concern to pupils, including the possibility of wider whole-school consultations. The APGs receive training to help them fulfil the above responsibilities. (Appendix 5 The Role of APGs – Encouraging Good Practice)
7. The Scope of Pupil Participation Pupils in our school are involved in decision making across a wide scope of matters relating to teaching and learning, policy and school improvement including:
- a. improving learning;
 - b. social responsibilities;
 - c. behaviour management /anti bullying/restorative practices;
 - d. improvements and additions to the curriculum;
 - e. planning, reviewing and implementing policies;
 - f. school self-evaluation processes and the school development plan;
 - g. school improvement;
 - h. whole school ethos and a code of conduct for pupil-teacher relations;
 - i. extra-curricular activities;
 - j. staff appointments;
 - k. fundraising and links to charities;
 - l. developing resources and facilities;
 - m. improvements to the school environment;
 - n. sustainability e.g. recycling, development as an eco-school;
 - o. pupil welfare including peer support, mentoring;
 - p. transition from primary to secondary;
 - q. the quality of pupils' experience of their Learning Pathway at 14-19, including the range of learning options available, accessibility and support;
 - r. food and fitness;
 - s. links with the local community and involvement in community projects;
 - t. representation to the local authority on issues of concern e.g. transport, safe routes to school.
8. **Inclusion At MHS** - we ensure that all pupils have opportunities to have their voices heard and to participate in decision-making processes in their learning environment, not just those who are more articulate. We actively encourage all pupils, including more marginalised and 'difficult to engage' children to participate in decision-making. Our Senedd Ty and Senedd MHS are inclusive and representative of all sections of the school community with representation from..... (for example pupils with ALN, EAL and ethnic minorities).
9. **Resources** - MHS ensures that sufficient resources are available to ensure that pupil participation is meaningful and effective.
- a. **Training** - The senior teacher responsible for Pupil Participation have undertaken specific training in Pupil Participation. The senior teacher ensures that all staff, including non-teaching staff, have positive attitudes towards pupil participation and understand the benefits of it. Pupils are trained in pupil participation giving them the skills and understanding to participate effectively.
 - b. **Time** - Pupil Participation is regularly discussed at senior management and staff meetings and is a standing item on Governing Body meeting agendas.

There is designated time allocated for class, Senedd Ty and Senedd MHS meetings within curriculum time, including time for year/school Senedd members to give feedback to pupils.

- c. **Finances** - Money is raised for Senedd MHS activities through fund raising activities organised by the pupils.
- d. **Accommodation** - MHS ensures that the Senedd MHS is supported with an appropriate room available to carry out their meetings. The Senedd MHS meetings are held in The Aspire Suite. USEFUL LINK for resources: www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk NB. Training materials and resources can also be found in the Pupil Participation area of the Pembrokeshire Portal.

10. **Monitoring and Evaluation** - Our Pupil Participation Policy is monitored and evaluated annually, in consultation with pupils and staff, under the seven National Participation Standards and forms part of the school's self assessment process. An annual action plan is developed highlighting the areas for development under each of the seven standards which forms part of the school improvement plan.

11. **Pupil Participation Contacts** -

- a. The Local Authority Children's and Young People's Rights Office, Nadine Farmer, Children and Young People's Rights Officer 01437 775744

12. **Appendices** -

- a. Appendix 1 - Developing/reviewing your Pupil Participation Policy
- b. Appendix 2 - National Standards for Children and Young People's Participation
- c. Appendix 3 - Preparing a Healthy Senedd MHS Constitution
- d. Appendix 4 - The role of Associate Pupil Governors (APGs) – Encouraging Good Practice

13. **APPENDIX 1: Developing/reviewing your Pupil Participation Policy**

Developing, implementing and reviewing a pupil participation policy should be part of your school's self- evaluation process and should be done in relation to the National Standards for Children and Young People's Participation. It's the process itself, rather than the end document, that is important. By involving children and young people in creating your policy, you will send strong messages that you take their voice seriously, and want to involve them in making their learning environment better. Schools who have engaged in such processes report improvements in engagement, behaviour and attainment, and a better environment for all. It's important not to lose sight of why this process is happening - i.e.

- a. so that learners feel they are listened to, respected, and involved in their organisation;
- b. to empower pupils to raise any potential safeguarding concerns they may have and potentially resolve these at an early stage;
- c. to improve outcomes for learners in terms of well-being and learning; to engage learners in the process of organisational improvement, so that they can be active agents in their school community, thus developing important life skills;
- d. to ensure that policies and processes reflect the needs of learners, and are therefore effective.

14. APPENDIX 2: NATIONAL PARTICIPATION STANDARDS

The National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales

Having a Voice – Having a Choice

"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"



INFORMATION



This means:

- Information that is easy to understand for everyone
- Adults working with you who know what is going on and are up front and clear.

We will:

- Ensure everyone has enough information to get properly involved
- Let you know what difference you being involved will make
- Inform you about who is going to listen and make changes.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE

This means:

- You choose if you want to get involved or not
- You choose to work on things that are important to you
- You choose what you do and how you do it.

We will:

- Give you enough information and time to decide if this is something you want to do.



NO DISCRIMINATION



This means:

- Children and young people are all different but you all have the same right to have a say about the things that matter to you.
- We want everyone to feel welcome and be able to get involved if they want to be.

We will:

- challenge any discrimination
- get in touch with children and young people in lots of different situations
- get you involved in things you want to do.

RESPECT

This means:

- Everyone has a chance to have a say, your opinions are important and we will respect them.

We will:

- listen to your ideas, views and experiences
- take you seriously and treat you fairly
- work with you to do something about the things you tell us are important
- work with you to help change things for the better.



YOU GET SOMETHING OUT OF IT



This means:

- We want you to enjoy and benefit from taking part
- We know that you have other things to do in your lives as well!
- Making sure that participating is a positive not a negative experience.

We will:

- work in safe, fun, and enjoyable ways
- make the most of what you know
- do positive things that build your confidence
- meet in friendly places that are easy for all young people to use
- value and respect what you have to offer.

FEEDBACK

This means:

- It's really important that you know what difference you have made and how your ideas have been used.

We will:

- keep you up to date with what is happening
- give feedback as soon as possible and in ways that are easy to understand for everyone.



IMPROVING HOW WE WORK



This means:

- We want to learn and get better at the way we work with you.

We will:

- look at the way we work with you and how to improve it
- ask you what has gone well and what needs to change
- make sure your views make a difference to the way we make plans and decisions.



For more information about the Standards, please see www.participationworkerswales.org.uk/standards

15. APPENDIX 3: Preparing a Healthy Senedd MHS Constitution

- a. The constitution sets out rules for running a Senedd MHS, including:
 - i. objectives;
 - ii. rules for meetings;
 - iii. role and responsibilities of Senedd members;
 - iv. rules for electing members.

- b. Here are 10 steps to preparing a reliable constitution:
 - i. Name: What is the name of the school council?
 - ii. Purpose: What are the Senedd's aims and objectives?
 - iii. Members: What is the composition of the membership of both the Senedd and Ty groups? Is everyone represented? Is gender balance planned for?
 - iv. Elections: How are members elected? Is it a secret ballot? Is the election well publicised and high profile?
 - v. Officers: Who are the officers - eg: chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer, press officer? How are officers elected?
 - vi. Responsibilities: What are the responsibilities of members, officers, staff and the headteacher?
 - vii. Removal/Resignation: How can members resign or be removed, if found not to be fairly representing the needs of others?
 - viii. Meetings: When, where and how are meetings held? How is the agenda formed? How are decisions made? How are actions undertaken?
 - ix. Boundaries: Are there clear rules for the debate? Are students trained in meeting skills? Are there certain issues that it will not be possible to discuss at the Senedd?
 - x. Finances: Does the Senedd have a budget? If funds are raised by the Senedd, are there any match funding arrangements?

16. APPENDIX 4: The role of APGs – Encouraging Good Practice

Taken from WG guidance document Pupil Participation – Good Practice Guide (www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk).

The role of Associated Pupil Governor (APG) was established by the School Councils (Wales) Regulations (December 2005), with the aim of ensuring that pupil voice could be represented at governing body meetings in secondary school settings in Wales. Some areas of the role are elucidated and explored below, in order to encourage good practice.

Appointment of Associate Pupil Governors

It is important that Associate Pupil Governors are correctly appointed, and there are indications that this is not happening in all cases. The position is therefore clarified below:

As stated in paragraph 7.-(1) of the School Councils (Wales) Regulations 2005, the headteacher of a school must ensure that the school council has the opportunity to nominate up to two pupils from its membership to be Associate Pupil Governors. This means that the school council must be informed that they have this choice, and be allowed to choose those pupils who will best represent them at governing body meetings. These representatives may be the Head Boy and Head Girl - but not in every case. Staff selection of Associate Pupil Governors is not acceptable.

The governing body must accept any pupil nominated in accordance with paragraph (1) above, and appoint him or her as an Associate Pupil Governor, unless there are reasons to disqualify him/her under Schedule 5 of The Government of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2005.

Benefits of APGs

It's important that governing bodies are aware of the role of APGs - and their potential benefits for the governing body and the wider school community. Supporting and developing the role of APGs should enable the governing body to be more effective in its decision-making, including new insights and fresh approaches.

Continuity

There can be problems with lack of continuity with the role of Associate Pupil Governors, partly due to the fact that older pupils are not available during the summer term due to exam pressures. To alleviate this problem, schools should consider a hand-over period for the APG role at the beginning of the summer term, and ensure that training for the role is in place. Governors should also consider whether younger pupils (e.g. Years 9 and 10) may be allowed to have representation on the governing body.

Associate Pupil Governors may hold office for one year, after which they may be reappointed if they are still on the Senedd. When Senedd's nominate pupils from amongst their members to be APGs, the merits of continuity should be weighed against the desire to be inclusive and to give new members the opportunity to represent the Senedd and pupils as a whole on the governing body. The effectiveness of Associate Pupil Governors will depend on the skills of those appointed, but also on the quality of the relationship and trust built up between governors and pupil representatives. These are all issues that need to be considered carefully.

Suggestions for Effective Communication

- Consideration should be given to effective, inclusive and timely communication between the governing body, Associate Pupil Governors, the Senedd and the body of pupils in the school so that information is shared, opportunities for pupils to contribute their views are maximised, and feedback is received.
- Pupils should be aware of the role of APGs, who they are, and what they are able to achieve, whilst also understanding the importance of presenting views and ideas through democratic channels.
- Governors (in particular the Designated Governor) can support APGs by ensuring that they receive any papers well in advance of meetings in an accessible form, and by being aware of the use of language, acronyms and jargon in governing body meetings, which can be intimidating and form a barrier to participation.
- When APGs have been involved in discussing policies and procedures at governing body meetings following wider consultation with pupils, they should ensure that the results are fed back through Senedd MHS or other pupil representatives to the body of pupils, if possible with an explanation of how pupils' views were represented and influenced the final decision.

Exclusion of Associate Pupil Governors from meetings

The governing body may exclude Associate Pupil Governors from discussions regarding sensitive and confidential matters. These include:

- staffing matters such as pay, discipline, performance management, grievance and dismissal;
- individual pupil discipline;
- admissions;

- election, appointment and removal of governors.

In addition, the governing body has discretion to exclude Associate Pupil Governors from any discussion which, because of its nature, is considered to be confidential. This discretionary power must in no circumstances be used as a pretext to exclude Associate Pupil Governors from discussions, and there should be an expectation that Associate Pupil Governors are present for a significant proportion of governing body business. An understanding of the scope and limitations of the Associate Pupil Governor role should be part of induction training for pupils taking on this role.

The budget and financial considerations

One of the areas of discussion which governing bodies are presently advised they may wish to exclude Associate Pupil Governors from is the budget and financial considerations of the governing body.

Governors should consider carefully before excluding pupils from these matters. It is recommended that young people gain knowledge and experience of budgeting, and this is encouraged by other areas of Welsh Government policy. Pupils may also be able to bring a unique perspective to discussions around what would be value for money, and how pupils would react to proposed developments. For these reasons, it is recommended that Associate Pupil Governors are included in discussions around budgeting and finance in appropriate ways wherever possible.

Senedd funds will be audited on an annual basis by the Headteacher and/or the Business manager.

Effective planning and timings of meetings

Considering that Associate Pupil Governors may be excluded from certain agenda items, it is important that governing body meetings are carefully planned, so that items to which Associate Pupil Governors may have input are placed together on the agenda, preferably towards the beginning. Consideration should also be given to the timing of governing body meetings and their accessibility for Associate Pupil Governors. Many governing body meetings take place at the end of the school day, and the school should ensure that Associate Pupil Governors are able to travel home safely. The Designated Governor should also ensure that Associate Pupil Governors have opportunities to participate effectively in meetings, and that they are supported in becoming acquainted with the format of meetings, and the language used.

Pupil representation at non-statutory governing body committees

Associate Pupil Governors may be members of non-statutory governing body committees, and may vote at those committees if the governing body grants them voting rights. Associate Pupil Governors may not be members of the following statutory governing body committees:

- staff disciplinary/dismissal committee
- staff disciplinary/dismissal appeal committee
- pupil discipline and exclusions committee
- admissions committee
- staff grievance committee.

There may be an argument for saying that pupils can play a more valued and meaningful role on some of the non-statutory governing body committees rather than on the full governing body. Pupils can play a key role in the School Improvement Plan, for instance,

including a genuine input into the School Improvement Plan, school self-evaluation and school effectiveness. Whilst this is true, it must be remembered that it is the governing body rather than its constituent committees that has a strategic view and takes key decisions regarding the management and development of the school. Pupils have a right to be represented on the Governing Body through Associate Pupil Governors, and they must be presented with all the necessary information to make a genuine choice as to what is best for the pupils of the school as a whole. As mentioned above, support should also be in place to ensure that Associate Pupil Governors are able to take an active role in governing body business.