

Bolsover Infant and Nursery School



Children's Voice

Getting children involved with School Development and School Improvement.

Children's Voice

Involving children in school development and School improvement is vital for us at Bolsover Infant and Nursery. It allows us to collect opinion, tackle issues and be much more effective in implementing change. We believe involving children in school can help:

- Motivate children
- Make children feel part of school and develop belonging
- Improve relationships between children and adults
- Develop practice
- Develop children's views and opinions
- Develop life and learning skills inc communication and social skills
- Support collaboration

And much more!

We involve children in school life and ensure they have a voice in a range of ways including:

1. School Council
2. Suggestion boxes
3. Personal meeting
4. Use of learning mentor systems and Listening ear Project
5. Pupil conferencing
6. 1 to 1 discussion
7. Group discussion
8. Circle time

From 2009 to July 2014 we ran a School Council. This allowed children to elect class representatives who attended termly meetings, discussed, reviewed, met with their class and then fed back to the headteacher. In 2009-2010 each class had a representative on the school council. In 2010 we felt that the meetings had become too hard for Reception children to get involved in, so we elected a Year 2 class rep to bring their views to the table. This continued until 2012. In Sept 2012 we only elected Year 2 children as the meeting were becoming quite difficult to manage and allow each child an opportunity to talk. This worked much better. In 2013 the acting head used circle time as a means to gather Pupil voice ideas. In 2014 we introduced the 'A' Team.

The 'A' Team came around after much review of how we gathered Pupil voice and who's voice we were listening to. After much research it was felt that the school council approach;

1. Was more about adults assigning tasks and pupils informing them
2. It was highly adult initiated and led by grown ups
3. Sometimes children were consulted and informed, but activities were run by adults

We wanted our Children to have a stronger voice than this. We wanted our young children to share their ideas and make the decisions and to develop their opinion, this is where the A Team started.

The A Team

As a school we are very interested in children's views and ideas. In the past we have listened to these in a lot of different ways, including class discussions and school councils. School councils allowed everyone to share their opinions, ideas and thoughts, through their school council rep directly with Miss Cowan (Our headteacher).

We thought that this way of working was quite unfair, as only one child in each class got a turn to bring everyone's ideas, thoughts and opinions. (Sometimes children would even forget what everyone else thought and had shared with them and it would all get quite confusing!) We wanted to try and give everyone a chance to be heard. We believed this can be done through the A Team.

The basic premise of the A Team is that everyone can bring something to the table and everyone should have a voice.

How does Miss Cowan's 'A' Team work?

Different children may be on the 'A Team' at different times. It will all depend on what we need at any one point.

- If we need a good idea, we would ask all the children to share their ideas (around a given brief) and Miss Cowan would then meet with those children who had the very best ideas. These would be decided using a score system.
- If we want to know what children think about something, we would ask each class what they thought and the class would share their thoughts using a brainstorming system, which would be sent through to Miss Cowan.
- If we needed children to decide what is a priority, in school, we would ask them to rank their top 3 choices and share the scores.
- If we want the children to make a decision about something - the children would decide on their opinion and would be asked to come to a class consensus and then share that with Miss Cowan. Each task would have a different way of working and hence different children involved.

Why do we think an 'A' Team is a good idea?

This allows for a lot more children to take part in the decision making in school and helps everyone to become involved with school improvement. Each time a class representative would meet with Miss Cowan the class would choose which child would go. The 'A' Team then becomes everyone in school. Not just the elected 9 children (like with a school council). We hope that this allows for everyone to have a voice.

Listening to Children

We are really interested in ensuring that Children have a voice in school. We want them to be involved and feel that they are listened to. Here is a list of ways we have listened to children already.

Academic Year...	You said...	We did...
2009-2010	You did not like the rubbish around school, including fruit peel.	We worked on litter picking, buying rubbish bins and smartening up the site.
	You said you wanted to be able to have other things for snack, not just fruit.	The school council started a tuck shop that ran for 3 years.
	You said you wanted to raise money for outdoor play things.	The school council ran enterprise events to raise money and bought the equipment
	You said how you wanted to spend the money that had been raised by a sponsored football event and enterprise activities.	You voted and decided on a school pet and outdoor toys, these were both purchased.
2010-2011	You said you wanted more to do at lunchtime.	We bought a Wii to play with in Green class and other outdoor toys
	You discussed the homework policy and said that you wanted homework to be fun.	We wrote this in to the new homework policy and did a review of what activities went home
	You said that you enjoyed outdoor maths as long as it was fun and you moved around a lot.	We planned for one outdoor maths starter a week, in each class, with the premise that they should be active and fun
	You said you loved Goldentime and outlined the activities you wanted to undertake.	We altered the Goldentime list in line with what you had asked for
2011-2012	You said that there were some places in school where you did not feel safe at playtime e.g. because an adult couldn't see you	We ensured that these places were highlighted to staff and mid days to supervise more (inc moving all lunchtime toileting to green class where the first aider could supervise).
	You said we should support a charity with our enterprise money.	We ensured that the money was forwarded to the chosen charity.
	You were asked about the behaviour policy and to compile a list of Good Learning behaviours.	We added this list of good learning behaviours to the behaviour policy
	You said that you wanted our Olympic celebrations to include bikes and cycling.	Indigo class and Year 1 planned for this as part of their work The school went on to include balancability into their work
2012-2013	You said you liked to new lesson structure and liked that it was fun and you could play to learn.	We planned more learning through play opportunities in topic lessons

	You discussed Enterprise and asked for a whole market centred around FOOD.	We planned for this
	You said which after school clubs you attended.	We used this list to invite all the after school clubs in the area to present at open evening
	You discussed the school website and said it was boring and needed more pictures.	We went back and populated all of the years with event photos and planned to ensure this happened after each event
2013-2014	No School Council as Miss Cowan was on Maternity Leave / but we did still listen to the children	
	You said you were unhappy about Sports Day being cancelled due to Strike Action.	We planned a Family Fun Race day to compensate
	You said you loved the enterprise market where you brought and bought toys.	We planned for another event with books
	You enjoyed the Zumba warm up so much you asked for a Zumba club.	We introduced a Zumba Club after school
2014-2015	We moved from a school Council approach to Pupil voice to Miss Cowan's A Team	
	You were asked to give opinions on assemblies and how they could be improved.	