

Student voice within the context of wider participation activities in school (with a subject focus on student views in relation to English)

Agreed purposes of the visit

- To review the school's current practice and identify next steps
- To explore the use of student voice meetings
- To consider the breadth of student participation across the school

Evidence base

- Meetings and discussions with key members of staff across the different aspects of participation
- Joining two student voice meetings (Yr 11 with a focus on English; Yr 7 students with SEND)
- Learning walk and observation of Yr 11 lessons
- Discussion and reflections with key members of staff

Overview of strengths and recommendations

The following thoughts were explored during the visit. They are discussed in full in the note of visit.

Strengths of the school's current practice

- A range of student voice/participation activities are embedded in day-to-day practice. All members of staff showed a desire to further develop practice.
- Student voice/participation activities cover many types and levels of participation.
- Observations indicated that students treated opportunities to share their views with appropriate consideration. They appeared to understand that their views are important and are respected.
- Staff involved in the discussions were insightful about student voice/ participation activities and are motivated to improve opportunities for meaningful participation.
- Both student voice sessions were well-run, positive, purposeful and enjoyable. Students were supported to engage and were enabled to contribute honest and helpful views.

Areas for development

My view is that the 'voice' element of practice is currently stronger than the collaborative voice/ participation element. Increasing more collaborative activities should be a relatively easy step, as the foundations of participation are already so well embedded. Specific developments discussed include:

- Creating a visual map of all the current participation activities, so that the breadth and nature of the activities can be appreciated and understood.
- Vulnerable and harder to reach groups will continue to be a focus for ensuring access to opportunities for voice/collaboration.
- The *Ladder of Participation* may be a useful tool for identifying which participation activities can foster more collaborative approaches, where students are engaged in steering/influencing.
- Making all student voice/participation activities meaningful to students by 'closing the loop', so that students know their voice has helped informed thinking and/or practice.
- Helping student leaders and the school council use various participation techniques and strategies (work is already underway).
- We discussed some general good practice points for student voice/participation sessions, to build on the current good practice (information sheet shared after the visit).
- A great suggestion from faculty leads was to log and coordinate which students have taken part in student voice groups across curriculum subjects.

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