



Listening to and involving children and young people

About this guidance

This is statutory guidance from the Department for Education. It applies to local authorities and maintained schools, who are required to have regard to it when considering how best to provide opportunities for pupils to be consulted on matters affecting them or contribute to decision-making in the school.

Review date

This guidance will be kept under review and updated when necessary.

Relevant legislation

Under section 176 of the Education Act 2002 local authorities and schools are currently required to have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State (in relation to England) or the National Assembly for Wales (in relation to Wales) about consultation with pupils in connection with the taking of decisions which affect them.

This legislation is underpinned by the general principles of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), - articles 2, 3, 6 and, in particular, article 12 which states the following:

“1. Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall, in particular, be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.”

The UNCRC has not been incorporated into national law, so there is no statutory duty to comply with it. However, the government has reiterated its commitment to pay 'due regard' to the convention when new policy is made and legislation proposed. Schools are strongly encouraged to pay due regard to the convention.

Pupil voice

The term 'pupil voice' refers to ways of listening to the views of pupils and/or involving them in decision-making. You may also hear the expressions 'learner voice' or 'consulting pupils'.

A feature of effective leadership is engaging pupils as active participants in their education and in making a positive contribution to their school and local community.

Why involve children and young people?

The Government is committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It believes that children and young people should have opportunities to express their opinion in matters that affect their lives. Some of the benefits of involving children and young people in decision making are:

- **It encourages pupils to become active participants in a democratic society** - by holding youth parliaments and school councils which develop skills such as co-operation and communication and encourage them to take responsibility.
- **It contributes to achievement and attainment** - young people involved in participative work benefit in a range of different ways. Increased confidence, self-respect, competence and an improved sense of responsibility have all been reported by young people who contribute in school. Schools also report increased motivation and engagement with learning.

Further sources of information

British Youth Council: www.byc.org.uk

Hear by Right standard framework, developed by NYA: www.nya.org.uk/our-services/hear-right

Participation Works, education resources: www.participationworks.org.uk/topics/education

National Youth Agency (NYA): www.nya.org.uk

The Office of the Children's Commissioner for England: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

UNICEF: www.unicef.org.uk

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC): www.unicef.org.uk/crc