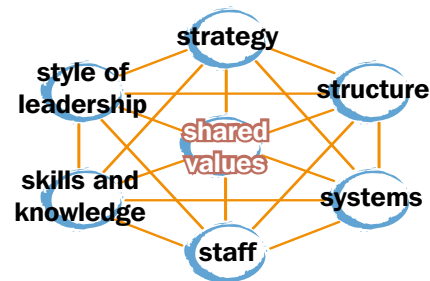


# How to make student participation work in your school or college

This is a briefing to show how the **Hear by Right** standards framework works in a school or college to map evidence of current student participation and develop a plan for improvement.



Hear by Right



[www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright](http://www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright)



## What do we mean by student participation?

The Department for Education and Skills defines it as “adults working with children and young people to develop ways of ensuring that their views are heard and valued and encouraging them to:

- become more active participants in their education, including planning and evaluation of their own learning; and
- participate in creating, building and improving services to make them more responsive to their needs ...”

(*Working Together: Giving children and young people a say*, DfES 2004).

In Deptford Green School, Citizenship is participation and student participation means practising active citizenship in your school as well as teaching it. “There needs to be coherence between the message of Citizenship and the method of delivery.”

## What’s the point of student participation?

- promotes school cohesion and student self-esteem;
- improves academic achievement through participative processes and improved behaviour and attendance as alienation and disaffection diminish (DfES, *Working Together*);
- recognises children and young people as major stakeholders in society with important contributions to make to the design and delivery of services they receive, including education (DfES, *ibid*);
- supports and enables the participation of all children and young people as a key requirement of becoming a healthy school (*National Healthy School Standard: Promoting children and young people’s participation*);
- meets the legal duty in the Education Act 2002 to involve students;
- meets requirement of new Ofsted inspections and Every Child Matters; and
- meets legal right in Human Rights Act 1991 to have views heard and taken seriously.

New Ofsted inspections emphasise student participation and the need for a strategy to develop this. “More emphasis is given to gathering pupils’ views: they are our most important customers and inspectors want to be able to see the school through their eyes.” (Maurice Smith, HMCIS, Ofsted).

“Making a contribution involves asking children and young people what works, what doesn’t and what could work better, and involving them on an ongoing basis in the design, delivery and evaluation of services. The emphasis here is on greater consultation and involvement, so that pupils have a real say in making decisions on matters that affect them. What I can say is that a school providing good citizenship education is also doing well in terms of the Every Child Matters agenda of making a contribution.” (David Bell, Permanent Secretary at DfES and former HMCIS, Ofsted).

Source: Ofsted website 2006

Every Child Matters five outcomes are now prominent in the requirements from schools by Ofsted, both locally, where evidence of students’ participation is part of the Inspection Judgment Form, and with partners in Children’s Trusts in the Joint Area Review.

### The extent to which learners make a positive contribution

Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them.

Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community

Ofsted Inspection Judgment Form





A study of schools that have developed student participation asserts that students are on the whole constructive and kind. In it a teacher says: "We've learnt a lot ... about how students rapidly improve in their learning and their self-esteem and their motivation through dialogue with staff, through feeling important, feeling cared for, feeling their views matter. I think it's had a really, really significant effect." [*Consulting Pupils: a Toolkit for Teachers*, John MacBeath et al, Pearson, 2003]

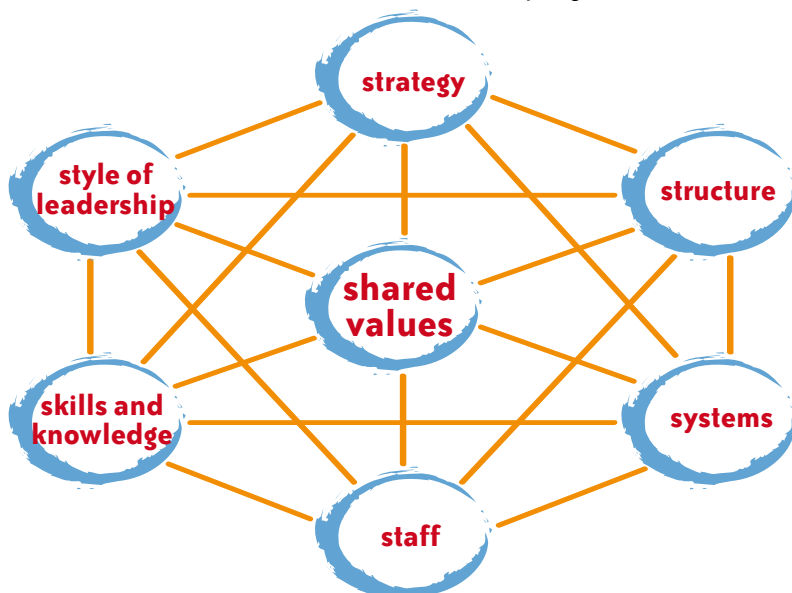
### How can *Hear by Right* help?

The *Hear by Right* participation standards framework will help your school to map the current level of student participation and to develop a strategic plan to improve it. The *Hear by Right* map of your school will allow you to record in one place the evidence to satisfy the various government requirements for aspects of student participation. The gaps in your map will allow you to develop a strategic plan.

The *Hear by Right* standards have been tried and tested in many organisations and services and are becoming increasingly universal. However formal your school's involvement in the local Children's Trusts, Children and Young People's Plans and Local Area Agreements, *Hear by Right* will enable you to benchmark what the local authority and others are doing around children and young people's participation and also to identify joint development and training initiatives.

### How does the *Hear by Right* standards framework work?

Any aspect of a participation strategy will be covered by some angle of *Hear by Right*. It is modelled on the McKinsey Seven S model of organisational analysis and change. Each area below is a standard in *Hear by Right*.



All the seven standards are important and need to be assessed, but they also connect to and depend on each other. A school council is a 'structure', but how does it relate to the 'strategy'? A governor, as a leader, may declare an interest in the school embracing student participation, but who really shares the values to make it a whole-school success?

Each standard has, in turn, seven indicators. These provide a proven guide to the key elements of building in participation. How well does your school meet each indicator? On the *Hear by Right* web pages, and on the CD-Rom contained in the *Hear by Right* book, there is a self-assessment mapping and planning tool. In the tool, next to each indicator, there is a space to record whatever evidence you have of this aspect of student participation being in place. There is a direct link over to the corresponding planning page on the tool to list the suggestions for improvement. Once prioritised and assessed for budget and other possible barriers they can quickly become the strategic participation plan for the school.

### Can students participate in the *Hear by Right* process?

Of course! *Hear by Right* is a tool for changing an organisation to build in children and young people's participation and is written for adults. But students can have a key role to play by

- evaluating the adults' evidence on the map or suggesting some of their own;
- suggesting areas for improvement in the strategic plan;
- helping to set the priorities for the plan; and
- delivering some of the actions and solutions.

There is a companion to this schools user briefing by students for students. This has been developed with The National Youth Agency by English Secondary Students Association (ESSA). It sets out students' experiences of participation and how the *Hear by Right Building Standards* pamphlet can help them to make a positive contribution to the strategic participation plan. It also introduces tools that students can use – on their own or with support – to focus on participation in the school or college and to think about how it could work better.

### Putting *Hear by Right* in the schools context

*Hear by Right* is a participation standards framework that can work for a school as well as any other organisation. The principles are the same for building participation into an organisation, even if the language is sometimes slightly different.



- The standards may say ‘organisation’ instead of ‘school’.
- We talk about ‘partners’ that in school terms may mean local authorities in Children’s Trusts, or Connexions Partnerships or small voluntary organisations who are in touch with young people who are not at school.
- For local authorities using *Hear by Right*, ‘partners’ will definitely mean schools!
- ‘Staff’ could mean any staff employed by your school.
- ‘Elected members or trustees’ clearly means governors in a school.
- ‘Key managers and leaders’, the essential champions of participation, could mean the head teacher, deputy head teacher or a governor.

We chose to leave the language intact in the *Hear by Right* Participation standards framework because it can helpfully serve as a common language and benchmark for all organisations that work with children and young people. **“Hear by Right is a clear and powerful framework which agencies can share explicitly. The framework gives concepts and language which makes it easy to talk across agencies because there are different understandings about participation. Having a shared language is a good place to start.”** Hilal Barwany, Leicester Federation (Pathfinder Children’s Trust).

The emerging level in *Hear by Right* is mainly about getting participation established internally in the school culture; the established level is about it working effectively across the curriculum; and advanced level is often how it works outward-facing (in the community).

## Building the Shared Values in school

This will be central to the success of participation as a change to the school culture.

- Who really believes in practising citizenship in the school?
- The Head Teacher or governors may be in favour, but are the staff willing and ready? **“Where such consultation is new for a school, teachers may feel uneasy about talking with pupils in a way that changes traditional power relationships. It can take time to build a climate of trust that allows teachers and pupils to review their work together openly and constructively.”** [MacBeath].
- Developing participation in the school or college could be discussed at the in-service INSET programme.

The four corners of Shared Values are:

- A visible commitment to participation that is properly resourced – eg the Head Teacher has said that the school is committed to participation and staff and timetable space are allocated.
- Young people’s views are valued – eg students feel that their views have been taken seriously, and they get to hear about any result from their participation.
- An equal opportunity to get involved – eg a clear chance for the students who are ‘quiet’ and are not used to being heard or picked to represent their class, so reflecting the main democratic plank of active citizenship.
- Policies for participation are in place, evaluated and improved – eg policies will build in participation beyond the enthusiasm of a few staff, but students’ views will be important to evaluate their effectiveness

### Our story of what’s changed: St Thomas & St Anne’s CE Primary School Children’s Council – Shropshire

Evidence of listening	Evidence of planning	Evidence of change
The children told us they wanted to do something to reduce the amount of litter on the school playground.	The children counted the amount of crisp packets on one day. At the school council meeting they decided to run a trial for four weeks where the whole school would only eat fruit at break times.	We are proud that we no longer litter in the school playground. The children have fruit at break times and the peel etc is put in the compost bins. The school received the Eco-Schools Green Flag award for raising environmental awareness and in promoting healthy lifestyles for pupils and the wider school community. Children are keen to participate in a variety of PE and sport activities and make healthy eating choices.

Every Child Matters outcomes: Staying healthy: Making a positive contribution



## Top tips for using *Hear by Right* to make participation work in a school or college

### Taking stock and deciding who needs to get involved using:

- The *Hear by Right* book – full context and ideas for evidence of meeting the standards.
- The tools on the CD-Rom – practical ways to promote and use the standards framework, including the PowerPoint presentation – tailored to your need with local case studies.
- Copies of this Briefing for governors and key staff.

### Agreeing a process: What suits your school or college best?

- Look at the stories and case studies on [www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright](http://www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright).
- Gain the agreement, interest and buy in of leading players early on.
- Involve students on their own terms, using the tools to help them say how they expect to be listened to and taken seriously. Your school council can play a key role in supporting this process.
- Use the *Hear by Right What's Changed* tool to draw out local success stories, crucial to develop

momentum and sustain impact.

- Agree a realistic target for progress.

### Developing a strategy for children and young people's active involvement

- Use the *Hear by Right* mapping and planning tool to develop your strategy.
- A key member of staff or small group can use the tool to map and plan.
- Two-hour "speed-dating" workshops can be used to draw in the ideas of leaders, a range of staff and students. This gives effective momentum to the process.
- Key priorities will emerge from the map and plan to form the basis of the strategy.

### More help

- *Hear by Right*, with CD-Rom and briefings £10 from The National Youth Agency. Tel: 0116 242 7427. E-mail: [sales@nya.org.uk](mailto:sales@nya.org.uk)
- Contact the active involvement team at The NYA for information, ideas, resources, training and consultancy. Tel: 0116 242 7406. E-mail: [activeinvolvement@nya.org.uk](mailto:activeinvolvement@nya.org.uk)
- Further information and resources from [www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright](http://www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright)

**"We aim for no less than a change in the political culture of this country; for people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped to have influence in public life ..."**

Government's advisory group on citizenship (1998)

**"Students are the main stakeholder group in the school. They now have their own interview panel when we appoint new staff and their judgment proves to be unerringly accurate."**

Jan Palmer Sayer, Head Teacher, Hertswood School, Borehamwood

**"Everyone can make a difference one way or another. It may be a small or a big difference, but it can still affect the community and make it better."** Year 10 Student Deptford Green School

### Our story of what's changed: Primary school in Hertford

Evidence of listening	Evidence of planning	Evidence of change
We asked students for help with a problem with bullying in the playground.	The students pointed out that staff on duty tended to gather in one place.	Staff are now sited at key points suggested by students and the bullying has virtually stopped.

**Every Child Matters outcomes:** Enjoying and achieving; Making a positive contribution

### Key resources

**Hear by Right: standards for the active involvement of children and young people.** Badham, B., and Wade, H. (2005), The National Youth Agency/LGA. [www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright](http://www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright)

**Act by Right: skills for the active involvement of children and young people in making change happen,** Badham, B. (2004), The NYA

**Working Together: Giving children and young people a say,** DfES 2004

National Healthy School Standard: Promoting children & young people's participation, DfES 2004

**The PSHE Citizenship Guidance,** QCA, 1999

**Consulting Pupils: A Toolkit for Teachers.** John MacBeath et al, Pearson, 2003