DEMOCRATISING YOUR SCHOOL

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR HEADTEACHERS

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2000

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DEMOCRATISING YOUR SCHOOL

FOREWORD FROM THE AUTHORS

'It is useless to have the most beneficial rules of society fully agreed on by all who are members of the polity if individuals are not going to be trained and have their habits formed for that polity, that is to live democratically if the laws of the society are democratic and oligarchically if they are oligarchic'

Aristotle

'Democracy is much broader than a method of conducting government. It is a way of life. Its foundation is faith in human intelligence…faith that each individual has something to contribute, whose value can be assessed only as it enters into the pooled intelligence constituted by the contributions of all'

John Dewey

This manual was developed under a 2 year project between Areddo (Romania) and the Citizenship Foundation (UK), with generous support from the British Know How Fund. It takes as its theme an increasingly discussed idea in educational circles – the connection between the internal structures and relations of a school system to those existing in society as a whole. The authors have taken the view that in order for democratic relations to exist in society – and correspondingly, in order for democracy to function effectively – there needs to be a certain amount of 'democratisation' at school level as well.

At this time of great change – both in Romanian society, and in the educational system, it seemed to the authors that headteachers were in particular need of some concrete means of implementing and interpreting the numerous new demands being placed upon them. For that reason, the emphasis throughout the book is on a series of simple, practical measures, rather than on a comprehensive analysis. We hope that the ideas will prove useful and practicable to you in the everyday running of your school.

ELLIE KEEN   **ANCA TIRCA**

1. INTRODUCTION

Why Democratise?

A great deal of the talk about democratising - both in schools, and in the world at large – is based on the pragmatic reasons for *involving* people in the decisions which they are expected to implement. People work better at tasks if they agree with them, and feel that their engagement is at least partly self-motivated; and that is much more likely to be the case if they have themselves had some input into the setting of a task.

Schools are obviously not wholly democratic institutions – nor are we going to suggest in this manual that they should be. But they can be more, or less democratic, and it is one of the purposes of this book that it should help the individual head teacher to decide just where she – or he - wishes to draw the line; and to help them move it, if they wish to do so.

The main questions with which we shall be concerned are those of *consultation and inclusion*. We shall look at ways of consulting and including not only other members of staff, but also children and their parents.

Why?

Because…

Members of the school will help it to achieve its objectives - if they feel included

They will learn important democratic skills - if given the chance to become involved

They have a right to be consulted

The Case for Consultation

The thought of more 'Democracy', in any institution, can sometimes spark fears of anarchy. Giving people choices and loosening the reigns of control can seem, to many, to carry an unnecessary risk – particularly when there are children involved. It is as if we are afraid that we cannot trust others to make the right choices – and so we stick to the safer option of keeping decisions in the hands of those who 'know' (normally ourselves!)

> BUT DO WE *KNOW*?
> *Better than anyone else? Better than* everyone *else? Without discussing the issue with others? Have we thought of everything, which might be a problem? Are we aware of all the facts?*

AND IS IT REALLY *SAFER*?
To tell them what to do – rather than asking them? Will they do it correctly, if they don't believe in it? Will they respect you if they feel you do not listen to their concerns?

> **It can make a great deal of sense for the Head to involve others in the school – and outside – more actively, in what may seem to be strictly managerial questions. The best way to ensure their co-operation is to include, consult, involve and empower them.**

That is the key issue which will run through this manual. We shall deliberately leave the formulation vague, since it will be up to individual heads to decide for themselves exactly who should be involved, in which decisions, to what extent, when, how and to what end.

About the manual

Most of the sections in this manual consist of a collection of practical suggestions which can be easily implemented in any school, and each of which is intended to address a particular area of concern. All of the suggestions put forward have been tried and tested in numerous schools; and most are common practice in other countries of the world.

Heads will almost certainly want to be selective, at least in the first instance, and may decide to give priority to certain areas, and to leave others for the time being. They should certainly not feel that a suggestion made near the end of the book is dependent on the implementation of those that went before. All of the suggestions are self-standing, although each would certainly be assisted by the implementation of a more systematic approach.

We have not aimed to be comprehensive, either in the range of suggestions and issues which are covered, or in the details of their implementation. We have aimed to raise questions, to provoke thought, and – perhaps – to spark some changes in practice. None of the suggestions is meant to create difficulties for the head, or for other members of the school. All are intended to *assist* the school – including the Head – to cope with the significant new demands of the Educational reform; and thereby - to adapt more effectively to the changing world outside the school walls. We hope that they may be of some assistance.

2. CONCEPTS OF DEMOCRACY

A healthy, well-functioning democracy cannot be reduced to the mere presence of certain social or political structures – like free and fair elections, or a multi-party system. To work effectively, democracy depends to a far greater degree on the *values*, *beliefs* and *expectations* which surround these structures, in the population as a whole.

For that reason, if it is our aim to prepare young people in our care not only for the final exams that they will take at the end of their school career, but also for life in *society*, then we should give close attention to the environment in which they grow up, to the culture within the school walls. We cannot expect students to learn the lessons of democracy if, for example, the environment in which they spend most of their formative years is *autocratic*. They might learn the theory - in lessons of civic education, for example - and become familiar with the structures, but which models would they then have to adopt?

> **The expectations, values and beliefs which grow in an 'autocratic' environment are inappropriate for the children's later emergence into democratic society; and the skills which are needed have no opportunity to be developed.**

School Ethos

It is clear that schools are defined and characterised not only by their academic results, but also by the less tangible aspects - such as the way in which staff and pupils interrelate, the code of conduct which is either implicitly or explicitly understood, the extent of co-operation - or friendship - between teaching staff, the amount of understanding and support given to non-academic or difficult children - and so on.

Although academic results are undoubtedly crucial in shaping a child's future progress, it is these less tangible aspects that children tend to remember, and which therefore exert a more powerful influence on their later choices, priorities and values.

> *Whether or not schools openly engage in 'moral' or 'character' education, teachers cannot help but shape the characters and expectations of the children in their care - sometimes to an almost alarming degree.*

Subjecting ourselves to scrutiny…

Perhaps, then, schools need to be much more aware of the (hidden) messages which the children will pick up within their walls. They need to be aware if any of these messages *conflict* with what is being taught, for example, in lessons of civic culture. Or whether 'undemocratic' signals are being sent out to children; or if the school is practising 'authoritarian' styles of management, or employing any unfair practices within the classroom.

It will be helpful to consider some of the following questions, which have been put together on the basis of what are considered to be the fundamental elements of a democratic culture. The purpose of the section is simply to raise questions. You may wish to put these questions to members of staff, to parents, or even to children themselves. Or you may prefer to contemplate them in the privacy of your own office. If some of your answers turn out to be technically 'undemocratic', or if you find that you resist change - consider whether you would be able to explain (or justify) this to other members of the school collective.

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF DEMOCRACY

1. Rule of law.

- Who makes the rules in the school? (*If your answer is that* you *do: is this fair?*)
- Do the rules apply to everyone, equally?
- Are teachers subject to the same rules as their pupils?
- Ought they to be? (*For example - do they apologise if they arrive late for lessons? Do they always listen while students are talking to them?*)

2. Accountability/ Control of the abuse of power

- Are there people (e.g. parents) to whom the school ought to be accountable, but who in fact have little influence over its policies and practices? (*What would* they *feel about this?*)
- Is there any favouritism or corruption within the school?
- Do teachers ever abuse their power over students? (*Do you think the students would agree with your response?*)
- Do any mechanisms exist to which students could resort in cases of such abuse?
- Are there procedures for members of staff to complain or air grievances?

3. Rights

Are you confident that all the rights of your students are respected within the school? For example -
- Freedom of Speech? *Do students feel able to express any opinion?*
- Human Dignity? *Are students ever humiliated in class?*
- Tolerance/Lack of discrimination? *Are people condemned for their opinions? Are minorities protected?*
- Are the best interests of the child always the primary consideration?
- Is there any physical or mental violence?

4. Justice /Equality

- Are students all treated in the same way?
- Do teachers criticise or reprimand students unfairly when they do not know the answers to their questions?
- Are the punishments for misbehaviour fair? Are they consistent?
- Are students innocent until proven guilty?
- Do they feel able to complain about violence? (what happens? Is it effectively addressed?)
- Is everyone given a fair hearing?

5. Transparency

- Are all school rules known to students? To parents?
- Are decisions and policies made public beforehand?
- Are people able to find out why certain policies have been adopted, and who is responsible for them?
- Are there opportunities/forums where anyone is able to publicise certain matters?
- Are the school accounts public?

6. 'Rule of the people', Participation, Elections

- Are their opportunities for teachers, students or parents to influence school policy?
- Are these opportunities open to *all* members of each group?
- Are people consulted in matters where they will be directly affected?
- Are they encouraged to participate actively in aspects of school life?
- Are there mechanisms by which those in power are made accountable to students or parents?
- Are there mechanisms for acting to remove abuses of power

There is little agreement about the 'correct' answers to the questions given above, and different schools appear on different points on a broad spectrum. You will need to find the right balance for your school between the obvious *rights* issues – such as that children have a right to be consulted on questions concerning their own future – and a pragmatic course of action which says that this may not be possible (or desirable) in all cases.

You may wish to open some of these questions to debate among members of staff, or among students.

3. A COMMON PURPOSE

Questions to Consider

- *Does your school have clear goals?*
- *Where do you intend that the particular strengths should lie? (Is academic excellence the main priority?)*
- *Are all members of the school collective aware of these goals, and aware of the part they may play in achieving them?*
- *Do people have the confidence and the ability to carry out their roles?*

We have already commented that the arguments for democratising schools are more often than not pragmatic. Head teachers depend on other people to carry out their wishes - or their orders - on a day to day level. They depend on members of staff to implement the educational and behavioural policies of the school, and they depend on (a certain amount of) compliance from the children and from parents, in order for their policies to have any effect. The co-operation of all these team members is far more likely to assist the head teacher in his task than is their resistance.

1. ESTABLISHING WHERE THE SCHOOL IS GOING

DEVELOP A VISION statement

for the school

A VISION STATEMENT is a short summary of what the staff (not just the head) believe in, and want their school to be. An increasing number of schools find it useful to develop a concise statement of common aims and intentions, which helps to give direction to the staff, and also serves to inform children and parents about what the school expects and is trying to do.

The Vision Statement should not try to include everything the school wants to achieve, but it can be a useful way of focussing attention on the aspects which should be given priority. It should be concise, and written in plain language, so that it is understandable to children as well as parents and staff.

➢ On the following pages, we offer some examples of different Vision Statements. You may find it easier to begin by drawing up a longer version – such as the sample one given on page 11 – and then to condense this into a single paragraph.

➢ The single paragraph version is useful because it will make staff think about what is *most important* in the school – rather than simply ending up with a long list of aims which it would be *nice* to realise (in an ideal world!)

➢ Note that in the examples given, there is little reference to what the school is going to *do*. The emphasis is on describing what staff want the school to *be*.

Examples of Vision Statements

An infants school

> We believe that children learn best in a happy, secure and stimulating environment where a positive attitude to learning is developed so that we lay firm foundations for present and future learning. We monitor progress, carefully informing parents at regular intervals, and encourage parents' interest and support.
>
> We are committed to creating opportunities to enable all children to succeed by generating feelings of self-worth and mutual respect and also to ensure that there are equal opportunities for all our children.

2. A primary school

> Our prime purpose is to give children a sound start in their education by helping them develop lively, enquiring minds as well as learning basic concepts, skills and knowledge. By the time they leave school we expect them to be literate and numerate, to the best of their ability, starting to understand the world around them and developing tolerance of those who are different from themselves.

3. A secondary school

> Our mission is to help adolescents develop academically, socially and personally as to give them the best possible preparation for adult life. We would like our pupils to be confident within themselves and considerate to others. By the time they leave school, they should have the highest academic qualification of which they, individually, are capable.
>
> The school is a learning community and all those who work in it encourage each other to go on learning and developing.

> **When you have drawn up your vision statement, you will need to make sure that people know about it. Inform members of staff; explain the different aspects to children; pin it up in public places around the school; put it on important policy documents; send it out to parents so that**

> **they know what the school is trying to do with their children.**

SAMPLE VISION STATEMENT

A detailed vision statement drawn up by a school in England in 1997.

GREENLEIGH COMMUNITY SCHOOL
VISION, CORE PURPOSE, AIMS, SCHOOL TARGETS

Vision

"Success for all in our learning community"

Core Purpose

1. To be valued in our community for widening horizons and enabling pupils to achieve success beyond expectations;
2. To develop an orderly and caring community based upon values of mutual respect and self-discipline, which students and staff enjoy attending and of which parents, the community and governors can also be proud.

Aims

1. Equal opportunities for all pupils to achieve success.
2. An orderly and caring community based on self-respect, respect for others and respect for the environment.
3. Confident pupils, able to participate in and wanting to improve the community, rather than accept it as they find it.
4. Pupils who are able to widen their horizons and achieve success beyond expectations.
5. Pupils who value learning as a lifelong activity and strive for improvement in all they do.
6. Partnership between pupils, parents, staff and community which promotes learning and success.

Whole School Targets
(Within 5 years we will achieve our vision by:-)

1. Establishing a clear sense of purpose and educational direction, which is reflected in all aspects of the school.

2. Improving teaching and learning and curriculum planning in the core subjects, especially mathematics.

3. Using the skills of effective teachers to provide systematic help for others, to improve the quality of their lesson preparation and class control.

4. Improving the unsatisfactory assessment of and provision for pupils with special educational needs.

5. Promoting the school's Code for Success and ensuring it is supported wholeheartedly by all staff.

6. Improving the school's management structures and systems, ensuring that planning and expenditure are firmly focused on raising standards.

Whole school targets

Our objectives and how we will achieve them (and how we will recognise and measure their achievement.)
Note – Precise timescales worked out in a full Action Plan

1. Establish a clear sense of purpose and educational direction, reflected in all aspects of the school.

We will:

1.1   Review the aims and values of the school

- Communicate this vision to staff, parents, pupils, community – Code for success, notices, documents, prospectus, School council (Document accepted, annual review by Headteacher and chair of governors)

1.2   Appoint a Headteacher

- Governors/local education authority review new headteacher's progress

1.3   Establish a clear vision statement for the school which emphasises high expectations in learning and pride in the school

- All documents include vision statement (questionnaire to parents0
- Establish a Dress code for staff and pupils (Pastoral staff monitor)
- Establish a school council, Pupil Duty week (Review in school council)
- Increase extra curricular participation
- Promote success – Sports day, awards evenings, performances

2. A CONSULTATION EXERCISE

INVOLVE OTHER STAFF

MEMBERS IN DRAWING IT UP

It is of course possible for the head teacher to draw up his or her own Vision Statement and present it to staff as one more task for them to carry out. More effective, though, is to involve members of staff directly in the drawing up of this statement. After all, the more closely they have been involved –

- **The better they will understand it**

- **The closer they will feel to the statement, and the more responsibility they will feel for carrying it out**

- **The greater will be their desire to carry it out: this is now their Vision Statement (and has not been imposed on them from above).**

- **The more realistic will the statement be, in terms of what the staff themselves feel able to achieve**

A consultation exercise can be a useful way of drawing staff together in a common task, and an effective means of strengthening relationships and creating a sense of *common purpose*. Thinking about the school's broader objectives can also help to concentrate attention on the important non-academic aspects of school life, and the vital role that schools need to play in preparing young people for society.

There are various levels at which you may feel able to consult members of staff, or at which you feel that it is appropriate to make the investment of time and energy. Select those suggestions below – or use others of your own - that you feel best able to carry out within your school. Remember, though, that the more you consult staff on this issue, the more you will enable them to carry out the aims which are being set for the school.

METHODS OF CONSULTATION:

Begin by brainstorming priorities for the school: what would staff like these to be?

OR…
Ask staff to submit individual suggestions in written form – for priorities, or for actual versions of the Vision Statement

OR…
Meet in small groups, and ask each group to come up with a common proposal

OR…
Create a working group involving a cross-section of different teaching staff

OR…
Draw up two or three possible Vision Statements and invite staff to comment or criticise

OR something else…

3. MAKING THE VISION STATEMENT WORK

use it to review existing

practices

In some schools a vision statement can serve as not much more than a statement of intention, and has little practical use. A vision statement needs to be put to work*: it will not reach its own objectives.*

The development of clear objectives for the school, in the form of a vision statement, can provide a good opportunity for reviewing current practices and rules. You could begin with a consultation process – involving staff - to ensure that yourthe new vision statement is consistent with existing school policies, practices and rules.

EXAMPLE 1:

Set up a small working group of members of staff. Ask them to compare the aims expressed in the vision statement concerning **behaviour and human relations***, with the methods currently used to promote and encourage them in the school…*

VISION STATEMENT 1

> **…To develop an orderly and caring community based upon values of mutual respect and self-discipline, which students and staff enjoy attending…**

Questions to consider:

To what extent is this *consistent* with the current system of rules, punishments and behaviour management in the school?

Does the current system, for example, allow students to feel *respected* by staff, and staff to feel respected by senior management?

Is the system *orderly* in the sense that people know exactly what to expect: are there, for example, any discrepancies between methods used by different members of staff?

… and so on.

EXAMPLE 2:

Given the very general nature of a vision statement, it is perhaps unlikely that there will be actual inconsistencies *with current school practice. It can be useful to give the working group the additional task of considering which, if any, of the school's existing policies actually serves some* purpose *in achieving the aims set out in the Vision Statement.*

VISION STATEMENT 3

> **"…We would like our pupils to be confident within themselves and considerate to others…"**

Questions to consider:

➢ What could be done to ensure that this aim was given priority?
➢ Are students aware that it is a priority?

> ➢ Are parents?
> ➢ Are staff?

> ➢ **Are any positive means used to increase the self-confidence of pupils?**

Such as…

- ♦ Encouraging all pupils in their areas of strength
- ♦ Assisting, with sensitivity, in areas of weakness
- ♦ Making an effort not to humiliate pupils in class
- ♦ Not allowing other children to do so
- ♦ Encouraging mutual respect among children

EXAMPLE 3:

VISION STATEMENT 2

> **"…Our prime purpose is to give children a sound start in their education by helping them develop lively, enquiring minds…"**

> ➢ **Are teaching staff aware of how they might assist in this objective?**

For example…

- ♦ Using a variety of teaching methods to stimulate interest
- ♦ Giving children the opportunity to develop skills of investigation
- ♦ Giving them the opportunity to select their own areas of interest and pursue them
- ♦ Encouraging them to ask questions, and always honouring them with an answer
- ♦ Assisting them in finding answers to their own questions
- ♦ Provoking discussion and debate in lesson time

…MAKING THE VISION STATEMENT WORK

USE it to draw up school

policies

Many of the suggestions which have arisen out of the process of review can be used to form the basis of *school policy statements*. There may be a number of other areas of school life, besides behaviour management, where individual teachers adopt practices which are

not consistent with one another; or where they need guidance in pursuing a general aim; or simply where it is important to record and clarify the school's general approach, for the use of staff, children and parents. Such as…

EXAMPLE 4:

- *Is the system of* marking *consistent throughout the school?*
- *Is it fair?*
- *Is it effective?*
- *Do children know what is expected of them?*
- *Do members of staff use marking criteria which are consistent with the school's vision?*

CONSIDER DRAWING UP A MARKING POLICY - which should be discussed with staff, and made known to all members of the school collective[1].

EXAMPLE 5:

- *Do girls and boys feel that they are given equal opportunity to contribute to school life?*
- *Do staff have stereotypical expectations of girl and boy students?*
- *Do any children feel inhibited/threatened by other students because of their background?*
- *Are less able students given the same support as academically more able students?*

CONSIDER DRAWING UP AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY- which will make it clear

to staff, students and parents that the school takes seriously its commitment to avoiding

prejudicial or unfair practices.

EXAMPLE 6:

Developing a behaviour management policy

We looked, in Example 1, at a process of reviewing behaviour management throughout the school, following the drawing up of a new Vision Statement. The working group which is given the task of reviewing current practices in the school should be asked to do more than just compare these with the vision statement; they should also be required to come up with *concrete suggestions to be implemented* throughout the school.

Although we would strongly recommend that schools do not bypass the important process of reviewing their own practices, we include below, by way of an example, some suggestions that you may want to consider, and which arose out of such a process of review in one school. Suggestions such as these can easily be put into the form of a Policy Statement, which could form the basis of a behaviour management policy. The policy will of course need to be made known to all staff, and could also be made available to parents and children.

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[1] See Appendix 2 for a possible model for a marking policy

Suggestions for changes in behaviour management:

…arising out of the review process

- Minimise the number of school rules. *Too many rules can make a school seem like a police state! You can often find a general formulation which can take the place of a number of specific rules.*

- Wherever possible, express rules in the more positive (and respectful) form 'students should…' rather than in the form 'Students should not…' *For example – students should be punctual for lessons is a kinder formulation than* **students should not be late***!*

- Explain the reasons behind the school rules. *Students will be more likely to respect rules if they understand why they are necessary.*

- Have clear lines of responsibility so that staff, parents and children are aware of who should be dealing with the problem; keep relevant teachers informed about any behaviour problems, and co-ordinate efforts to deal with them. *You may want to consider the use of forms such as that on page 20*

- Move beyond punishment of bad behaviour, and give staff guidance on how to encourage good/acceptable behaviour in students *See page 21: Staff strategies for encouraging acceptable behaviour.*

- Use warnings and sanctions when they are likely to be *effective* - but also take every opportunity to praise and give additional attention to those who are behaving well.

- Make the sanctions relevant to the offence – *e.g. clearing up the school yard may be appropriate for someone who has made a mess of wasted school time, but would be inappropriate for someone who has not done their homework.*

- Where punishments are necessary, make absolutely certain that the right person is being punished.

- As far as possible, have an agreed scale of sanctions throughout the school – so that children committing the same offence will not be treated in radically different ways. *See page 22 for one such scale in a British school*

- Make sure that a pupil is fully aware of the reason for being punished; seek ways of having the pupil put right any wrong they have done.

- Avoid, at all times, humiliating punishment or punishment which appears to be designed to irritate, embarrass, demean or waste time.

Other possible areas for policy statements…

You may want to consider drawing up policy statements on other issues. A list of such policies in a typical British school might include any (or all) of the following:

Able Children Policy	Anti-Bullying Policy
Appraisal Policy	Assessment Policy
Attendance Policy	Behaviour Management Policy
Child Protection Policy	Drugs Policy
Environment Policy	Equal Opportunities Policy
Health and Safety Policy	Induction and Support of New Teachers Policy
Homework Policy	Induction and Support of New Special Needs Analysis Policy
Information technology Policy	Intercultural Policy
Learning Resource Centre Policy	Marking, Assessment. Recording and reporting Policy
Security Policy	Students with a Physical Disability Policy
Sex education Policy	Spelling Policy
Special Needs Policy	Staff Development Policy
Teaching and Learning Policy	Work Related Curriculum Policy

SAMPLE FORM FOR BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS

To: The teachers of _____

Form: _____

As a few incidents have recently come to light, causing some concern, please note some salient points concerning the above student so that action can be taken.
Please comment on relevant points:-

Attitude   motivation
Behaviour   standard of work
Talkativeness   homework
Disruption   resistance to correction
Punctuality   concentration
Insolence   influence on peers

and add any other pertinent information, problem, cause, need for counselling.

You will be advised if any follow-up is intended. Thankyou very much for your co-operation. Please treat this as confidential and urgent.

Signed:_____(Form teacher/Year Co-ordinator)

Name of teacher:
Subject:
Comments:
Date: Signature:
Please continue overleaf if necessary.

4. TEACHING STAFF

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- ♦ *Is the school getting the best out of teaching staff?*
- ♦ *Do staff know what they are expected to do?*
- ♦ *Are they informed about what is going on?*
- ♦ *Can they contribute?*
- ♦ *Are they consulted?*
- ♦ *Do they feel valued?*

Teaching staff, the world over, are overworked and underpaid; and few of the suggestions made in this book are likely to alter that fact, or to improve the lot of teachers in either of these respects. Indeed, it may seem to some staff that the changes proposed in these pages require even more from them than they are accustomed to carrying out as part of their school duties. They may not be prepared to give any more to the school.

HOW CAN YOU PERSUADE STAFF TO ASSIST YOU IN THE TASK OF

ADAPTING THE SCHOOL TO CHANGING EXTERNAL CONDITIONS?

If you have few external incentives that you can offer them, then you will need to rely heavily on powers of persuasion. But that is not to diminish the powers at your disposal, since internal motivation can often be a far more powerful and effective tool of change than any financial or material stimulus.

> *Try appealing to the human qualities of your staff – to their desire for satisfaction, for understanding and appreciation…*

- Show them how their efforts will lead to a more pleasant working environment for everyone - including themselves

- Show them that it will give the children in their care a better chance of success in a changing Romanian society

- Help them to see the satisfaction they will gain by playing a more proactive role

- Let them see that you appreciate the difficulties they are facing

- Show them that you value the efforts they are making

- Assist them, where they appear to need assistance

- Support them, and encourage them to support one another

- Listen to their suggestions, and give them an opportunity to voice them

- Listen to their difficulties and grievances

- Let them see the difficulties that you are facing!

- Do not be impatient when they make mistakes, since there is not a teacher in the country – nor a headteacher – who is not making mistakes. Try to understand why the mistake was made, and how it can be avoided in the future.

- Explain that it is everyone's responsibility to ensure that the reform is given the best possible chance of succeeding…

- And explain that you cannot do it without their help

1. FINDING OUT…

It can be helpful to staff simply to feel that their views, or concerns, are of consequence to others in the school. Sometimes people do not even require concrete steps to be taken – they only want their concerns to be heard. Of course, you will satisfy them further if you act on their concerns – or at least answer them; but a helpful first step can be simply to look into people's feelings about general issues around the school.

- *Do you know what your staff think about the general direction of the school?*
- *Do they have any complaints or grievances?*
- *Do they have any suggestions for improvements?*
- *Are they given opportunities to express any of the above?*

ASK THEM…

You may find that there are problems you were not aware of, or that there are common misperceptions, which need addressing. Asking your staff for their opinions can direct your attention towards possible inadequacies in the management of the school, and it can also often throw up solutions.

- You can use the questionnaires included in Appendix 2 as a model, or give staff the opportunity to reply verbally to questions

- Make sure that they feel free to state their honest opinion

- Make sure they are not inhibited by other members of the staff collective, nor by the fear of repercussions from senior management (this may mean giving them the opportunity to answer anonymously, or it may mean organising individual interviews with someone they trust)

- Make sure that, whatever the form of questioning you select, staff receive feedback on their responses. They must feel that someone is listening – not just asking them to talk.

> **Staff should feel, at all times, that there is someone to whom they can go if they wish to talk**

2. GIVING THEM CLEAR RESPONSIBILITIES

It is clear that you will need the assistance of staff in coping with the changes required by the reform. Indeed if we are using the term 'democracy' in any meaningful sense when talking about school management, then there will be no 'democratisation' without the staff's active assistance. At the essence of the very concept of democracy, after all, is the idea of *participation* by all members.

> **The staff's involvement, inclusion and joint responsibility for the general well being of the school are an essential part of any process of democratisation.**

A Mission Statement will set out general aims for the school, and different policy statements will set out a means of reaching these ends. But you will need to be sure that teachers are aware of their individual *roles and responsibilities* in achieving the ends defined by the Mission Statement. **Do they know what you are expecting them to do**?

> DRAW UP JOB
> DESCRIPTIONS

- **You may wish to use the sample job description given in Appendix 2 as a model. Each member of staff will need their own job description.**

- **Staff need to know what is expected of them, and what concrete methods or measures are recommended in order to achieve general aims**

- **You need to know what you are entitled to expect from your staff, and that certain individuals are responsible for carrying out specific tasks**

- **Be as specific as you can: staff may need careful guidance on how to carry out new roles**

DELEGATE...

GIVE THEM *GENUINE* RESPONSIBILITY

Senior management is, as far as possible, supposed to supervise the work of the school while the staff carry it out, but roles can be reversed sometimes because the staff are too dependent or because the headteacher likes to take care of everything. The more the headteacher takes on his or herself, the more dependent the staff become.

The only way to develop responsibility in people is to give them responsibility. It is worth remembering that your staff are NOT the major *source* of all your problems; they are the major *solution* to all your problems.

The more you delegate to staff, the more you will have time for them and that will enable you to know whether things are going well or not. When they are, you will be able to give them credit for it (one of the most important tasks a head teacher does). When things are not going well you will be able to give them the support they need – advice, encouragement, practical help, whatever is needed.

So, for every task, ask yourself if one of your staff could do it – and if not, why not? If they need training, then train them.

Levels of delegation
When you delegate a task or responsibility, there are four things you need to go through with them.

1. The Brief

In briefing them, you can be anywhere between these two extremes:
a) Tell them exactly what it is you want them to do and, if necessary, how to do it.
b) Tell them what outcome is wanted, when it is to be achieved – and let them do it their way.

2. Responsibility
Make clear what they are responsible for. For example:
a) They are responsible for following your instructions.
b) They are responsible for the outcome.

3. Risk
The risk can be covered in one of two ways. Tell them either:
a) To recommend what they think they should do, get your approval, then act.
b) To act, but then advise you of what they have done.

4. Support and check-ups
Arrange the time and place for the follow-up. At *that* meeting either:
a) Thank them if it is going well.
b) Spot problems and coach them through.

3. ASSISTING THEM

ASSESSING THEIR NEEDS

Teachers everywhere fear the process of appraisal. They fear that the only purpose of the exercise could be to measure them against a fixed standard, and then to pass them or fail them. And in so far as this is indeed the purpose of appraising teachers – they are probably right to be afraid. As an adult, being 'passed' or 'failed' can be a difficult and often humiliating ordeal.

But staff assessment – or appraisal – can in fact be used in a far more positive way within a school, which is both much kinder to the individual teachers, and is also beneficial to the school as a whole.

You can use appraisal as a *supportive* process, where the emphasis is on helping individual teachers - and thereby on helping the school. Your staff should not be afraid that they will be punished if they fail to live up to a certain standard: they should rather see their appraisal as an opportunity to receive advice or assistance in their working practices, which is suited to their own particular requirements.

> **Appraisal is a means of assisting all teachers, including headteachers, to reflect on their professional practices, discuss and then improve them. It is therefore primarily a staff development exercise which has, as a necessary outcome, the improvement of pupils' learning and development.**

A POLICY FOR APPRAISAL

Aims:

Appraisal of teachers within the school should –

> Help them to develop professionally, to their own personal advantage and to the advantage of the school as a whole;

> Be a non-threatening activity;

> Be seen as a learning experience for both the appraisee and the appraiser;

In practice, appraisal must…

> Follow a scheme which is known beforehand – for example, teachers must be aware of who is going to be appraising them, and they should know when they are due to be appraised, for how long, on what criteria, what the possible consequences could be – and so on.

> Be carried out in an atmosphere founded on the mutual respect of the appraiser and the appraised. This is arguably the most important condition of a successful system of appraisal. If certain teachers are not happy with the person to whom they have been assigned, they should have the opportunity to work with someone else instead;

> Particular attention should be given to observing a policy of confidentiality within the appraisal scheme: teachers should know that the results of their appraisal will be known only by those who are appraising them, and by the headteacher (for example).

The process of appraisal

> At least to begin with, the appraisal scheme can be relatively informal. It may take time for people to become used to the idea, and there is little point in setting up complicated structures which create an atmosphere of formality and authority;

> You will need to identify a group containing members of staff who are liked and respected in the school. These people will carry out the appraisal process (you may or may not wish to be among this group)

> Each member of staff (including those in the 'appraisal group') should be allocated one or possibly 2 appraisers, with whom they will meet not less than once a year for about 20 – 30 minutes. They may request

a different appraiser, if they are not happy with the person to whom they have been appointed;

The appraisal group may prefer to work in groups of 2 when they are conducting an appraisal – but remember that this is likely to be a more intimidating experience for members of staff, and it may not deliver the same results as a more private interview would do;

The process should begin with all teachers having an agreed job description, and this should be used to focus the discussion. The following points could be used as a guide.

Directing the Discussion

- **What is the member of staff required or expected to do?**
- **Is she carrying out these responsibilities?**

If the answer is yes…

- *Make sure that the teacher is aware her efforts are valued; thank her*
- *Look, together, at whether they are achieving the desired effect on pupils/the school*
- *Ask about the effect they are having on this teacher*
- *For example - is she having any difficulties carrying out her responsibilities?*
- *Does she need further support from other members of staff / the school?*

If the answer is no, then discuss why she is not…

- *For example - the target was unrealistic*
- *The teacher was unaware of her responsibilities*
- *She was not trying to carry them out*
- *She did not have the skills to carry them out*
- *She was unwilling to carry them out*
- *Or something else?*

- **Ask whether there are particular problems or needs for the member of staff. Discuss how these could be met, or how to resolve the problems**

- **Set new targets for the following year with the member of staff.**

Remember: Teachers must believe that they take part in appraisal - as opposed to believing that it is something done to them.

Make sure that targets are SMART:

SPECIFIC – e.g. I shall…complete marking on time, arrive on time for lessons, use a variety of teaching methods, give children responsibilities in class, draw up a set of class rules and make sure they are observed etc
MEASUREABLE – they can be checked
ACHIEVABLE – *I can do it*
RELEVANT – it will help me
TIME-RELATED – *set a date*

SHARING OF EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE

Among the members of staff in your school, you have a vast wealth of experience and, undoubtedly, expertise. Indeed - the collective 'experience' within your school walls is possibly greater than that in the local CCD; and certainly the experience of day-to-day practical teaching experience will be greater.

This is a valuable resource, which many schools fail to utilise properly. It means that a large proportion of the training needs within any school - which might have been identified as a result of the appraisal process outlined above - can normally be met by other members of staff, either within the school, or in neighbouring schools.

The best way of sharing good practice and learning from others' experience is to have open lines of communication both within the school, and with neighbouring schools. TEACHERS CAN LEARN FROM EACH OTHER.

- **You may wish to run formal inset training days or sessions, and invite staff from neighbouring schools to attend. Suggest that they do the same for areas where they have a different expertise.**

- **You could introduce mentoring within the school, where a more experienced teacher is responsible for assisting and overseeing the work of a less experienced member. You would have to include lesson observation within such a scheme.**

- **You could adopt a less formal approach and simply use existing channels to share experience among staff members.**

For example…

1.

| | MAKE BETTER USE OF |
| | DEPARTMENT MEETINGS |

Set an Agenda for meetings

- **Make sure participants to the meeting are aware of the Agenda beforehand – so that they come to the meeting prepared**

- **Give them the opportunity to add their own items to the Agenda – for example, if they have attended a training day and would like to share their experience**

- **Encourage members of staff to think about what might be useful to share with their colleagues. You could even add a show and tell section as a regular item on the Agenda.**

- **Make sure that the person running the meeting keeps to the Agenda (stops people from discussing issues out of turn, or questions which are not even on the Agenda!)**

- **Make sure that someone keeps a record of what has been discussed and decided at the meeting. This can be useful for those who have been unable to attend, and also as a reminder to those who were there.**

- **Make sure that the minutes of the meeting are written up afterwards and made available to everyone concerned.**

2.

| | DISSEMINATE INFORMATION |
| | AMONG MEMBERS OF STAFF |

- About the reform
- About assessment

- About training, methodology, the curriculum
- About changes in the school

Give them individual pigeon holes in the staff room

Use the notice board for announcements, events, absences, visits to the school etc

Encourage staff to look at it regularly

Issue a weekly/daily newsletter for staff

Encourage staff to pass on information to other members – through meetings or in written form

Encourage them to share their problems, solutions, skills, ideas etc with each other

Encourage them to go to the staff room whenever they are not teaching

Make yourself available, in case staff are in need of support or advice

Encourage other members of management to do the same

5. PUPILS

Democracy for all?

There is not yet a society that gives children the opportunity to vote in general elections. Children are not thought to be responsible enough; and nor, it is believed, would they understand the issues. Perhaps, then, we need not concern ourselves with including the younger members of the school collective in our new school 'democracy'?

The authors of this manual rather doubt that it is *always* the case that children are less responsible, or less able to understand complex issues than adults! But even if – or when - they are, there are nonetheless strong reasons for extending the scope of *democratisation* within a school, so that children as well as members of staff not only feel the benefits, but so that they are included in a more active and constructive way.

Why…

- Schools need to familiarise their students with the practices and institutions that make up their society. Giving students positions of responsibility, the opportunity to voice opinions, to take decisions and participate actively in school life offers them essential practical experience in the skills that they will need to use in later life.

- Through such institutions as school or class councils, students may be offered the opportunity to practise such skills, and may also gain personal experience of a democratic system with elected representatives.

- There are *practical* reasons for involving students in planning decisions, since such involvement can lead to improvements in discipline. When students feel ownership of the rules and practices that govern their school lives, they will understand them better, and will also begin to develop respect for these rules and practices.

- In some areas, they may even prove to be 'better' at planning or problem solving, since there are issues relating to student concerns where they will have, by definition, a greater 'expertise'.

- Students have *rights* to participate in the decisions which affect them directly, to have their opinions heard, to receive information, and to have their best interests taken into account.

A COMMUNITY OF TRUST

A more democratic school for pupils does not mean anarchy, and nor need it mean a lack of any hierarchical structures. It means a school where institutions and power structures are clearly defined, but where the relations between different members are based less on fear of those higher up, and more on a mutual trust and respect. Children are given more opportunity to voice any concerns, more responsibility in matters around the school, and greater opportunities for active and creative involvement in questions that directly concern them.

One of the most effective, and popular methods of involving pupils in a more active way in school matters is to establish a students' council, and we have included, as a separate section, detailed briefing notes on the setting up of a student council. However, a student council on its own can often be little more than a gesture towards student involvement, and ideally it will be backed up by other procedures and practices which contribute in a more deep-seated way to building a democratic culture within the school.

So in this section, we shall consider a number of other measures which could be easily implemented within the school, and which will help to involve *all* pupils in a more active and responsible way. At the base of most of the suggestions is the idea that pupils will be better able to fulfil their potential – in whatever sphere that may lie – if they feel part of a **friendly, safe and just school community**.

- **<u>Friendly</u> – in that members of the community respect, care for and look after one another;**

- **<u>Safe</u> – in that members do not feel threatened by any aspect of school life, and know that they can always receive support and help from within the school;**

- **<u>Just</u> – in that all members are given an equal and fair chance – no matter what their personal characteristics or abilities may be.**

> **Experience shows that children respond well to being given more trust, more freedom, and additional responsibilities. They are often capable of understanding issues that adults think to be beyond them!**

1. CREATING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

IN THE CLASSROOM

TIMETABLE REGULAR

CLASS MEETINGS

It is increasingly popular among primary schools around the world for them to allocate a time for the class to meet together and engage in a general discussion. Known as 'Circle Time' – because the children generally sit in a circle during the discussion – such sessions can be very effective not only in developing important communication skills, but also in strengthening personal relationships and a sense of class identity.

Such meetings may take place every day, or once a week, and may take any number of forms – depending on the abilities and level of comfort of the teacher who is facilitating the discussion. Although there is sometimes less time available at secondary level, it is strongly recommended that, where possible, some type of semi-formal discussion takes place at least once a week – possibly in tutor group. Below is one possible way of conducting the meeting, followed by some suggestions for topics of discussion, or reasons for gathering the whole class together. Both of these documents are taken from Thomas Lickona's excellent book *Educating for Character*.

Ten Steps in a class meeting

1. **Circle up:** Form a good circle and call the meeting to order
2. **Set the agenda:** state the purpose and goals of the meeting
3. **Set the rules:** Establish or review rules for "good talking and listening"
4. **Identify partners:** Pair up students who will discuss the problem or topic under consideration
5. **Pose the problem or question:** For example – 'several people have said there's a lot of name-calling on the playground lately. What can we do to solve this problem?'
6. **Personal thinking time:** Give students a silent minute to think about the question individually.
7. **Signal for quiet**: Establish a signal (e.g. flick of the lights) for stopping partner talk in order to begin whole-group discussion.
8. **Partner talk:** Have partners (in place) share thoughts with each other (3 to 5 minutes); circulate to help those who may be slow to interact.
9. **Whole-group discussion:** Invite several pairs of students to share their ideas with the group; invite reactions to these ideas; pose follow-up questions; if appropriate, reach and record agreement on action to be taken and plan implementation, and set a time for a follow-up meeting.
10. **Close the meeting**.

Twenty Kinds Of Class Meetings

1. **Good news meetings:** "Who has some good news to share?"

1. **Circle whip:** Go around the circle; everyone can either complete the "sentence-starter" or chose to pass. After everyone has had a turn, the teacher can use individual students' responses as a springboard for interactive discussion. Some sample sentence-starters are:
   - "Something I like about this class……."
   - "Something I think would make our class better……"
   - "A decision I think we should make…."
   - "I'm wondering why…"
   - "Something that bothers me…."
   - "I wish….."

2. **Appreciation time:** "Who would you like to appreciate?"

3. **Compliment time:** One or two children are chosen; taking one child at a time, the teacher invites classmates to say something they like or admire about that person.

4. **Goal-setting meeting:** Discuss the goals for the morning, the day, the week, a curriculum unit, the academic year.

5. **Rule setting meeting:** "What rules do we need for our classroom?" "For going to gym?" " For the up coming field trip?"

6. **Rule evaluating meeting:** Have students write about then discuss the following questions: "What are the school rules? Why do we have them? Are they good rules? If you could change one rule, what would it be? Do any of our classroom rules need changing to make them work better?"

7. **Stage setting meeting:** For example, before a small group activity: "What can you do to make things go smoothly in your group?"

8. **Feedback and evaluation:** "How well did you work together?" "How could you make it go better next time?" "What was good about today?" "How can we make tomorrow a better day?"

9. **Reflections on learnings:** "What did you learn from this activity (unit, project, book)?" "One new idea or understanding?"

10. **Student presentation:** One or two students present a piece of their work, such as a project or story; other class members ask questions and offer appreciative comments.

11. **Problem solving meetings:**
    - Individual problem: "Who's having a problem that we might be able to help solve?"
    - Group problem: "What's a class problem we should ask about?"
    - Complaints and recommendations: Ground rule: You can make a complaint about a problem but you have to offer a recommendation for correcting it.

- Fairness meetings: " How can we solve this conflict (e.g. cutting in line, disputes over materials or equipment, arguments over cleanup) in a way that is fair to everybody?"

12. **Academic issues:** "Why do we have to study this?" "What would help you do a better job on homework?" " On the next test?" " How could the last test have been improved?"

13. **Classroom improvement meeting:** "What changes would make our classroom better?" Possibilities: Changing the physical arrangement of the class room, new ways of working together, new learning games, ideas for class created bulletin boards etc.

14. **Follow up meeting:** "How is the solution/change we agreed upon working? Can we make it work better?"

15. **Planning meeting:** " What group projects would you like to do?" " What topics to study?" " What field trips to take?" " What would be fun to do differently next week in spelling, maths or science?" " What would be the most exciting way to study this next topic?"

16. **Concept meeting:** "What is a friend? How do you make one?" "What is a conscience? How does it help you?" " What is a lie? Is it ever right to tell one?" "What is trust? Why is it important?" "What is courage? How do people show it?"

17. **Sticky situations:** " What should you/would you do if: You find a wallet on the pavement with $20 in it?"…. "You find just a $20 note?"… "You see a child stealing something from somebody else's locker?"… "There's a child that you'd like to be nice to but your friends think s/he is weird?"… "A friend asks to copy your homework?"… "A friend you're with shoplifts a CD?"… "Two children on the bus are picking on a little child and making him cry?"

18. **Suggestion box/class business box:** Any appropriate subject students have submitted for discussion.

19. **Meeting on meetings:** "What have you liked about our class meetings? What haven't you liked? What have we accomplished? How can we improve our meetings?"

…CREATING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

IN THE SCHOOL

| HOLD REGULAR ASSEMBLIES |
| FOR THE WHOLE SCHOOL |

Regular meetings with the school as a whole – or with parts of it – can help to stimulate staff and student awareness of whole school issues. This, in turn, is important for the formation of a school

identity, and can also assist with developing links and associations across peer-group or class boundaries. The following provide some possible guidelines in organising such meetings:

- Following discussion with staff, publish a calendar of assemblies (usually for one per week, but it could be more)

- Depending on the size of the school, assemblies could be given for years 1 – 5 and for years 6 – 9, usually at the beginning of the day. Students and form tutors should attend

- If chairs can be provided, children can set them out on a rota basis, and the event will seem more important than if they were sitting / standing on the floor.

- 10 – 15 minutes is enough for normal assemblies – more time can be taken for end of term or special event assemblies

- Students should go straight to the assembly when they arrive at school – this provides a good opportunity to highlight latecomers!

- Form tutors should sit with their group and take responsibility for their behaviour and contribution, where appropriate.

- The first assemblies should be taken by the headteacher or deputy head, in order to demonstrate good group management and communication techniques.

- Later on, when people have become accustomed to the format, assemblies could involve a class presenting something on the same theme. This is a good opportunity for young people to gain experience in talking to a large group. However – members of staff may need to be prepared for them to share personal, and sometimes even controversial views! The freedom with which they do so usually depends on the skill and inclination of their form tutor in preparing and enabling them. Form tutoring demands very special qualities and skills, and you may need to identify good practice and organise the sharing of such practice with all pastoral staff.

- Assemblies should be well planned – whoever is conducting them!

- The content can be guided by a theme that could cover 4 – 6 weeks, and would ideally be linked to the content of the form

tutor lessons. It makes good sense for the 'message' of the assembly to be reinforced afterwards by class teachers.

- Such themes could include: world, national, local or school issues e.g. famine, disaster, racism, drugs, discipline etc.

- Assemblies should not just be lecturing sessions! The style of presentation should be varied in order to keep students' interest – e.g. using a flip chart, other prepared visual aids, a radio or tape, or a reading.

- Celebrate all achievement – not just academic success. Helpfulness, tolerance, progress, attendance and punctuality are just a few of the student attributes that could be recognised. The School Vision will clearly influence the categories chosen for such recognition.

A PLEASANT ENVIRONMENT

INVOLVE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL IN

LOOKING AFTER THE SCHOOL GROUNDS

It is of course important that the school feels like a well cared for place. Students – and teachers – spend a large part of their waking hours within the school walls, and a cheerful physical environment can play a large part in improving morale and good-will around the school. It is also worth remembering that the greater the students feel that their contribution has been, the more they will value the changes that have taken place. Help them to feel ownership of different aspects of school life; help them to put some of their own ideas into practice.

Display pieces of student work on the walls

…of classrooms and school corridors. Make sure that all students have their work displayed at some time: it can be very discouraging for less able students to feel that their work has not been appreciated

Ask students to make suggestions about how the appearance of the school can be improved

…both inside and out. They may have a number of ideas which they may be prepared to carry out themselves. Some of them may be interested to tend the school garden, or to bring in plants for classrooms; some classes may wish to design their own exhibition, or simply to exhibit project work that they have

completed in lessons; parents may be able to help with repairs, building or decorating different parts of the school.

KEEPING THEM INFORMED

TELL THEM WHAT IS PLANNED,

AND WHAT IS HAPPENING…

A good flow of information around the school will not only help events to run more smoothly, but is also an effective way of making everyone feel involved and included in the school community.

- Use notice boards to display information about forthcoming events, exam timetables, things they are required to do, activities or clubs that might be of interest to them. For more ideas on how to use notice boards see below.

- Consider publishing a school newsletter with more detailed information about such matters. Students themselves may wish to include information about activities in which they are involved

- Let them know about school successes, or the successes of individual pupils

- Stick up copies of the school rules in every classroom

- Warn them beforehand if there are to be any changes in school practice or procedure – e.g. in the dress code, in assessment methods, in punishment methods, in available options etc

- Make sure that they know what possible sanctions may follow from misbehaviour

- Make sure that they know what homework they will be expected to do each evening as a general rule - so that they are able to plan other aspects of their life accordingly
- Make sure that they know in advance about any events/competitions/activities for which they may need to prepare, or alter existing plans.

Using Notice Boards around the school

Notice boards can have a wide range of uses, beyond acting as public information areas. They can also be used to create a more pleasant environment, and to give a sense of the school as a living community. You may want to consider putting up some of the following around the school:

Photographs of all who work in the school with their names and job title – in the Entrance Area to the school

Daily, weekly, monthly and annual calendars of events advertising forthcoming activities – at the school gates and in the corridors.

Individual boards for student year groups – in the corridors

A board in each tutor group room for school policies and procedures relating to attendance, homework and behaviour (punishments and rewards); a cumulative record of attendance, punctuality, awards/achievements, weekly homework.

Sports notices: individual and cumulative results, team sheets, training details – in corridors

Students' work (always with name and date), organised so that every child has something on display at some point in the year – everywhere!

For parents – copies of whole school letters, events for parents, a calendar; newspaper articles which refer to the school – at the school gates or entrance area.

For teachers and non-teaching staff – daily, weekly, monthly and annual calendar. Issues for and from members of staff, curriculum issues, forthcoming training programmes – in the staff room.

Some of the above could be maintained by teachers, others by students. Remember that some of it will need to be changed frequently, as the impact over time will diminish. Keep the individual items for the boards brief and use a variety of formats. You want people to read them!

2. ESTABLISHING TRUST

No democracy can function properly without the existence of trust. Indeed - the very idea of democracy makes little sense without trust – we would be better to create benevolent dictatorships.

However - trust needs careful cultivation: it needs to be helped to develop, and it needs time and constant attention in order to be deep and genuine. This task, if it is not begun in childhood, is extremely difficult to accomplish. For that reason, we see the encouragement of this very quality in every aspect of school life as one of the most important roles that schools can play in the development of democratic society.

> **Schools need to cultivate an atmosphere of trust, which young people will value, and which they will come to see as the most natural and desirable state of affairs.**

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY TRUST?

Among other things, we mean:

- That people believe in each other
- That people know that they can rely on others
- That they expect, and are directed towards the best in others, and not the worst

And there are two central means by which we can assist with developing this among young people:

1. **By setting an example, and showing that we – adults – deserve their trust.**

2. **By letting young people themselves feel valued and trusted**

SETTING AN EXAMPLE

> ENCOURAGE STAFF TO KEEP IN
>
> MIND THEIR PASTORAL ROLE

You may find it helpful to draw up general guidelines for staff. The following suggestions are also taken from Thomas Lickona's book *Educating for Character*, and could be used as a starting point:

1. Avoid favouritism, sarcasm, embarrassing students, or any other behaviour which undermines a student's dignity and self-esteem.

2. Treat students with respect and love by:

   - *Developing the kind of rapport that leads students to be open to the teacher's positive influence.*
   - *Helping them succeed at the work of the school.*
   - *Being fair.*

- *Responding to wrong or incomplete answers in a way that affirms whatever is good about a student's response and reduces fear of making mistakes.*
- *Valuing the views of students by providing a forum for their thoughts and concerns.*

3. Combine good example and direct moral teaching by:

- *Giving moral issues importance by taking class time to discuss them when they arise.*
- *Offering personal moral commentary that helps students understand why behaviours such as cheating, stealing, bullying, and name-calling are hurtful and wrong.*
- *Teaching students to care deeply about moral values such as honesty and respect by showing the depth of one's own feelings when those values are violated.*
- *Storytelling that teaches good values.*

4. Mentor one-on-one by:

- *Trying to discover, affirm, and develop each child's special talents and strengths.*
- *Complimenting students through written notes; having students keep journals and writing comments in response to their entries in a way to make a personal connection with every student, build self-esteem, and offer advice on dealing with social-moral problems.*
- *Using personal conferences to give students corrective feedback when they need that.*

TRUSTING YOUNG PEOPLE

Pupils need to begin to feel, while they are still at school, that their views *matter* to other people, and that they are valued by others – even when their views do not coincide with those of the majority.

One of the tasks of *education for democracy* is to produce creative and individual thinkers who will fit easily into a world where they are required to take responsibility for their own actions. We can help students to become more independent in their thinking, and to have faith in their own abilities, by giving them additional freedoms and accompanying responsibilities while they are still at school.

Sometimes it may seem simpler to give the responsibilities to a member of staff; and sometimes giving students choices, information or additional freedoms may appear to carry uneccessary risks. As headteacher, you will need to weigh up whether or not the young people in your care are responsible enough to justify your *trust* in them.

Remember, though, that trust is a two-way process: children will not learn to develop trusting relationships if adults do not also make that leap of faith!

TRUST THEM…

TRUST THEM with information
– encourage openness and honesty in all aspects of school life

TRUST THEM to make up their own minds
– on subject options, on controversial political or moral issues

TRUST THEM to use, responsibly, freedoms that they rightfully possess
- such as freedom of expression, the right to criticise, the right to a student council

TRUST THEM to take on responsibilities
- such as tending the plants, or representing their class at the student council, or organising the chairs for assembly

TRUST THEM to understand…
The reasons behind school rules, or the moral code, or why they are being punished in a certain way.

6. PARTENTS

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- *What are the school's legal responsibilities before parents?*
- *What (else) are parents entitled to expect from the school?*
- *What is the school entitled to expect from parents?*
- *How can the school assist parents with meeting these responsibilities?*
- *Are there other ways in which the school and parents can work together for their mutual benefit?*

1. THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Parents entrust their child to the care of the school, and they have a right to know what is being planned for his or her education – in the broadest sense. Why, after all, should they entrust their child to an institution in which they have no faith, or about which they have little knowledge?

As the changes planned by the Reform begin to take root, so too will schools begin, increasingly, to assume their own identities. Some schools may start to offer a broader range of optional courses, while others may offer an education based more on the humanities or on the sciences; some schools may give priority to preparing the child for life at university, while others may be looking forward to life in society; some schools may offer a strict code of discipline, while others may favour a more lenient approach. The combinations will be endless, and parents will increasingly begin to realise that if *this* school cannot offer their child the education they prefer – they may find it elsewhere.

> **As headteachers, you will increasingly need the support of parents in the choices they are making for their school. Parents will increasingly want to be told about these choices**

KEEPING PARENTS INFORMED

…about what is happening in the school

ISSUE A NEWSLETTER

- *Has anything else happened recently which would be of interest to parents?*
- *Is the school offering anything that is not offered by other schools in the region?*
- *Has the school any successes or achievements about which parents should be informed?*
- *Does the school require the assistance or support of parents in some specific way?*
- *Are there any events planned in the near future?*

All of these questions, plus others of general importance, can be effectively addressed through a regular newsletter, which can be sent out to parents and to other members of the community, as well as being displayed around the school.

KEEPING PARENTS INFORMED

…about what is planned in the school

- *What if parents feel that your punishment policy is too strict (or not strict enough)?*
- *What if they are unhappy about the optional courses which are being offered to their child?*
- *What if they feel that the system of assessment is unfair?*
- *What if they feel their children are doing too much homework*

SEND THEM IMPORTANT POLICY

DOCUMENTS BEFOREHAND

➢ **Send parents a copy of the school's mission statement**
➢ **Send them copies of the School Rules**
➢ **Send them an explanation about the changes in evaluation**
➢ **Inform them that you are planning to set up a Students' Council – and tell them why**
➢ **Make sure they know about what homework their child should be doing**
➢ **Make sure they know what punishments their child may suffer for misbehaving**

Although it may seem to involve an unnecessary amount of extra effort, such a flow of information can actually be of assistance in the running of the school. It will assist in the narrow sense that it can help parents to feel more involved in the educational process, and thereby to offer their (passive) support to the school. Such passive support is most important at a time of great change.

But parents can also be of assistance in a more pro-active way. The child, after all, spends some 4 hours out of every 24 under the care of the school, on about 200 days in every 365. The rest of the time – which is by far the greater part - the child is under the care of his or her parents or guardian. A school *needs* parents to reinforce and assist with the education of the child; and it needs the guidance and the values which the child receives at home to accord with those which are being promoted at school.

If the school rules are known at home, then parents can help the school, by reinforcing them. If the rules go against the spirit of what the child is learning at home, then perhaps school or home need to rethink – or at least, to find a means of explaining two contradictory influences in the child's life.

> **There needs to be a continuous dialogue between parents and the school, and such a dialogue cannot take place if the parents are unaware of what the school is doing.**

Example: Letting parents know about homework

HOMEWORK – A STATEMENT OF POLICY FOR PARENTS[2]

What do we do about homework?

Teachers set tasks or activities regularly which need to be done partly or completely out of school time. The success of lessons and the progress of students depends on this.

Homework - supports the work done in class
- encourages independent study
- develops a sense of responsibility for learning
- prepares students for what will be required to complete GCSE courses
- enables staff to monitor progress

The staff maintain that homework should not be set for its own sake but should be relevant to the work done in class and to the individual student's needs. A homework might be:
- to plan and prepare for the next piece of work
- to collect information or materials or perhaps visititing the local library
- to learn work done in class
- to listen/watch a radio/TV programme

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[2] Taken from a British school

- to read a novel, poetry, or a play
- to complete an assignment related to current class work.

Most subjects will normally set homework once a week.

You will find the amount of time required for homework will vary but in all cases the following time limits should apply:

Year Seven – 40 minutes per subject per week
Year Eight – 50 minutes per subject per week
Year Nine   – 60 minutes per subject per week

These times will increase in Years 10 and 11 because of the increased demands of GCSE courses.

- *Tasks have deadlines which are made clear to students.*

- *Teachers check who has met the deadline and make a note of any who do not. If a student fails to do homework without good reason, parents are informed.*

- *Not all homework needs to be assessed. If it does and is given in on time, it is marked promptly and returned to students.*

- *In order that students may organise their homework more effectively each student is given a Homework Diary. All Homework should be recorded. This will be signed regularly by a tutor.Students should ensure that they catch up on all homework missed due to absence.*

The staff will:

- set regular homework
- advise students in the organisation of when and how homework should be done
- mark homework regularly
- check homework diaries regularly
- keep you informed of problems over homework

What you can do to help:

- discuss with your son/daughter at what time homework is to be done each evening
- attempt to provide a suitable quiet area in which they can work
- attempt to provide the necessary materials needed to complete each homework
- if possible look at the work. Encourage them to produce careful, neat and accurate work
- check the homework diary each week and sign it
- keep in contact with us. Always feel free to comment in the Homework Diary, to come andsee us. Ring, if there is anthing which you need to know, or if you would like to make an appointment.

KEEPING PARENTS INFORMED

…about their child's progress

Parents will care about more than just the general direction of the school that their child is attending. And they will care about more than the general progress of children in the same class or peer group. Parents are entitled to know, after all, whether the school is right for *their* child. If it is not, they may decide that the child would be happier at another school.

- *Is the child coping with the academic and social aspects of school life?*
- *Is the child coping with some areas, but not with others*
- *Is the child happy with the teachers he or she has been allocated?*
- *Do these teachers appear to* understand *the child as an individual, and can they relate to him or her as a person?*
- *Are the teachers aware of this particular child's strengths and weaknesses?*

ALTER THE FORM OF

PARENTS' MEETINGS

Typical parents' meetings do not always address these type of questions, since they provide little opportunity for parents to meet individually with their child's teachers, and little opportunity for parents to put specific questions or concerns that they may have.

A less formal structure for parents' meetings can give more opportunity for the type of *two-way dialogue* that we have mentioned already. A meeting can be helpful and informative not only for the parents, but also for teachers. You could consider some of the following suggestions:

- Cutting down on general speeches or comments about the whole class/whole year, and giving more time for discussion of individual pupils;

- Encouraging parents to ask the questions which interest them, rather than simply sitting back and listening;

- Asking other teachers besides the form teacher to attend parents' meetings, so that parents have an opportunity to talk individually to some of the teachers who work with their child;

- Organising more frequent informal meetings for smaller groups of parents, so that there is more possibility for discussion on an individual basis (you might want to give parents a 5 or 10 minute slot to make sure that they all have a chance to raise the questions which are concerning them – and to allow for confidential issues to be discussed, if necessary)

- Inviting children to attend the meetings with their parents! This is increasingly common practice in many schools, and can be an effective way of encouraging the child to take responsibility for his or her successes and difficulties (such meetings are best arranged by giving each 'family' group a time slot, and seeing them individually).

And / Or…

In addition to such meetings – or instead of, if it proves to be to difficult to do both at once – you could provide parents with individualised information about their child in *written* form.

> PROVIDE PROGRESS
> REPORTS FOR PARENTS

A possible form for these reports is given below.

ENLISTING THEIR SUPPORT

Parents may themselves be able to help the school in a wide variety of ways – and not only financial – and you may find that you turn to them throughout the year with particular requests for support. However, it can also be useful for the school to have a general understanding with parents of the different areas of their responsibilities. For this reason a number of schools are turning to the option of a **Home-School Agreement** – and in the UK, such an agreement is now a legal requirement.

You can find a basis for one such agreement on the next page.

> *The empty boxes could form the basis of a consultation process with members of your staff*

It is, however, important to remember that such an agreement will not of itself ensure better relations between school and staff. The school will need to show parents that it is serious in the commitments it is making to them – for example by keeping them better informed and by allowing for the individual nature of every child in the school. Only gradually will this lead to the establishment of a more co-operative and trusting relationship between the two sides.

A CONTRACT BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

	School	**Parent/Guardian**	**Pupil**
Work	To provide work of a suitable standard so that each student can engage with the work and be challenged by it	?	To complete all work set to the best of my ability
Homework	?	To encourage my child to complete his/her work and to provide, to the best of my ability, suitable conditions for this.	To complete all homework to the best of my ability
Marking	?	To place attention to comments made about my child's work and behaviour.	To take note of all comments about my behaviour and learn from them.
Discipline	?	To encourage my child to treat all members of the school community with respect and courtesy.	To treat all members of the school community with respect and courtesy.
Attendance	To inform parents of every absence.	To take all written and verbal comments about my child's conduct and progress seriously, to talk to staff about my concerns and to attend parents' evenings regularly.	To attend school regularly.
Information	To give detailed information to parents about their child's progress. To listen to parents and to take their concerns seriously.		
Complaints		To discuss with school staff any concerns/complaints I may have and to expect them to be listened to seriously and acted upon if necessary.	To discuss any concerns I may have with a member of staff.

7. SCHOOL COUNCILS

1. WHAT IS A SCHOOL COUNCIL?

In the following notes, a School Council will be used to mean a democratically elected body of students, whose role it is to reflect the interests of students.

In order to carry out this role effectively, a School Council needs to be given a semi-official status within the school, and its authority must be acknowledged and respected by members of staff. It will require a 'link' member of staff, but other than that, a school council, in our understanding, is made up *solely* from students.

WHY HAVE A SCHOOL COUNCIL?

A school council is intended to give students a voice in the school issues that directly affect them, and, as we have noted more than once, there are strong ethical arguments in favour of doing this. Quite apart from such moral considerations, however, there are a number of other benefits which often follow from giving students an official forum, such as a school council, to voice their interests, needs or concerns.

1. Pupil-centred benefits: promoting educational or personal development of pupils

♦ **councils promote citizenship learning, political efficacy, democratic attitudes**
♦ **councils promote social-confidence and personal values**
♦ **students are empowered to challenge authority**
♦ **students learn how to make decisions in a fair and accountable way**
♦ **students learn about the realities of life, e.g. how to work within limited budgets or against unresponsive authorities**

2. Managerial/pragmatic benefits

♦ **democratic management styles work better than autocratic ones: they are more effective**
♦ **councils encourage co-operation and not rebellion, they harness energy, they reduce alienation**
♦ **councils improve the atmosphere of the school, teachers are trusted more, rules are shown to be more fairly based**
♦ **however poorly they work, a school council practically demonstrates to students the good faith of the staff and commitment to certain values**

- councils can provide the basis for a staff/student consensus against the anti-social minority who would undermine the quality of community life, for example, through vandalism
- students will accept rules more readily if they think they have helped to decide them
- students are not always aware of the huge amount of work done on their behalf by staff, so better communication can build trust and allay cynicism that 'nothing gets done' about persistent problems
- student councils can improve student motivation generally and better exam results tend to follow improved attitudes

3. Normative reasons for establishing a school council: (ethical/principled/legal)

- students have rights to be heard
- students have rights to a humane and safe environment and councils can address these issues
- councils can promote justice by tackling important issues where student rights are infringed, e.g. bullying, or abuse of teacher power
- People have a duty to care for one another: students should learn how to serve others.
- teachers are accountable to a number of client groups, including students
- in important ways, students are citizens and not subjects
- the Children Act and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child give children the right to be heard on matters which affect them. Schools should not appear to undermine those rights

HOW DO SCHOOL COUNCILS WORK?

There are almost as many different models for a school council as there are schools, and there is no blueprint that will be right for all schools. Nonetheless, the starting conditions for Councils in different schools are often very similar, and we have provided one possible starting model in the next section, and also a list of some of the things which may vary from school to school - such as the number of people involved, the frequency of meetings, and the extent of staff involvement. You may find you want to change some of the suggestions we have made, and construct your own model.

It is important to remember that none of the rules will be fixed in stone: any of them may be subject to change by the student council itself, if members find them unsatisfactory. However, we recommend that you try working to *one* set of rules for at least the first year, because it will take time for the school council to become established, and any new structure needs to be given the chance to settle down.

Some Important Points

Almost inevitably, wherever there is a school council, there will be concern about the way in which it operates; and we list, in Section 4, some of the problems most frequently encountered.

Here are just a few things you might want to bear in mind if you are in the process of starting up a school council.

♦ The link member of staff can make or break the council. You need to choose someone who is accepted and trusted by the student body as a whole, and in particular, by members of the Council. You may want the head teacher to take this role, or you may want to appoint a different member of staff who is respected by students. The important thing is that students should not be *afraid* of the member of staff. Remember - this is their council, and they must feel that they can raise any point at meetings, and voice any opinion concerning it.

♦ The member of staff should not be an inhibiting influence, nor should he try to control the Council. Students need to have trust in their council, and the teacher's role is to *facilitate* the meetings, not to take them over.

♦ It is just as important that the link member of staff has the confidence of other teachers in the school, and in particular - of the headteacher. If the staff do not appear to take the Council seriously, the students will feel that the exercise is a pretence, and a waste of time. The link member of staff needs to take back the issues raised by students to the rest of the staff.

♦ Establishing the Agenda is important. Sometimes this may be done on the basis of suggestions from students, sometimes from members of staff, and sometimes on a combination of the two. The students should not feel that teachers are *deciding* the Agenda for them, but you may have to give them some guidance, at least to start with, in choosing relevant topics for discussion. We have included a list of some of the issues which are frequently raised by British students (Section 5).

♦ Student members who wish to raise a point on behalf of their peers should inform the Secretary, so that he can put it onto the Agenda. Students should come to the meeting prepared to talk (concisely) about an issue.

- If you want your Council to work, there will have to be time made available for students to meet with their representatives at least once a fortnight (between meetings), or maybe once a week. Classes need to be given the opportunity to discuss issues which they would like their representatives to raise at a meeting of the Council, and they also need to be briefed on the points which were raised at the last meeting.

- Do not be afraid to discuss any difficulties with the Council itself. Nearly every school council experiences difficulties in its initial stages, and it may take some time for the right system to develop. Students and members of staff need to work out a system which both find satisfactory, and there will almost certainly be teething problems.

At times, it will seem to students that the Council is not taken seriously by staff, and that it has no real power to implement change. At other times, staff will object to the issues that students think they have a right to discuss, and the solutions or proposals which they come up with.

This is all part of an important learning process. It is inevitable that giving students more responsibility will create some new problems which did not exist before. But if it can be made to work properly, the school council should provide educational benefits not only for students, but for members of staff as well.

2. A STARTING MODEL

CONSTITUTION:

1. Composition
1.1 The Council will be made up from 2 representatives from each class in the school; and one member of staff, who will act as Chairperson.

1.2 From its members, the Council will elect a Secretary of the Council to serve for one term.

2. Councillors
2.1 Each class will elect 2 councillors - one girl and one boy - to serve on the Council for one year.

2.2 Elections will take place once a year, half way through the autumn term.

2.3 Voting will take place by secret ballot, and students will be *solely* responsible for electing their representatives.

2.4 Members of staff have neither a vote, nor the power to veto the students' choices.

3. Meetings:

3.1 Meetings should be held at a regular time and place, at least once a fortnight.

3.2 Meetings should be attended by all school councillors. Councillors should notify the Secretary in advance of the meeting if they are unable to attend.

3.3 Meetings will be chaired by the staff-member of the Council.

3.4 Members of the Council wishing to speak during a meeting should first attract the attention of the Chair, and should speak only when called upon by the Chair.

3.5 Members of the Council must accept the word of the Chair as final

3.6 Issues raised at the meeting will follow an Agenda, with which Councillors must be acquainted before the meeting begins.

3.7 All decisions taken by the Council will be minuted by the Secretary of the Council, and the minutes will be displayed in an agreed public place before the next meeting takes place.

4. Voting

4.1 Any individual member of the Council is entitled to propose a *motion*, which the Council may vote on in the case of a second member of the Council seconding the motion.

4.2 Each member of the Council, including the Secretary and the Chair, is entitled to vote *Yes* or *No*, or to abstain from voting

4.3 Voting may be by a show of hands or by secret ballot.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Members will respect the rules and conventions of the Council, and will work to ensure that other members do so.

5.2 Members will report back to their class after every meeting

5.3 Members are responsible for raising points to the Council on their class's behalf.

5.4 The Secretary of the Council will keep a record of school Council meetings, and will ensure that these records are accessible to all members of the school.

5.5 The Secretary is responsible for drawing up an Agenda prior to every meeting, and for making it known to Councillors before the meeting begins.

5.6 The staff member (Chairperson) is responsible for ensuring that meetings follow the Agenda which has been drawn up, and that all points on the Agenda are covered.

5.5   The Chairperson is responsible for ensuring that discussion at meetings is fair and orderly, and that all members have the opportunity to express their opinion.

3. VARIABLES

The following are some of the things which may differ from one council to another:

- Number of members - how many representatives from each year
- Is every class represented
- How members are elected
- Is there a staff member of the council
- Are there elections
- How do elections take place: are there hustings; Is voting by secret ballot
- For how long are members elected to serve
- Who makes the agenda: staff, pupils, pupil members?
- Can staff veto items on the agenda?
- Who chairs the meetings
- Is there feedback from members of the Council, to and from other students
- Is there feedback to and from other members of staff
- How many members of staff attend
- In what capacity do they attend - as observers, as members
- Do they attend regularly
- Is the headteacher involved
- Does the Council have a budget
- Is it entitled to raise its own money
- Can it choose how to spend this money
- Does the council meet regularly
- How often does it meet (once a term, once a week etc)
- Do decisions made by the council carry any official weight
- Are they passed on to the staff room
- Are the minutes of meetings published
- Is time made available in the curriculum for students to discuss Council matters
- Are students free to challenge school rules
- Are they free to criticise members of staff

4. PROBLEMS

We list some of the problems which are frequently encountered with school councils. It will be as well to be aware of these difficulties before you start your own council - you may even have your own ideas for preventing them from arising in your own school:

- student disillusionment and frustration at the low level of discussion (the most frequently debated issue across schools is the toilets); one of the students put it that 'the staff only take us seriously when we're talking about trivial issues'

- the low status of the school council both in the eyes of many staff and the bulk of the student body

- the danger that students who regularly sit on the council are not seen as representative of the majority of students but more like some kind of elite

- poor feedback from the council to forms

- heads often appear to listen but then 'nothing happens'

- poor communication between councillors themselves, who often seem to feel isolated from each other and from the rest of the student body

- irregularity of meetings

- 'link' staff too busy to call meetings

- fairly often, the wrong kind of student gets elected and stops attending or does not fulfil his or her responsibilities well

- the 'cyclical' nature of councils is frequently referred to: eg. in some years they work well, but in others they do not. Each new year brings new students into the council and by the time they learn how things work, they are replaced or leave the school. This partly explains why the same issues crop up year after year

5. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

You may need to give students some guidance in choosing topics to be put on the Agenda. As a pointer, you could simply ask them to think about ways in which the school could be improved: you will find that they come up with many ideas which would not occur to members of staff! Give them support, guide them, be sympathetic towards their needs - and try to find ways of getting *them* to take the initiative. The school council is as much about teaching young people responsibility and organisational skills as it is about finding actual solutions to real problems.

Here are some of the issues which often come up at meetings in British schools:

- the constitution of the school council
- school uniform
- better facilities for students, including:

- condition of and access to toilets
- social areas for students
- lockers for students
- messy cloakrooms
- fair use of play areas
- play equipment
- shelter in bad weather, access to buildings
- bicycle racks
- school trips
- new kit for school sports teams
- food related issues, including:
  - menu
  - quality and price
  - disliked metal cups
  - tuck shop
- behavioural issues, including:
  - general codes of conduct
  - charter of rights and responsibilities
  - school punishment system
  - staff behaviour
  - racist and sexist behaviour in the school
  - behaviour in the dinner queue
  - bullying and violent behaviour
  - mediation and conflict resolution
  - violent games in the playground
  - vandalism and smoking, especially in toilets
  - litter around the school
- quality and reliability of school buses
- charity and fund-raising events
- school and local environment
- school magazine
- timing of school day
- organisation of fire drills
- school clubs
- curriculum issues
- scheduling of homework and project work
- school development plan

8. SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY

No translation available

APPENDICES

Containing documents/ templates from British schools. All names have been changed

APPENDIX 1: SCHOOL POLICIES

BEHAVIOUR POLICY

Staff Strategies for Encouraging Acceptable Behaviour

1. Prevention is better than cure: well prepared lessons, properly resourced and differentiated with tasks that are challenging but achievable, clearly explained and taught in an interesting way will avoid most unacceptable pupil behaviour.

2. Be positive about a pupil's work and behaviour. Catch them in the act of doing what is good and right and build upon that. Regular diagnostic feedback on general behaviour and academic progress in subjects will encourage all pupils.

3. Value, celebrate and show interest in what your pupils do.

4. Have clear, consistent Behaviour Management Strategies regarding lesson delivery and appropriate pupil grouping.

5. Use a range of formal/informal methods of giving praise and rewards that recognise a range of types of achievement.

6. Display and publish different types of achievement within the school (e.g.: Praise Board).

7. Have strategies for identifying and resolving pupils' learning and emotional or behavioural difficulties.

8. Support for staff through Departmental, Year Team and Line Management Structures and opportunities for in-service training.

9. Be punctual to your lesson: if possible get there ahead of the class.

10. In your dealings with pupils be firm, fair, polite and absolutely clear about your high expectations of pupil work and behaviour.

11. Avoid getting into arguments or being sidetracked.

12. Stay calm and do not allow a pupil or pupils to 'wind you up'.

13. Show regard and respect to pupils and almost all of them will happily show you the same.

14. Avoid sarcasm, nicknames, put-down comments, and comments of a personal nature. Likewise, refuse to tolerate them in your class.

Staff Strategies for Minimising Unacceptable Behaviour

15. Use all the strategies for encouraging acceptable behaviour.

16. Warnings and sanctions should be used when likely to be effective.

17. Take every opportunity for praising and giving attention to those who are behaving well.

18. If you punish, be absolutely certain that you are punishing the right person(s) and keep the sanction relevant to the offence, e.g. a litter duty is appropriate for someone who has made a mess or wasted school time but would be inappropriate for someone who has not done homework.

19. Make sure that a pupil is fully aware of the reason for being punished, seek ways of having the pupil right any wrong that they have done; have a wrongdoer make amends if at all possible.

20. Avoid humiliating punishment or punishment which appears designed to irritate, embarrass, demean, or waste time.

Consequences of Unacceptable Behaviour

21. Verbal reprimand.

22. Seating position in class changed, temporarily or permanently.

23. Making up lost lesson time (e.g. 10 minutes recall at the end of the day and/or at Break – not assigned lunch break).

24. Placement with another teacher for the lesson and/or period of time.

25. Pupils may be removed by 'on call' staff and placed in ISR for the remainder of that lesson. Work to be provided by the subject teacher. (see procedure for 'on call' system)

26. Referral form, completed by relevant member of staff and passed to Key Stage Co-ordinator.

27. Parents or Guardians informed of unacceptable behaviour by Subject Teacher, Head of Department, Head of Year or Key Stage Co-ordinator.

28. Placed 'On Report' for persistent unacceptable behaviour or other difficulties. The pupil may also place him/herself on Report e.g. to focus on targets to improve.

29. 10 minute recall – This is NOT a detention, but a recall to <u>discuss</u> behaviour. During the discussion decisions will be taken as to whether further action needs to be taken.

30. Detentions after school (24 hours notice given)

31. **Stage 1**   Subject Teacher or Tutor Detention

   Stage 2   Department or Head of Year Detention
   (Parents notified by Letter)

   Stage 3   Central Detention System
   (Notice given to parents by letter home from Year Head / Head of Department / Senior Management Team)

   Stage 4   Failure to attend the same Central Detention twice results in half a day in ISR followed immediately by Central Detention. Parents are notified by Head of Year.

32. NB – Detentions are not cumulative.

33. Withdrawn from class and placed in the Internal Support Room, with relevant work provided for those lessons. Key Stage Co-ordinator makes the decision to withdraw.

34. In extreme circumstances an Exclusion from School will be considered by the Headteacher.

ASSESSMENT AND MARKING POLICY

1 Introduction

1.1 This policy aims to set out the rationale and procedures for the assessment and marking of pupils' work at Burn Hill school.

2 Purposes of assessment and marking

2.1 Assessment and marking are integral to teaching and learning and serve a variety of purposes:
- to positively motivate through praise;

- to diagnose weaknesses so that they can be improved through target-setting;
- to keep a record of progress made by a pupil;
- to inform decision-making (e.g. in relation to grouping, behaviour-modification, etc.);
- to provide a basis for reporting to pupil and parents;
- to inform the teacher and others on the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

2.2 These purposes should be borne in mind when carrying out the process of assessment and marking.

3. Forms of assessment and marking

3.1 Assessment and marking can be through (1) oral feedback or (2) the written word.
> 3.1.1 In the teaching space teachers discuss with pupils, ask, and answer questions, and observe, challenge, help and guide their work.
> 3.1.2 In addition, teachers mark and review written and practical work.

3.2 All work should be monitored in some way or other. Marking can be (1) cursory or (2) in depth.
> 3.2.1 It is not realistic to expect that all work should be marked in depth. Sometimes work should be 'policed', i.e. cursorily or selectively marked; sometimes work can be pupil-marked.
> 3.2.2 Some work should be marked in-depth. This should include not only marking according to subject criteria, but also wherever practicable corrections of basic literacy and subject-specific spelling.

4 School marking scheme for reporting back to pupils.

4.1 It is essential for staff to be consistent in their reporting back to pupils, otherwise pupils will become very confused. The school marking scheme is shown in the Appendix.
4.2 Aim to make any written comments responsive, evaluative and target-setting.
4.3 National Curriculum Levels should be used sparingly and cautiously when reporting back to a pupil, except at the end of Key Stage 3. National Curriculum levels should be recorded in the teacher's or departmental records.
4.4 Merits and other forms of positive reinforcement should be used as much as possible to encourage and reward effort, presentation, attainment and other qualities.

5 Departmental schemes of work

5.1 These should indicate major assessment opportunities to ensure planned coverage over key stages and the selection of a manageable number of assessment criteria for each task.

BULLYING POLICY

Everyone has the right to come to school, participate in any activity and attend classes, without being hindered by the behaviour of any other person or group.

BULLYING IS NOT TOLERATED AT THIS SCHOOL

Bullying is anything that intends to hurt or belittle someone: that makes them feel ashamed, unhappy, or afraid.

This means:
- any physical violence, e.g. kicking or punching; name calling;
- threats to hurt someone or damage their property
- ignoring or not talking to someone;
- laughing at, or ridiculing someone.

If you are part of a group that makes anybody feel ashamed, unhappy or afraid, you are involved in bullying.

EXCUSES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED:

"I was there but didn't do anything"

If you did not try to stop it or get help, you are partly responsible and therefore involved.

"We were only messing about"

Was everybody laughing? Did everyone find it funny? Did you stay and help the person who was upset? If not, it's bullying!

Everyone at this school has a duty to assist in every way they can to stop bullying. This means speaking up for someone who needs support. By not telling you are helping the bully and the bullying will continue. The person you speak to could be any member of staff, a classroom assistant, one of the office staff, a dinner supervisor, a caretaker or an older student.

YOU WILL BE LISTENED TO AND TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

Some KEY POINTS in the event of any bullying taking place:

- **Parents of the bullies are always informed and if necessary interviewed.** It is important that parents of the bully are informed sothey are prepared for more serious action from the school if it continues. Parents are expected to help in controlling the situation.

- **Whenever possible the bullies will be interviewed separately.** At a later stage they will have to explain their behaviour to their victim and possibly the victim's parents.

- **The victim will be helped to recognise and avoid threatening situations.** The victim needs help in understanding that it was not their fault and that it need not happen again.

- **The police will be informed where necessary.** Interviews, with parental consent, can be arranged either with the local beat officer or through the Community Liaison Bureau.

- **The bully misses out on education, not the victim.** If the presence of a bully, or a group of bullies, is preventing someone gaining an education, it is the bully who is excluded from school.

Respect for each other is achieved through

Consideration
Personal responsibility
Co-operation
(See Code of Conduct)

- These are reinforced throughout the curriculum, but especially in the **Tutorial Programme.** The Tutorial Programme also contains units of work on "Friendship" and "Bullying".

- The main points of this Bullying Policy are constantly repeated and reinforced in assemblies.

- Good examples of considerate behaviour and working together are displayed by the staff. This happens not only in their dealings with each other, but also in their dealings with students.

BULLYING – TEACHERS' GUIDE

Remember point 6 of the Teachers' promise in the Student Handbook to:

"….treat all students politely, fairly and with dignity, to ensure that no student is discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion ,age, gender, creed, personal or cultural background and disability and to act to ensure that students are not harassed or bullied."

What Can You Do About It?

1. **Be Vigilant** – All teachers are urged to be vigilant and sensitive so that they can spot bullying when it occurs.

2. **Be Sensitive** – Do not be dismissive of complaints about bullying. Even if you can't deal with it there and then, fix a time to see the student again when you will have time to listen.

3. **Be Polite** – Take care that you do not use language that may reinforce the bullies' effects. Nicknames for example which seem innocuous may actually be being used by

bullies to undermine a victim. When repeated innocently by a teacher the effect may be shattering. Good humoured joshing in class may also cause problems for victim if it results in him/her being singled out in any way.

4. **Be Firm and Consistent** – Bullies thrive on weak discipline and teachers' indecision and inconsistency. Always deal with abusive language firmly. Always expect the same standards in your classroom. Adhere to the stated rules about behaviour and procedures in College so that students do not play you off against other staff. Treat all complaints which are brought to you seriously. Support action which you know is being taken elsewhere against bullies and disruptive students. Don't allow yourself to be used by students who seek favour with you in order to play you off against other staff. We know some students behave better in some other classes than others and get on with some teachers better than others, but this does sometimes lead to staff appearing to contradict other colleagues or failing to support sanctions imposed by them.

5. **Record All Incidents** – Record complaints and example of misbehaviour however trivial. They may be the tip of the iceberg.

6. **Report** – Report all complaints to the Year Co-ordinator. Report all incidents likewise which indicate cause for concern. Ensure that all staff involved with the students concerned are aware of the situation.

7. **Investigate** – It is the role of the Pastoral Staff to investigate allegations and decide action. Investigating teachers will interview the complainant, witnesses and the alleged bullies separately in the first instance and record what is said.
When alleged bullies are confronted with allegation for the first time they should be asked to comment on the allegation NOT accused. Only where there is corroborating evidence can an alleged bully be directly accused. If he/she still refuses to admit guilt parents should be informed of the accusation, that the College is satisfied that the evidence is sufficient and the nature of the punishment.

8. **Involve The Parents** – The parents should be invited for interview and the child told in front of parents that the actions are to stop and what sanctions will follow if there is a re-occurrence . Bullies must be warned that retaliation will result in even more serious punishment.

9. **Reinforce the Message** - The anti-bullying message must be constantly reinforced through PHSE, assemblies and through the intervention of teachers into tense situations wherever or whenever they occur. Drama and role-playing can be used to explore issues of bullying.

There are four main courses of action:
1. Detention for single proven incidents.
2. Daily report for all suspected or persistent bullies.
3. Segregation of bully and victim or of members of bullying gangs in order to reduce tension and stress.
4. Proven cases of bullying should be met with a period of suspension in order to clear the air and free other victims to come forward.

POLICY ON RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This school is, first and foremost, a place of work. Everybody at the school has a job to do and it is their right to get on with it without being hindered in any way by other people. Students are expected to take responsibility for their education and work as hard as they can.

It is the responsibility of teachers and associate staff to help them achieve the highest possible standards.

We believe that learning is a lifelong process and governors, parents and officers of the Local Education Authority are partners in this process. All the adults at the school understand that they provide constant models of work and beahviour for young people growing up.

Guiding Principles

In order to protect the rights of every member of the school, we all have the responsibility to be:

- **Considerate**: we must respect each other as individuals, accepting our differences and making sure our words and actions do not cause offence or inconvenience to anyone
- **Courteous**: we must be polite and helpful at all times
- **Co-operative:** we must be willing to work together as part of a community
- **Friendly**: we must be on good terms with each other
- **Honest**: we must be truthful
- **Trusting:** we must understand that others genuinely want to help

These principles guide the work of every member of the school, and it is our aim to develop them as fully as possible in each one of us.

The Principles in Action

In lessons:
It is the responsibility of students to-

- arrive punctually
- have the necessary materials (pen, pencil, ruler, etc)
- get on with their work to the best of their ability
- complete all homework assignments
- be prepared to work with anyone else in the group
- ask for help when necessary
- be prepared to wait their turn
- accept advice and guidance from the staff
- carry out requests from the staff
- clear up at the end

It is the responsibility of staff to-

- arrive punctually
- explain the detail of the courses so that students understand what is expected
- prepare appropriate work for all the students in the group
- maintain an orderly working atmosphere in the classroom
- provide opportunities for students to be actively involved in their learning
- recognise and encourage achievement and success
- regularly set homework
- regularly mark and assess students' work
- take appropriate action when students do not work or complete assignments
- communicate success, progress and concerns to parents

In general:

It is the responsibility of us all to-

- **Speak Considerately** – we avoid raising our voices, swearing and offensive language
- **Move in an Orderly Way** – we avoid running or pushing and hold doors open for each other
- **Respect the Environment** – we take care of the grass, trees, hedges, buildings and furniture.

The Bottom Line:

BECAUSE THESE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ARE CENTRAL TO EVERYTHING WE DO, THIS SCHOOL IS A HAPPY, SAFE AND PURPOSEFUL PLACE.

However, certain things are absolutely forbidden, not least because they are against the law:

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE
THEFT
DAMAGE TO PROPERTY
THREATENING BEHAVIOUR
TRUANCY
RACIST BEHAVIOUR
DRINKING ALCOHOL UNDER AGE
SEXIST BEHAVIOUR
USING TOBACCO AND OTHER DRUGS
LEAVING LITTER

This statement of Rights and Responsibilities has been produced after full consultation with students, staff, parents and governors. It is displayed throughout the school.

We expect everybody at the school to accept it in principle and practice.

APPENDIX 2:
JOB DESCRIPTIONS

THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Functions of the SMT:

- To give leadership to the school
- To carry out a range of whole school tasks
- To advise the Headteacher in decision-making
- To be a link between the governors/Headteacher and the rest of the staff
- To carry out a reactive role in dealing with serious school situations and complaints
- To make sure that the school functions smoothly, efficiently and effectively
- To monitor the work, carried out by both staff and students, of the school
- To represent the school in the community.

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Responsible to – The Headteacher
Function – Subject teacher and Head of Department

Management Duties

1. Philosophy

1.1   Formulating a departmental philosophy and promoting it within the context of the school;

2. Curriculum

2.1   Compiling an appropriate curriculum for the subject(s) in the department, including:
        writing and developing syllabuses and schemes of work, in the format required by the Headteacher and taking account of:

- the National Curriculum
- public examinations
- cross-curricular links
- the needs, experience, interests, aptitudes and stage of development of the pupils
- the resources available to the department;

2.2   Formulating and implementing a learning support policy for the department within a whole school policy and in conjunction with the learning support department;

2.3   Keeping up-to-date with educational trends and developments as they relate to the work of the department;

2.4   Devising, designing, and administering in the context of overall school policy an assessment and reporting system of pupils' achievements and progress, including:

- Internal assessment
- Reports to parents
- National Curriculum assessment
- External examinations

3. Staffing

3.1   Advising the headteacher on the staffing needs of the department;

3.2   Advising the headteacher in the selection and appointment of teaching staff in the department;

3.3   Ensuring that new members of the department are familiar with its ethos, aims and organisation;

3.4   Supporting and monitoring the members of the department, including advising the headteacher in the event of any action under the governors' disciplinary or support procedures;

3.5   Allocating duties to the members of the department as appropriate;

3.6   Providing advice and opportunities where possible to facilitate the professional development of the members of the department and the staff as a whole;

3.7   Acting as mentor to student teachers allocated to the department;

3.8   Advising the timetabler on the allocation of suitable teaching groups to the members of the department;

3.9   Making sure that the pupils have suitable work, for example in the event of the absence of their normal teacher; supervising any support staff attached to the department;

3.10   Supervising any support staff attached to the department;

4. Grouping

4.1   Placing the pupils in appropriate teaching groups according to the school's grouping policy;

5. Resources

5.1   Informing the headteacher of the resource requirements of the department;

5.2   Researching, choosing and ordering where appropriate items of equipment, materials, furniture;

5.3   Allocating resources as appropriate;

5.4   Organising storage and retrieval including the keeping of records;

5.5   Arranging maintenance and replacement;

5.6   Efficiently using the departmental budget;

6. Premises

6.1   Informing the headteacher of the premises requirements of the department;

6.2   Endeavouring to ensure that for school activities the premises are used appropriately;

6.3 Reporting the maintenance needs of the premises;
6.4 Maintaining departmental noticeboards and displaying suitable work in the departmental premises and if appropriate around the school;

7. Liaison

7.1 Maintaining where possible effective communication and liaison including:
between:

- the members of the department
- the members of the department and the senior management team;

with:
- pyramid schools and places of post-16 education
- other heads of department
- pastoral staff
- support staff
- other schools
- parents
- governors;

7.2 Organising regular departmental meetings;
7.3 Making arrangements for representation of the department at meetings both inside and outside the school;

8. Discipline

8.1 Supporting departmental staff in the maintenance of good classroom discipline within the discipline policy of the school;
8.2 Communicating with others on discipline matters according to the school referral system;

9. Health and Safety

Devising, communicating and implementing a health and safety policy for the department.

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRES

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

This questionnaire is in three parts. Part 1 is concerned with whole school issues. Part 2 is concerned with departmental or faculty issues. Part 3 is confined to subject issues.

Please choose between one of the following four categories for your answer to each question :

> *'Good' (G)- means well above standard.*
> *'Satisfactory' (S) - means up to standard.*
> *'Poor' (P) means less than satisfactory*
> *'Don't know' (D) - if a question does not apply to you.*

Part 1. Whole School Issues

Curriculum

1. The extent to which the school has a coherent policy for assessing pupils' progress.
    (G/S/P/D)
2. The accuracy and usefulness of pupils' records.   (G/S/P/D)
3. The extent to which the school promotes pupils' understanding of the multi-racial society in which we live.   (G/S/P/D)
4. The provision of an effective programme of personal and civic education.
    (G/S/P/D)
5. The provision of extra-curricular activities.
    (G/S/P/D)
6. The arrangements made to ensure that pupils do their homework.
    (G/S/P/D)
    (etc)

Management

7. The extent to which there is a common purpose in the school.
8. The effectiveness of communication between the senior management team and the staff.
9. The smoothness of the routine administration in the school.
10. The way in which senior management delegates responsibilities.
11. The opportunities for professional development.
12. The use that is made of the accommodation.
13. The appearance of the school.
14. The accessibility of major resources such as the library.

Pupils

15. The extent to which pupils have equal opportunities to benefit from what the school has to offer.
16. Pupils' attitudes to learning.
17. The way the school groups pupils for the purposes of learning. (e.g. mixed ability, setting, streaming).
18. The measures taken to identify pupils' special educational needs.
19. The extent to which pupils' special educational needs are met.
20. The effectiveness with which the school provides pastoral care.
21. The extent to which pupils respect other people and their property.
22. The extent to which pupils have developed notions of right and wrong.
23. The behaviour of the pupils in the school.
24. The standard of pupils' appearance.
25. The provision for careers education.
26. The extent to which the school formally recognises and values pupils' achievements.
27. The opportunities that pupils have to take responsibility and show initiative.
28. Pupils' punctuality in arriving at school and for lessons.

School and community

29. The extent to which there is a sense of community and feeling of belonging in the school.
30. The effectiveness of communication with parents and others outside the school.
31. The extent to which parents are involved as partners in the education of their children.
32. The usefulness of the school's links with industry, commerce and other organisations.

Please specify below other whole school issues:

PART 2. FACULTY/DEPARTMENTAL ISSUES

If your school regards the faculty as the important working unit, your responses should be made on that basis. If the department is the basic working unit, please answer accordingly.
If you belong to more than one faculty/department, please complete a questionnaire for each.

FACULTY or DEPARTMENT _____

33. The extent to which the faculty's or department's aims are consistent with those of the school as a whole.
34. The passing of information between the head of the faculty/department and staff.
35. The extent to which the faculty/department works as a team.
36. The delegation of responsibilities on the department/faculty.

Specify any other issues relating to the faculty/department:

PART 3. SUBJECT ISSUES

Please use a separate sheet for each subject you teach for more than three periods a week. In the space below put the subject (e.g. physics, history) rather than an individual course. In some departments the distinction may not be obvious, in which case please agree with your head of department or faculty which terms you will use.

SUBJECT _____

37. Standards of achievement in this subject.
38. The extent to which the National Curriculum is covered.
39. The extent to which the teaching methods are sufficiently differentiated.
40. The way the pupils respond to the teaching methods used.
41. Pupils' ability to work purposefully together in groups.
42. The adequacy of resources.
43. The extent to which curriculum planning provides continuity and progression.

Specify other issues relating to the teaching or learning of this subject: