

# Developing the Pupil Voice in School

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# Background



In 2016 sparqs in conjunction with the Higher Education Academy delivered a series of *Learner Transition* events aimed at bringing together learners and staff from different educational institutions (schools, colleges, universities) to encourage a dialogue around:

- learner expectations of the curriculum
- the delivery of programmes of study
- potential barriers to successful progression



# Background

Subject specific events held:

- Health Sciences
- Social Sciences
- Creative Industries
- Engineering

Events held in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen



# Delivery of the Project



The events were delivered by working in close partnership with institutional partners including agencies responsible for widening access and articulation as well as teaching staff from schools, colleges and universities.



# Delivery of the Project

- University of Glasgow
- University of Edinburgh
- Edinburgh Napier University
- University of Abertay
- University of Dundee
- The Robert Gordon University
- Dundee and Angus College
- North East Scotland College
- Scottish Wider Access Programme
- ELRAH
- LIFT OFF
- Aberdeenshire Council
- Queensferry High School
- Braeview Academy
- Broughton High School
- Drummond Community High School
- St Kentigan's Academy
- The Royal High School
- Whitehall Secondary School
- Denny High School
- St Augustine's
- Holy Rood High School

# Developing the Pupil Voice in Schools



During one of the learner transition events a dialogue was started between sparqs and the depute head teacher from Braeview Academy in Dundee, Mrs L Cathro.

The school expressed a real appetite from within to develop their existing pupil council into an autonomous body with real decision making powers.



# Braeview Academy



sparqs' expertise in student engagement has been tested and refined in Scottish Further & Higher Education, and through our consultancy work in international projects.

*Bringing through the voice of the learner in their education is at the heart of what we do.*

It was agreed that we would work with the school around these issues.



# Initial Project Aims



After consultation with the school it was agreed that the initial project aims were to:

- Increase the numbers of the students on the council
- Develop and integrate their representative structure into the curriculum
- Create a set of materials for use with school pupils
- Train new pupil representatives who would be active in the council





# Background - Research



We took as a reference point the work undertaken by the University of Stirling and published by Scotland's Children's Commissioner:

*How Young People's Participation in School Supports Achievement*

Mannion, Sowerby and L'Anson, February 2015

# Background - Research



We met with various academics and professionals from the sector to consult with them in order to further refine our material including:

- The University of Glasgow
- UWS
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Strathclyde

All of whom have all done work on pupil voice and representation in schools.



# Background - Research



We also looked to build on existing research by academics and sector agencies.

We met with various professionals including:

- Education Scotland
- The Phoenix Education Trust
- Demos
- North Ayrshire Council



# Curriculum for Excellence - context



We paid particular attention to the recent developments in the schools sector emphasising the importance of the citizenship aspect of the Curriculum for Excellence. In particular:

Enabling each child or young person to be a:

- successful learner
- confident individual
- responsible citizen
- effective contributor



# Curriculum for Excellence - context



Developing the learner voice of school pupils through engagement in pupil councils and other in-school fora seeks to build students' abilities to:

- develop and communicate their own beliefs
- make reasoned evaluations
- make informed choices and decisions
- work in partnerships and in teams

This draws on capabilities from each of the four capacities of the curriculum for excellence.



# Creation of Materials



All of the research we collected was used to create a unique set of materials for use within Schools. It was primarily focused on the pupil voice in secondary schools but the material can also be tailored for use in primary schools too.



# Braeview Academy



We returned to Braeview Academy in September 2016 for the start of the new academic term to do the full training session with newly elected pupil voice representatives as well as meeting with the key staff member.

We will continue to work with and support the school throughout the current academic term on any major themes or issues to emerge from the council.

The depute head teacher and pupils from Braeview Academy are here today at the conference to present their experience of the project and to talk about all of the excellent work going on there.



# Dundee City Wide Pupil Council

As a result of the work in Braeview we have also started to work with the city wide pupil council in Dundee.

Braeview Academy hosted the council in December 2016 and sparqs presented the project to the council for their consideration and it was decided that sparqs would return to Dundee in June 2017 to do a full training session with all of the new members of the city wide pupil council.

We will then be looking at common themes to emerge from the council sessions which we can work with and support the council on throughout the following academic year.





# Moving Forward



- We are now expanding the scope of the project further. Invited to schools in Edinburgh and Ayrshire.
- We presented the project to the trainee teachers at the University of the West of Scotland at a mini conference held on the Ayrshire campus on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February.
- We have developed a dialogue with the Trainee Teachers at UWS around a pilot scheme for trainee teachers to deliver pupil voice training in schools.
- We are actively looking for new interested schools to further our work.





**Please welcome from Braeview  
Academy**

**Mrs Lynn Cathro, Depute Head Teacher**

**Pupils**

**Alyssia Smith  
Robbie Berry  
Morgan Watt  
Sophie Dolan**

# SPARQS

Braeview Academy, Dundee City





# WHERE WE WERE?

- Pupil council met with a guidance teacher once a term or more to discuss issues.
- The members of the pupil council did not represent every class within the school.
- There was no structure for feedback between pupils and the rest of the school.

# SMT BRAEVIEW FOCUS ON LEARNING AND TEACHING

- Decision was made to restructure the pupil council to make it more representative.
- Links were made with Sparqs and sessions were put in place for S1, S2/3, and S4/5 pupils.
- As a result of the consultation a new framework for the pupil council was made.
- A key part of the new structure was to ensure that pupils had a genuine voice and most importantly could discuss topics which could impact on their learning.

# STRUCTURE OF THE PUPIL COUNCIL

- Election of class captains from every tutor class.
- Class captains report to their House Captain. (two per house group)
- House Captains represent their house group at the PRC.
- Meetings scheduled to take place once every month during tutor time with the PRC and a dedicated member of staff.
- Composition of PRC. (Head Boy, Head Girl, Depute Head Boy, Depute Head Girl and the 8 House Captains.)



# TRAINING

- In September 2016, Sparqs came back to speak to interested Senior pupils to train them in how to give feedback to Class Captains and the skills they would require.
- A key part of the training was to build confidence in the Seniors, in order to communicate with others.
- Feedback from Seniors was very positive as they were clear on their roles and responsibilities within the PRC.



# PRC IN ACTION

- We now have a structure in place with a member of teaching staff who chairs the meetings and keeps us on task.
- It is hoped that eventually we can have the confidence to chair our own meetings, although we always elect a different secretary.
- To date we have sought advice on issues such as homework and studying, issues to be taken back to the City Wide Pupil Council about Senior phase, role of Class Captains as well as any other concerns that had been raised by the pupils e.g. the need for more pupil drop-ins.
- Head Boy and Head Girl represent our council at the City Wide Pupil Council and led a session on how the Sparqs training was a good model for the whole city. This was agreed.



• THANK YOU  
FOR  
LISTENING 😊

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