

The Pupil Voice

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Pupil Voice project



Over the last 2 years sparqs has been working on a project around the Pupil Voice.

Our work is split into two main categories:

- Bringing through the pupil voice at school.
- Bringing through the pupil voice at college and university.



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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



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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.

- 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



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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.

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

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.



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Braeview Academy 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

We understood that in order to fully understand this cohort of learners more research was required before a set of school appropriate training materials could be created.



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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

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.



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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



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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



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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.

The materials were used initially only in Braeview Academy for the first year but we are now happy to report that due to the success of the initial project we are now working in several schools all over Scotland as well as with areas that run city wide pupil councils.



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Braeview Academy



We returned to Braeview Academy in September 2016 and August 2017 for the start of the new academic terms to do the full training session with newly elected pupil voice representatives as well as meeting with the key staff members.

The depute head teacher and pupils from Braeview Academy presented at the sparqs conference in March 2017 on their experience of the project and talked about all of the excellent work going on at Braeview as a direct result of the pupil council.

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



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Dundee City Wide Pupil Council

As a result of the work in Braeview we 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 December 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.

Themes to emerge for council consideration: careers advice, positive destinations, gender imbalance in terms of careers pathways, curriculum accessibility for learners with protected characteristics



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Moving Forward



- Currently working with schools in: Edinburgh
Glasgow
Paisley
Dundee
- 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.
- Continuing to support the City Wide Pupil Council in Dundee.
- Sparqs was part of a consultation around 'Pupil Participation' carried out by Education Scotland in June 2017.
- We are actively looking for new interested schools to further our work.



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Developing the Pupil Voice at College or University



Our work package in this area seeks to develop the capacity of colleges, universities and students' associations to work more closely with this group of learners, tailoring their representative structures or training their staff to deal better with their needs.

School pupils themselves need to have the space and the capacity to have their say about how they learn at college or university.



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Pupil Voice at College or University



sparqs works with institutions to look at how they hear and harness the voice of their school pupil learners.

We look to develop structures and processes aimed at developing the abilities of school pupils to feed back on their learning, recognising that they are the experts in how they learn best.

Doing so allows schools, colleges, universities and students associations to use that information to make enhancements to the learning experience for this group of students.



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Pupil Voice at College or University



Equipping school pupils with the skills to be more critical learners allows them to think about what and how they are learning.

When school pupils are experiencing learning in a college or university setting it is really vital that the institution, the school and the pupils have a channel of communication with each other to ensure that the best learning experience is on offer.



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Pupil Voice at College or University



One of the main ways in which we can do that is by school pupils feeding back to the learning providers information on their experience of learning.

In order to do that it is important that everyone focuses on the appropriate elements and with the same language.

From talking about the curriculum being taught matching expectations from the information provided by the school about the module/unit or course, the quality of feedback experienced to broader issues about school pupil engagement and learner transitions.



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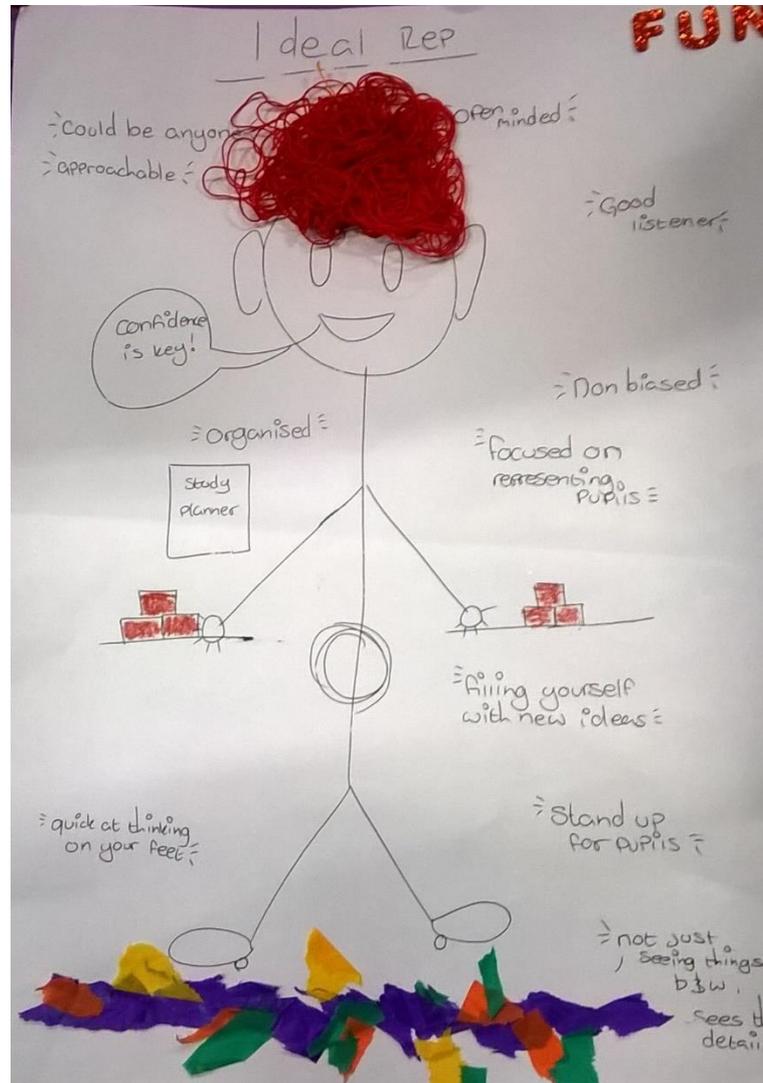
Moving Forward



- Agreed a programme of work over the current academic year with Fife college and West College Scotland around school pupil engagement.
- Looking to further the project by actively encouraging more institutions to get involved.
- Summer 2018 sparqs will host an event to bring together the key people from participating institutions to discuss and disseminate practice over the year long project.
- Bring together key members from all aspects of the pupil voice project, both from schools, colleges and universities as well as stakeholders such as Education Scotland and SDS to create a sector dialogue.
- Late 2018 sparqs to publish guidance on engaging school pupils.



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Pupil Voice Project



If you are interested in discussing the matter further please contact myself:

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Thank you very much for your time!



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