

Investing in Children Membership Award™

Re-evaluation of Ashley Hill Primary School



Introduction

Ashley Hill Primary School is situated in Onchan on the Isle of Man. It is a typical pre-fabricated building built in the 1970s. It is situated in substantial grounds consisting of hard and soft play areas. The school also has an extensive grass area for play and sport. It has a mixed intake from the area and has 250 children on roll.

The head teacher has been in post for two years and has been involved in the Investing in Children process at this school and his previous school where he was the deputy headteacher.

I visited the school for the purpose of the validation in November accompanied by Eleanor Seed and was made most welcome by the children who took us to the library area to meet the school council and other pupil representatives.

The pupils were quiet to start with but turned out to be very keen to talk about their achievements and were good at taking turns to explain their different roles, how the council functioned and what they had achieved. They were articulate, polite and were very proud of their achievements during this last year. They introduced themselves and they were:

Jack Y6, Head Boy and Chairperson of school council; Phoebe Head Girl Y6; Toby Deputy Head boy Y6; Kyra Y6; Chloe Y6; Evie Y6; Olivia Y4/5; Lucas Y4/5; Eva Y4/5; Isabella, Y4/5; Emilia Y4/5; Maisie Y4/5; Ted Y4/5; Sam Y3; Deaglan Y3; Eleanor Y2; Tristan Y2; Charlotte Y6 Learning Leader;



Evidence of Dialogue and Change

The children were keen to speak and the first thing that they told me about was their school council. They explained that it was comprised of children from every year group from Y1 to Y6. All the school council members present were nearing the end of their term of office so that there were no children from this year's Y1 or last year's Y6.

The children then explained clearly the process of being elected onto the school council.

“You write a speech, the kids vote for who they want to be their school councillor and whoever has the most votes is school councillor.”

“Well this term and last term, last term we were told to make a speech and then this term we read it out to everyone if you wanted to go for it. So if you are in any class they vote for you and no-one can see.”

The speeches are delivered by the candidates to their own classes and after listening to the speeches the children vote in a secret ballot.

“It is a blind vote so you can't see who the people are voting for.”

“You are allowed to vote for one person but two people can be school councillors so it is a whoever has the most votes and then the other person who has the most votes as well ,so the top two.”

Elections take place at different times during the same week in the autumn term so that there is an overlap between the academic year and the council members' term of office. Once elected the children who are on the council have a meeting to sort out the roles of chairperson and secretary.

“We have a board in the hall and so everyone can know who the school council are we have our faces on.”

The children also explained that Mrs Gelling was the teacher assigned to supporting the school council.

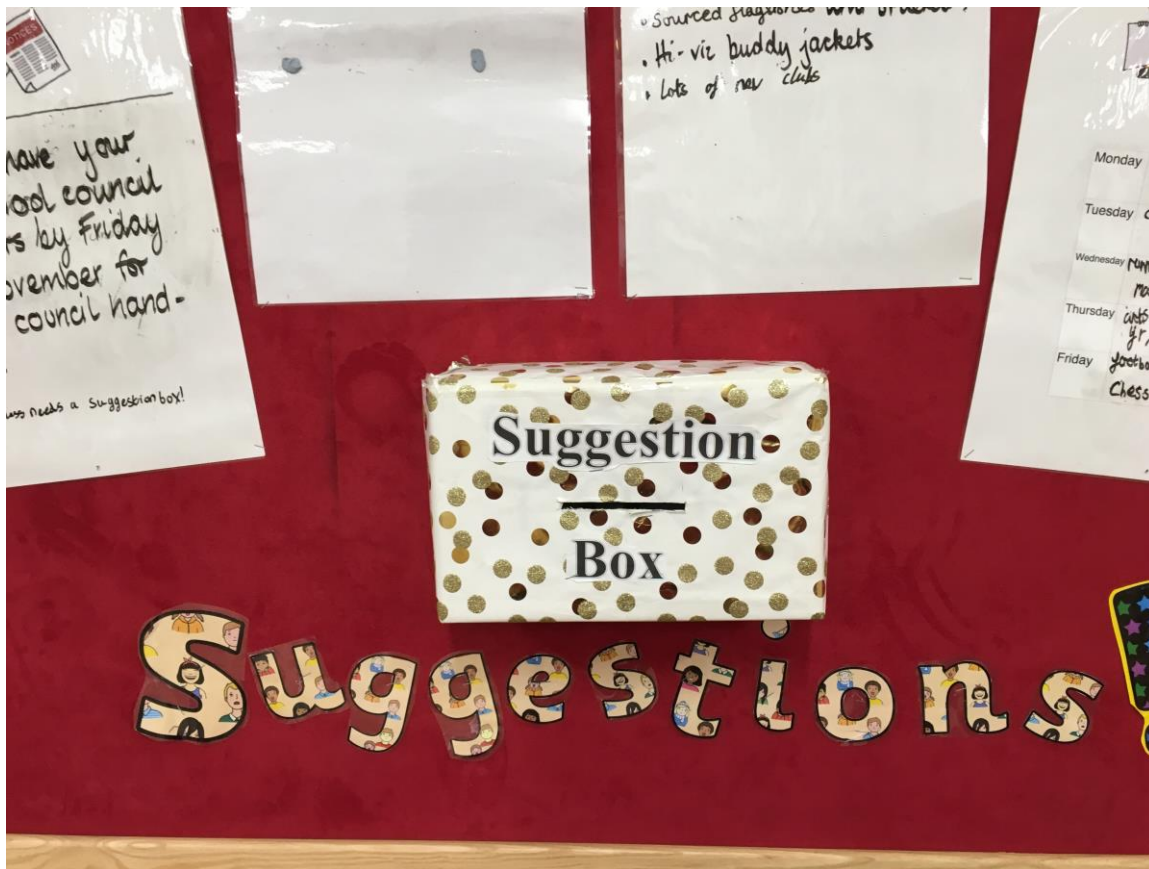
The children then explained about the mechanisms that were in place to enable all children in the school to have a say in what they would like to see in terms of changes and improvements.

“We look at the suggestions and say which is good and which is bad, if it is useful and stuff.”

(The council) **“take the suggestions out of the box and if it was a club you would have to write your name on it and if it was a club there has to be teachers free at that time to supervise you and then you have to be old enough to make a club and if the head and Mrs. Gelling thinks it is alright to do then they will take it on and see how it works.”**

“We have a discussion and if it is a good suggestion we will write it in our books

and take it back to our class but if we don't know how we are going to do it if they don't give us enough information then we will ask them to give us more information."



They also explained how information was fed back to individual classes. **"We go to the front and tell them all the stuff that we are going to do and see if they like it or not."**

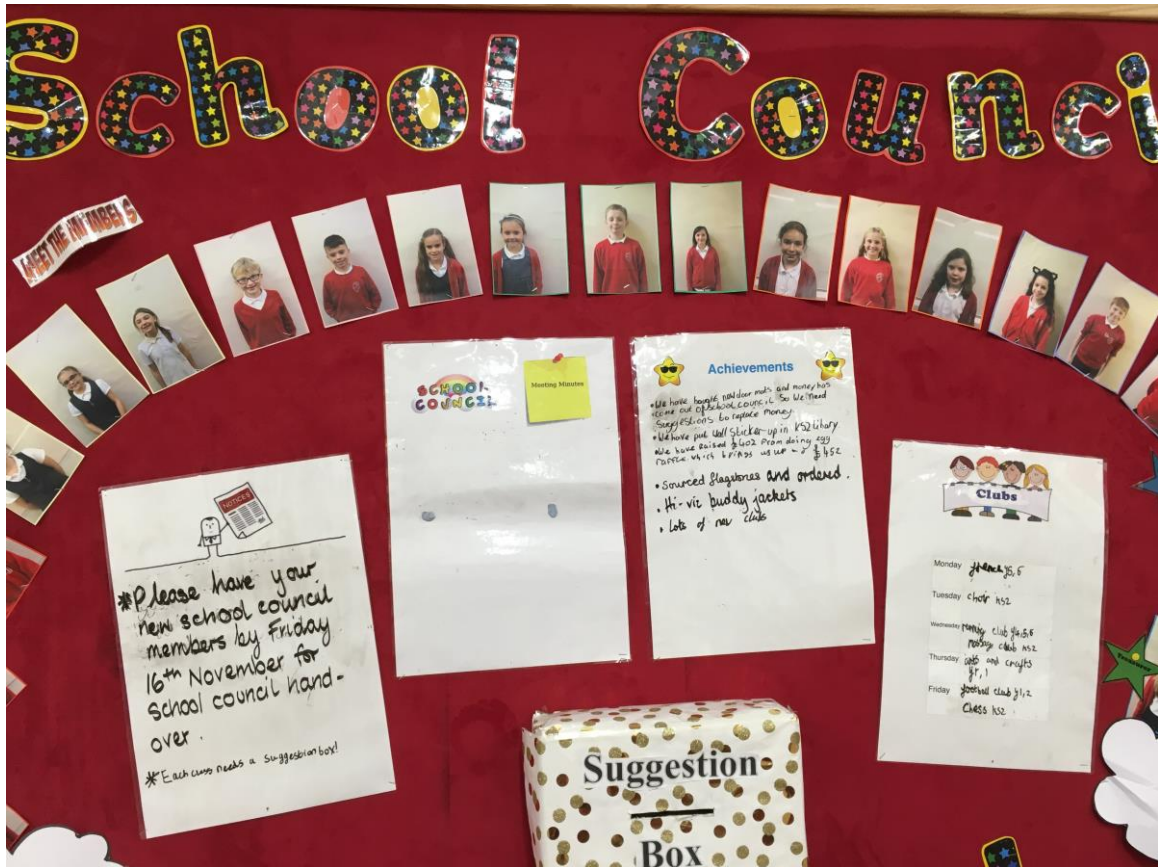
There was no set time for reporting back but most classes seem to set side some time straight after the meeting.

There was some confusion over meeting times but the group agreed that a meeting was held regularly on a Wednesday before KS1 lunch.

The children also explained how information was given to teachers in the school. **"The teachers find out via Mrs. Gelling well they get a sheet from all the things and put it on a sheet and give it to the teachers, that is what we have done in our class. It's like a minute sheet and every class gets a minute sheet and they read off that for feedback."**

There is also a School Council Notice Board in the hall.

"The secretaries type it up and then they send a letter out to each class and normally what we do is stick it up on the wall so if anyone is wondering what we are doing they can find it on the wall."



The children all agreed that they were happy with the way in which information was given back to the classes. They said it was hard to give feedback when an idea was rejected.

“You have to tell them that the school council members think that this club isn’t very good because and then give them the reasons.”

The children understood that school council members had responsibilities.

“You have to be a good role model for other people.”

“Well when we are out in the playground me and Toby were just walking a boy was crying because he had hit his head and Toby went to get the teacher while I stayed with him.”

“This Saturday and Sunday, you probably know the WW1 remembrance, we are doing speeches, sometimes we will go to Onchan Commissioners, a couple of weeks ago Onchan Commissioners house we went there they opened a plaque of 100 years from the end of the war.”

Other aspects of pupil voice at Ashley Hill are the roles of the head boy, head girl, house captains and learning leaders.

The head boy explained, **“Sometimes you don’t just represent the school in school**

time on weekdays, like this weekend we are going to be doing it Saturday and Sunday so we are kind of representing our school in every way.”

One of the house captains added, **“Also I forgot to mention at the beginning I am also house captain and last year I used to go to Onchan Commissioners with the other Yr. 5.”**

There are four houses with a Year 6 boy and girl from each house. There is a separate process which involves making speeches and then another school vote.

The children understood that there were different roles for the different positions.

(As a house captain) **“You have to represent your house again and house points you have to say how many house points you have and you encourage them to get more house points.”**

There are also lots of other opportunities for children to have a role in the running of the school.

“And you can also have other responsibilities to do with school like librarian monitors, you keep the library clean and tidy, and if you class teacher wants jobs on the kids then, what we do in our class is we have jobs on the board and we change every Friday.”

The children then explained some of the initiatives that they were introducing as well as other that they were continuing to work on or maintain. One of the previous initiatives was the log cabin. This has been built but there were difficulties in accessing it across the field.

“We have got the stones we just need to get the money and then lay down the stones to the log cabin.”

“The idea came from the suggestion box. We had an Easter Egg raffle to raise money and an Easter bonnet competition. I think we raised £500.”



“Last year our old chair people and secretaries they were looking on the website and they found a few photos of paths and took them to the school council, we wrote them down in our books and took a vote in our classes.”

“We picked black stones but we are still trying to get someone to do it, it was Jake the chair last year who was trying to find a company to do it, to give us a quote for it.”

“We are using the log cabin, we were doing something about WWII and it was in use because it was an air raid shelter.”

The children also talked about the clubs. The explained how the clubs were chosen, when they were changed and how long each club ran for. They were happy with the system that had been introduced as it allowed for pupils to run clubs and for all the children in school to access a club. There were also systems in place to ensure that access was as fair as possible, especially when there was a large uptake.

“In the hall we have a list with all the clubs on, so it tells you what clubs are on so if you forget what clubs like imagine choir is on on Tuesday, if you had just joined and forgot you can go to the hall and check it.”

“Well everybody in the school can run a club well maybe not Receptions but KS1, KS2 can and they can do any club they want and it needs to be supervised by an adult, the adult needs to say it is okay and we need to decide too.”

“One of clubs is Art and Craft of something like that for Reception and Yr. 1 I think and there is a running club on Wednesdays which I am running with three other for Yrs. 4 & 5.”

“It works really well but we don’t like really allow the clubs if it is like football club or running club we don’t allow it in torrential weather and stuff so its not too muddy and too wet.”

“Some other people do first-come-first-served so the first people with their slips in get the places but each term they change it so its fair on everyone.”

After clubs, the children explained what had happened to the old library space since the last evaluation.

“The old library space used to be in Year 6 so we moved it down here. It had been in Year 6 for a long long time and now it is a new and fresh space.”

“We are still trying to think what to do with it. I think we have suggested a learning space didn’t we”?

“Maybe science, we have suggested a few things.”

“So you can be quiet while you learn.”

The children were keen to talk about the missing door mats.

“There were some classes that didn’t have a doormat, each class should have a doormat but some didn’t and some did we thought the answer the classes that did need the doormats got them and the ones that didn’t we just left normal.”

“We wrote into Tesco’s to win a prize that month and people get to vote and we won it and some of the money went of the log cabin and I think the rest went of the mats.”

“Usually we will hold fundraising events and in the past two years we have done a school fair on a Saturday and that has got us a lot of money so far.”



The next topic of conversation was the 'Buddy' system. The children talked about how the system works and the improvements that they had made. They also talked about the impact that the system has had in helping the younger members of the school.

“Some of the little kids couldn’t find the buddies so we got them high viz jackets. We decided at school council and we raised money and ordered them. They were the same as our bibs but they the younger child would know because it says Buddy on the back of them.”

“I think it works for the smaller children because it is easier to find out the buddies.”

The last topic of conversation was about the way in which the children raised money for charity.

The children raised money for a variety of different charities but as they were keen to support as many as possible, this meant that they had no real plan for prioritising their efforts.

The children played a large role in organising events but agreed that a yearly plan would help them to limit the number of charities each year. This would enable them to support specific charities with more money. They also agreed that there could be a list of criteria that helped the council to make a decision.

Other areas where the children could make a choice were; Golden Time (some classes) and Music Assembly - **“Well singing assembly when you bring up an idea if it has**

got swearing they have to try and find a clean version like the song like Raz?? or something and has a random swear that no one really knows but they need it to have bleeped out or just the starting letter so it doesn't get too overhanded."

The plans for the coming year were then listed.

"Finish the footpath off."

"Probably make more clubs, ran by children."

"We will be doing a Christmas raffle."

"We have learning leaders and they do things to help us learn better and all that changing how we learn."

"The learning space."

The children were then asked to think of anything that describes the school how it made them feel being on the school council.

"It makes me feel quite happy because some stuff happens and I am sad but school time makes you a bit happier."

"I just like it because everybody's my friend."

"Safe."

"Everything."

"I feel responsible."

"It makes me feel lucky."

"School makes me feel welcome."

"Proud."

"I love being on school council, it makes you feel more responsible."

"I just feel safe."

"Exciting because we do lots of things."

I also met with a group of learning leaders who showed me the survey that they had completed by asking children throughout the school how they liked to learn. The results had been compiled and presented on a Keynote presentation. This has been shown to the children and teachers. The leaders explained that the role of learning leader had been created recently and they were keen to tell me some ideas about how they could help improve the learning environment throughout the school.

As this initiative is in its infancy, it will be good to see what impact it has had when the next assessment is carried out in 2019.



Suggestions

Do a weekly school council assembly to tell the whole school what the council are doing.

Have a little pot of money that you are responsible for e.g. £100 so if the school wants any equipment there is that little pot of money to start off the fundraising.

Go and talk to the headteacher and tell them all the things they want to change and stuff to see if they can make it happen and then they feed that back to the next school council meeting rather than a teacher going to speak to another teacher about it.

Some schools get involved in designing the building and things like that or choosing new equipment or what displays go up on the walls and things that might be an interesting thing for you to do so you all have different responsibilities.

Some schools choose 4 or 5 charities that they are going to support over the year and some schools choose them termly which charity they are going to use so instead of having lots of charities.

Conclusion

The children have been doing a lot of good work and it was pleasing to see that the children's involvement in making decisions about their learning was also making a

difference. The children were able to speak clearly about their roles and responsibilities and that they were building on the work of previous school councils.

The *Investing in Children Membership Award*[™] scheme was explained to the children and they were keen to renew their membership.

After a year in the scheme, things are really moving forward at the school and I would like to congratulate the children, the Head and the staff for all the opportunities they have created at the school to enable the pupils' views to have a real impact.

Jonathon Ayres
Investing in Children CIC
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