



## **Working with children and families**

*Children and the school council*

### **Kid**

Any classes come up with anything from the school uniform and jewellery? Adam?

### **Adam**

With the jewellery issue they said well, yeah, have it done but not have it in school so it can't get lost, 'cos if it gets lost or stolen it's the school's responsibility.

### **Woman**

When we arrived at Meadfurlong Middle School in Fishermead the second council meeting of the school year was in full swing. Guided by the Chair, Michael, the newly-elected members set to their task. Jewellery and school uniform were the main items on the agenda. Each council member must report on the consensus of opinion in their class. This consensus has been arrived at in circle time, bi-weekly discussion session, during which adults leave the room.

### **Girl**

.....studs alright, hoops no, watches yeah, but no jewellery on PE days.

### **Woman**

Next up, uniform.

### **Kid**

It'd be good to have some collars because you can wear the school uniform at school and you have really good clothes for the weekends.

### **Boy**

That's what some of our class raised as well. We decided on whilst half the class more or less wanted it, but some others disagreed with it because they reckon they should be able to have it but have the school uniform so they can have spare clothes for the weekend and special occasions.

### **Woman**

Circle time isn't limited to matters arising from the council meeting. The class members also have a chance to tell their rep about anything they think could be improved in the school.

### **Kid**

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### **Girl**

I was just listening to Leanne and I was agreeing because actually my brother got pushed off the bridge and I don't think it's very safe, and we should put something to hold it up and make the ladder to climb up more safer, 'cos that's where he actually fell, and it should be safer than that.

### **Woman**

Later on I spoke to Dale Small, the star of the story and a Milton Keynes' citizen. He offered to show us some of the visible contributions the council had made to the school. First of all, though, I asked him about Pokemon. Fights over stolen cards had led many schools in the area to ban the cards. When the citizen asked Dale's school about their approach it was Dale, rather than the Head, who replied.

**Dale**

We weren't actually banning them but we were going to keep like a limit to the amount of Pokemon cards to about fifty and that, they should only be used at breaks at lunchtime, they can't be brought out in school time, otherwise teacher may do whatever they like with the cards. That's about all really.

**Woman**

And was there, there was a particular place, wasn't there that?

**Dale**

Yeah, we named it, we named, it was first called Pokemon, Poker Point, then we changed it to Pokemon Point.

**Woman**

Can we go and have a look then?

**Dale**

Sure.

**Woman**

So this is the pond here then?

**Dale**

Yeah, there being very big crowds, like people just standing up, swapping cards.

**Woman**

Why did you particularly decide on this bit of the school then?

**Dale**

Well it was because it was out of the way of the playground where no-one could kick their footballs over here 'cos they landed over by the football wall. Apart from that not very many people played round this area.

**Woman**

It had been arranged for me to meet and interview some other experienced council members after school, but I thought it would work much better if they organised the interviews themselves. Dale volunteered and the others agreed.

**Dale**

Why did you want to be on the school council?

**Girl**

I wanted to be on the school council because it gave me an opportunity to get my views through to the teachers.

**Dale**

What kinds of things do you talk about in the council meeting?

**Boy**

Well just stuff we've got problems with and like about lockers, Pokemon cards and things like that.

**Dale**

What have the children actually suggested?

**Girl**

Well one of the main things that the children suggested was the problem about the toilets.

**Dale**

The one to the right was the **girls**, and the one to the left is the boys. What did they do about that?

**Girl**

Well the locks were busted on most of the toilets. Some of the toilets didn't even have locks. There was a sanitary towel bin that wasn't in the toilet so it was embarrassing for the **girls** if they had to go outside the toilet. There was a problem with mirrors because there weren't that many of them and then we discussed about them being at different levels so that people can see in them. And we talked about soap because before we had a problem with soap, people were putting them down the toilet.

**Dale**

...so they had to get new locks and toilet seats 'cos they were broken.

**Woman**

Okay, and there again those were all things that the children wanted?

**Dale**

Yeah. Does everyone get to say what they want to say in the meeting?

**Girl**

Usually 'cos the person who's chairing it tries to get everybody in to say what, to see what their suggestions were.

**Dale**

Do you think it's good that the actual children chair the meeting in the school?

**Girl**

Yeah, it shows that children can take hold of things, it's not just adults, and it's easier for the children to talk to children, than children to talk to adults.

**Dale**

Has the actual school council made any difference to like the school, er Hayley?

**Hayley**

Yeah definitely, there's been major improvements as in the toilets and the bench, the park benches outside, and it's definitely improved the way the school is.

**Woman**

What it would be nice to do is to go round and actually have a look at the picnic tables now, okay, can we do that? Thanks.

**Girl**

The picnic tables because instead of sitting out in the courtyard on the floor or what, on top of your bag, it's much easier to sit at a table outside.

**Dale**

The school bought six of them; we placed them in the courtyard here. How do you actually do the system, how do you actually share it around the school?

**Girl**

It was a year group a day, and then on Friday it was the one with the attendance or ones that lined up the nicest break.

**Dale**

Do you feel like listened to by the adults, and you actually feel that you're actually getting a say in what happens to the school, er Vanessa?

**Vanessa**

Yeah, you do get a say. The adults actually sometimes ask you the questions, instead of you asking the adults so, 'cos you can actually, you don't feel scared asking them and actually listening to them.

y, and not as people either to be put on a pedestal or to be punished.