

Student Voice

Revised: February 2021

Next review: March 2023

Mission Statement

Ours is a community of learning, where secure partnerships create opportunities for students, staff, governors, parents and carers alike to participate and grow to become intellectually, emotionally and socially *fit for life*.

1 Introduction

1.1 The core purpose of Cedars Academy, reflected in our 'Ethos and Aims' statement, is to ensure the best possible education and pastoral provision for our children, enabling them to be highly successful learners, to achieve their full academic potential, and to experience high levels of emotional and physical well-being. Children are the heart of our school.

1.2 We believe, therefore, that it is best practice to seek every opportunity to hear the views of our pupils about their school; how they perceive it, what they like about it and how they would like to improve. Issues raised by pupils will range from the everyday - for example, arrangements at lunchtime - to more strategic issues such as developing the outdoor environment or stronger links with local schools. We believe that we should seek, wherever possible, to respond to pupils' views and thereby enable them to play a part in shaping our school's future development.

1.3 The Department for Education, through the Ofsted Framework for Inspection, expects schools to invite, consider and respond to the views of pupils. In carrying out inspections, Ofsted will seek the views of pupils both through a survey and by talking with pupils in school during the inspection.

1.4 The key principles of this policy are:

- that our children have a unique and invaluable perspective on the life of our school;
- that their feelings, views and insights warrant the attention of - and a response from - the leadership of the school;
- that opportunities should be created for children's views to play a part in shaping the future development of our school.

2 Aims and objectives

2.1 In enabling the opinions, perspectives and ideas of pupils to be heard, considered and responded to, we aim to:

- ensure that our children enjoy school, experience a sense of belonging to our school community and take pride in our school environment;

- help our children to develop self-confidence and self-esteem;
- teach pupils to value their own opinions and to respect and listen to those of others;
- strengthen the social and emotional aspects of learning;
- continue to develop a communication-friendly environment so that pupils of all ages and abilities can feel comfortable in school and understand signs, directions, labels and visual and written information and instructions;
- share with and explain to pupils, as appropriate, all aspects of school policy and practice which affect their lives and learning in school;
- consult regularly with our pupils, according to their special educational need and communication difficulties, about their feelings concerning their life at school, and about what they like and would wish to see improved or changed;
- ensure that all pupils, regardless of age, ability, gender, social background, ethnicity or religion have equal opportunity to contribute their views;
- give pupils a sense of ownership of classroom and school practices, by involving them closely in drawing up codes of conduct;
- enable pupils to reflect on their learning and to understand the learning objectives of their lessons;
- enable pupils to play a part in determining the priorities for school development;
- enable pupils to make a meaningful contribution to the school community and the wider society in which they live, and to develop leadership and decision-making skills.

3 Classroom practice and the pupil voice

3.1 Teachers fully involve their pupils in agreeing and drawing up codes of conduct and, where necessary, rules, in their classrooms, which are in line with whole-school practice, agreed by the School Council.

3.2 Teachers always endeavour to ensure that pupils understand the learning intentions of lessons. In this way, pupils fully understand and engage with the standards of good learning for which they are aiming, and will have appropriately high expectations of their own achievement.

3.3 Where appropriate – and in accordance with their special educational needs - pupils are given sufficient opportunities to reflect on their learning, to understand different learning styles and approaches, to understand themselves as learners, to self-assess their work and to respond to the teacher’s marking and feedback, with comments of their own.

3.4 Through specific areas of the curriculum - such as history or personal, social and health education (PSHE) - pupils will be taught about the principles of democracy and social equality, and how this applies to practices in our school community.

3.5 Teachers ensure that all pupils, regardless of ability or special educational need, are encouraged to contribute to lessons and discussions by tailoring questions according to the needs of individual pupils in order to enable them to respond. Teachers do not allow any particular individuals, or groups of pupils, to dominate discussions or ‘Question and Answer’ sessions.

3.6 Cedars Academy values children’s achievements and interests from outside school, and encourages them to share these in school, both in class and through the weekly achievement sharing assemblies.

3.7 At the end of each academic year, pupils are encouraged and enabled to complete a questionnaire relating to their enjoyment of teaching and learning across the curriculum.

4 Listening to children

4.1 Academy staff always take every step to ensure that children are safe and free from the threat of bullying or other unacceptable behaviour (see our Behaviour and Discipline and Anti-Bullying Policies). They treat seriously any concerns or fears expressed, or disclosures made by children, and always act in accordance with our Child Protection Policy.

4.2 We always endeavour to make time to listen to children when they want to talk to us and to respond with interest. Members of staff will take positive steps to engage with quiet uncommunicative children and to help them to communicate and express themselves. Teachers maintain assessment records for speaking and listening and plan strategies to help pupils develop their communication skills.

5 The School Councils

5.1 We have a Primary School Council made up of elected pupils from each class in the school from KS1&2; a Senior Student Council made up of elected pupils from each class in the school from KS3&4 and a College Student Council made up of elected pupils from each class in the school from KS5.

New Councils - with new members – are elected at the start of every academic year. The Student Councils are made up of a group of Cedars students who have been elected to speak on behalf of the whole student body. They are the voice of the students. Members of the student council are responsible for discussing ways to make Cedars the best possible place for every student. Then they put the ideas that have been agreed into place, such as planning social or fundraising events, improving areas of school or meeting with catering staff.

5.2 Each year, every class will normally elect 2 representatives to be members of the Student Council. The Council then meets to elect the Student Council Executive, consisting of:

- Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Social Secretary

5.3 While we intend the School Council to be a democratically elected group, we take steps, when necessary, to ensure that its membership is representative of all significant groups of pupils in our school - including boys and girls, and those with complex special educational needs or disabilities.

5.4 Class teachers ensure that all pupils have opportunities to convey views or express opinions to the School Council representatives in their class, so that all pupils can have a voice through the Council.

5.5 In order to communicate relevance and purpose to the council members, we try to ensure that the School Council's business reflects the issues raised by pupils during informal discussions – such as during lunchtime – as well as topics that staff might like to be discussed.

5.6 Where appropriate, we consult the School Council, or pupils more widely, on the development or review of school policies, including pupil behaviour and school rules.

5.7 The Secretary of the School Council minutes School Council meetings, and is responsible for ensuring that the minutes are distributed to all classes so that the council member and teacher can share the discussion points with the whole class. Supporting staff ensure that any necessary matters are taken forward to the senior leadership team or the governing body, as appropriate.

5.8 Members of the School and College Councils are involved in the appointment of teachers and members of staff, including the Heads and Chief Executive via School Council interviews. This is a difficult and sensitive responsibility. Those involved are taught about the importance of confidentiality, and their specific role is made clear. They do not make or express selection preferences.

Rather, they enable the selection panel to assess the ability of applicants to interact with and relate to children. Also, they may be asked their views on how well they felt applicants answered their particular questions.

5.9 The School Council are also given opportunities to submit ideas for funding projects – such as the playground development project.

5.10 What has Cedars Student Council achieved in the past?

- The council were responsible for redesigning the Academy logo and uniform.
- They worked with the catering staff to change how meals were served.
- They polled the school to find a new name for the rebranded dining room.
- They researched and bought a buddy bench for the school yard.
- They worked with Living Streets to create an exciting project which got everyone in school walking around the local area and creating a child-friendly map of a route that was enjoyable and accessible for everybody.
- The School & College Councils are part of the interview process when new staff are recruited to the Academy. They rigorously interview each candidate and then meet with the Senior Leadership Group to feedback about how they feel each person would benefit the students' experience at Cedars.

6 Monitoring and review

6.1 The Heads of School and College are responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy and for seeking the views of the School and College Councils on its effectiveness.

6.2 The policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if requested by the governing body or School and College Council.

UNCRC Reference: Articles 3, 6, 12, 23

NP/MF

Policy date February 2021

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