

# **The New School at West Heath Student Consultation Policy**

## **Introduction**

This policy should be read in conjunction with our school policy regarding the management of student behaviour as with rights (which are promoted and celebrated) go corresponding responsibilities.

Fundamentally, our school exists for the benefit of children and young people – our students. More specifically, we are here for our student's education and our success is judged essentially by how effectively they learn. Our students are the most important stakeholders in our school because their lives are most affected by what we do. The influence of The New School does not end with them and their livelihoods. They in turn transmit what they have learned to their own families and communities.

The Children Act (1989), in reforming the law relating to children and young people, established as its dominant principle that the child's welfare should be the major consideration in any decision about his or her upbringing. The following sets out some general principles which reflect the spirit of the Act in relation to the interests of children and young people:

- Children's welfare and their rights to a secure, healthy and happy childhood are paramount
- Children's experiences in their early years are critically important in terms of their future development
- Children cannot learn effectively if they are concerned or frightened about possible or actual abuse or about being the victims of violence (in school or home). Any fears or worries they bring into the classroom (or wider school) should not go unnoticed by staff.

Children and young people:

- Should have access to a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum which both recognises the complimentary roles of care, health and education and values their individual qualities
- Are entitled to expect that adults will respect, uphold and preserve their rights and ensure that their stated feelings and wishes are taken into account
- Should have a right to a safe, secure and stimulating environment in which to develop
- Should have the opportunity to make choices and develop a sense of responsibility for their own actions appropriate to their age
- Have a right to be provided with experiences which foster the development of self-worth
- Should be encouraged to participate in making decisions which promote their well-being and development

- Should be supported in developing tolerance and understanding of themselves, others and the rules and expectations of the societies in which they live.

Experience has shown that there are real benefits for schools in establishing genuinely consultative and participative structures designed to involve students. Researchers and teachers have found that young people are observant, are often capable of analytic and constructive comment, and usually respond well to the responsibility, seriously entrusted to them, of helping identify aspects of schooling that get in the way of their learning. Students are far more likely to own decisions and plans in which they have participated.

## **Strategies**

Helping our students evaluate the effectiveness of our school and taking what they say seriously at every level will facilitate the promotion of an atmosphere of trust in our school. We aim to ensure a culture whereby students are more likely to be actively involved not only in the life and work of our school but in decisions taken about their lives – present and future.

The following are examples of this principle in action and the list is by no means exhaustive:

- Students attending Annual Reviews
- Our school council
- Students actively involved in target setting – termly, daily and during lessons
- Students having lead roles and responsibilities
- Our independent visitor system
- Worry or complaint boxes
- Buddy systems
- Key Working sessions (for boarders)
- Tutor time as a feature of our daily time-table
- Our compliments, complaints and suggestions procedure
- “Listening to students” featuring as a common theme throughout all our practices and procedures.
- Informal conversation during school lunch
- Talking through incidents in order to resolve and prevent reoccurrence
- Responsibility for monitoring specific areas of our school for damage, health and safety matters etc.

Our espoused values are published in our prospectus. It is clearly our responsibility to instil and promote the values of Privacy, Dignity, Rights, Choice, Self-fulfilment and Independence in all our dealings with our students. Indeed, the responsibility falls upon us to look for and actively seek out opportunities to achieve this end. Only then can we legitimately refer to ourselves as a “Listening” school!

## Implementation and Monitoring

<b>Student Consultation</b>	
This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:	
Appendices:	
Monitoring of Policy Implementation is the responsibility of: The Senior Leadership Team	
<b>Lead responsibility:</b>	Vice Principal - Residential
<b>Relevant Legislation:</b>	To be detailed in the next release
<b>Annual Policy Review Required:</b>	Yes / No
<b>Approved by:</b> S.S. Committee	<b>Date approved:</b> 10/01/2008
<b>Ratified by:</b> Trustees	<b>Date ratified:</b>
<b>Reviewed – no changes</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Reviewed – with revisions</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Revision No.</b>	