



Hearing the Pupil Voice: Arrangements within St Paul's to listen to pupils

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This policy is available on the Handbook page of the School Intranet and policies page of the School website and can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required; such requests can be made by email to policyquery@stpaulsschool.org.uk

The School recognises its moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued and to always consider the best interests of the child. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice. We operate within a culture of openness and recognise and accept that abuse can happen in any organisation.

1. Introduction

Seeking and hearing the voices of pupils is of major importance to the School and its leadership, for two main reasons. First, to develop the importance of pupil agency over their education, environment and existence, including by providing opportunities for pupils' leadership; and thereby to enable the school to hear and best respond to these views. Second, to seek any possible hard-to-hear voices within the school community. Many children will not find it straightforward to articulate concerns they may hold, and so it will require pointed effort to hear these voices and address the pressures and challenges that such individual pupils or cohorts may be facing.

Actions to develop these two aims of Pupil Voice have different structures and approaches. Both share the same goal of enabling school leadership to create the most secure and positive educational environment for each and all pupils.

2. Pupil Agency, Leadership, and Democratic Pupil Voice structures

2.1 Captains of School and Pupil Leadership Team

The senior pupil leadership is comprised of a Captain and two Vice-Captains of School, together with around thirty prefects. Various of these prefects form an informal leadership team around the Captain and Vice-Captain of School, in a manner designed to allow U8th pupils to work together to develop areas of the school in accordance with their passions. After their election, prefects are invited to take on a number of leadership roles, or to put forward a form of leadership that they would wish to be involved in. These can include: working with SPGS; environment; partnerships; diversity; character and values work; sports, music, arts, as well as responsibility mentoring within the democratic pupil voice system. Through these leadership roles, the prefects will thereby be supporting all pupils in having their voices heard.

The Captain and Vice-Captain of School also meet weekly with the Surmaster and Head of Eighth Form on operational matters. This will be an opportunity to feedback on the day-to-day operations of their team, share important developments, discuss and agree strategy, discuss and lead the work of the Year Fora (see below).

The senior leadership team will intersect with the democratic pupil voice structures. Early in their tenure they will agree their aims for the year, and then liaise with the Head of Pupil Voice where consultation with pupil fora will support those aims. The Captain of School will attend the Whole School Council. Through this involvement, senior pupil leadership will contribute to the agendas for Year Forum meetings and Whole School Consultations, as well as review feedback from those fora, and as appropriate play a role in promoting the aims of those fora and councils.

2.2 Democratic Pupil Voice Structure: School Council and Year Fora

The School has a formal democratic Pupil Voice structure, embedded within the House system. It is overseen and encouraged by the Head of Pupil Voice, who presents regular reports to the School. The structure comprises two layers:

- **Year Group Fora.** Each year group has an elected forum that will discuss matters arising and matters brought forward from the pupil body or by staff. Each Year Forum has eight

members, each democratically elected, one from each House. Each meeting is attended by either the Head of Pupil Voice, a Head of Section or an Undermaster.

- **School Council.** Two members from each Year Forum will attend the full School Council. This body conducts any major whole school pupil consultations, in close association with the Captain of School.

2.2.1 Year Fora

Each Year Group in the school will be represented by a Year Forum that will meet regularly across the year. They receive mentoring from the Head of Pupil Voice in the performance of their roles. When Whole School Councils are summoned, each Year Fora will send two members to attend.

These Year Fora:

- Represent the views of the pupils in their year group.
- Provide a forum for pupils to raise concerns, questions or ideas.
- Act as part of an ongoing dialogue regarding pupil voice initiatives, sharing the views of the pupils in their year group and updating their peers on the progress of initiatives.
- Widen opportunities for pupil leadership and participation in pupil voice.
- Help to prepare pupils for more senior leadership roles in the School.

Members will be elected by their peers for a term of one year. To encourage a wider group of pupils to participate, pupils will not be permitted to hold these positions in consecutive years, unless they are the only candidate. Members will be given some preparation and training for their role. A clear job description will be produced, and some training delivered on running their individual meetings, their role in decision-making, and how best to feed information both up to the Pupil Councils and back down to their peers.

Before each whole-school consultation, all pupils will have a chance to meet with their Council Member and discuss the upcoming agenda. This will involve:

- School Council representatives feeding back from the School Council Meeting where the agenda will have been discussed. They will update them on the progress of initiatives, and talk them through the agenda for the upcoming meeting.
- Year Fora agendas are published in the intranet for all pupils to read. All pupils will be invited to feedback and share their ideas through a variety of mechanisms including, tutor discussions; google form questionnaires; meetings with representatives.
- Council Meetings will follow the above, and will aim to feed these discussions in to a whole year-group view.

Summaries of the issues raised and resolved are brought to Executive half-termly.

2.2.2 School Council

The School Council consists of two elected representatives from each Year Fora and is designed to pull together the feedback from pupils in all years. As such, the School Council is the body consulted when staff from various areas of the school are looking for student feedback. The meeting is chaired by the Captain/Vice Captain of the school.

ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

The School Council is uniquely placed as a cross-year council of students. The School Council:

- Provides an opportunity for pupils to raise concerns, questions and ideas from their year group and discuss actions with peers from all years in the senior school.
- Provides a mechanism for the Captain of the School to hear feedback from all years and pass feedback via Year Representatives to Year Fora.
- Takes a lead role in the communication and discussion of Whole School Consultation agendas and feedback as well as the feedback from other consultations.
- Is the body of pupils who will be consulted if staff are keen to get feedback on a specific area of the school (e.g. catering). The consultation meeting will follow school-wide communication and subsequent Year Forum meetings and thus allow School Council Representatives to lead informed discussion and offer feedback.
- Provides an opportunity for pupils to develop leadership skills by working with their peers.

SELECTION AND TRAINING

Pupils are selected from the Year Forum to represent their year at the School Council. These elections are run within the Year Forum, where pupils can put themselves forward for this additional role. Where more than two pupils put themselves forward, candidates will be asked to speak to why they would like the role and what they feel they can bring to the role and all members get to vote. There is also some precedent for rotating responsibility.

SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETINGS

School Council meetings will run less frequently than Year Fora meetings and are designed to pull together feedback. They will generally run once per term. They are chaired by the Captain/Vice Captain of the School and attended by the Head of Pupil Voice who will be able to report to SMT.

Minutes/actions of the Whole School Council meetings will be shared in summary to the pupil body. These minutes and logs of Pupil Voice actions and responses. will also be taken to the next Executive meeting presented by the Head of Pupil Voice.

2.3 Direct Mechanisms

- Pupils are consulted regularly about various aspects of school life; including the biennial Whole School Consultation, but also direct surveys on various matters. The mechanism for school-wide consultation is usually a combination of tutor-based discussion based on circulated questions and a google form response. This feedback is then discussed through Year Forum and then School Council meetings.
- Pupils are also aware of their Year Forum members as well as the pupils from other years and the Captain and Vice-Captain of School. Information about pupil leaders is on the intranet and displayed around the school. A 'drop-box' system enables pupils to raise matters with Pupil Voice electronically.
- For every day maintenance and site related reports, there is a 'Helpdesk' system. This

system allows reports of (e.g. broken taps) to be reported and this is directed to a member of staff in a position to resolve the issue. As part of each Year Forum meeting, any such issues raised can be helpdesked.

- Pupils can anonymously contact the safeguarding team via the online safeguarding reporting platform Whisper.
- Pupils can raise matters of any kind with their tutor daily in Tutor time; or with their Undermaster.

3. Seeking the broader student voice

The broader student voice, including harder to hear voices, are actively sought in a wide variety of ways, particularly including major and minor surveys, and meetings of different interest groups.

3.1 Whole School Surveys

Major surveys of all pupils are undertaken at frequent intervals. The most significant are:

- Whole School Pupil Survey. This occurs biennially, surveying all pupils on all aspects of school life. A formal action plan is developed at Executive level as a result.
- Diversity and Inclusion Survey. Intended to best hear voices from all pupils of all identities, to best understand their school experience. A formal action plan is developed by the Head of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion as a result.

3.2 Other Surveys

Numerous other surveys are undertaken at various intervals. These include:

- Boarding Safety Survey
- Catering Survey
- School Bus Survey
- Numerous academic surveys
- Tutoring Consultation

3.3 Pupil Voice in Staff Appraisals

Pupil voice is sought in teaching staff appraisals, including from pupils of teachers, their tutees; and in management positions where those are pupil-facing (e.g. Undermasters).

3.4 Specific Interest Groups

The School runs numerous pupil groups with specific remits to hear the voices of pupils from different cohorts of the pupil body. These include:

- Spectrum
- ACS
- Reach
- Jewish Assembly

3.5 Other Avenues for Pupil Voice to be heard

Tutor groups

Boys meet with their Tutor groups and Tutor daily each morning for registration and on Friday afternoons each week. The Tutor group is a place where boys are encouraged to discuss all matters informally with other (usually including older) pupils and their Tutor. Stated objectives of 'Tutor Time' that are consistent with the concept of listening to pupils include:

1. Creating a purposeful environment where uninhibited, respectful, non-hierarchical engagement with one another is promoted.
2. Tutors getting to know their tutees to enable them to tailor advice and support appropriately.
3. Promote inter-year socialisation and integration – building relationships.
4. Build a whole-school sense of community
5. Foster inclusivity. From this, create an environment of trust in which serious issues can come to light.

Tutors are also charged with building relationships with any pupil that they and their Undermaster worry may be unhappy or struggling to develop a trusted adult relationship.

Teachers

Teachers at St Paul's are expected to listen to pupils and to take seriously, and act appropriately on, any concerns they may have. All teachers at St Paul's are given training in safeguarding and child protection as part of induction which is regularly refreshed, in line with Richmond Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) guidance. This includes guidance and advice on listening to children and what to do if a child wishes to disclose to a member of staff. All staff are required to read the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures, which provide further guidance in this area.

PSHE

The PSHE programme provides opportunities for boys to raise concerns, either via the forum of the class itself or specifically at the end of a class with the teacher or via the online feedback forms.

School Counsellors

Two professional counsellors are retained by the school to provide a confidential counselling service for any pupils at School who wish to see them. Pupils may make an appointment by seeing the School Nurse or booking via the Wellbeing pages of the intranet.

Independent listener for boarding pupils

Boarders at St Paul's are advised on arrival and reminded regularly of the provision of a school-designated 'Independent Listener'; a suitably qualified, vetted volunteer, who is not employed by the school, that pupils can raise concerns with. Contact details are provided to all boarders and made known on notice boards in School House.

School Chaplain

The School Chaplain is available to all pupils (and staff) of all faiths and none as a source of pastoral

support. The Chaplain is trained alongside the Teaching Staff in safeguarding and child protection. Additionally, the Chaplain attends the school boarding house/s each week to give regular pastoral support. Pupils are able to book to see the Chaplain via an email address, or an office drop-in. The Chaplain also has a ministry of presence, proactively being available around the school, and noticing how pupils are acting, particularly being able to pick up on negative body language and ask if they are OK, and whether they need to talk.

Raising awareness of internal and external sources of support

The School makes clear to all pupils, via the homepage of the intranet and in assemblies, and advertised widely around the school, that if they are worried, they can seek support from a parent, a senior pupil or friend, their tutor or a trusted teacher, their Undermaster, a member of the pastoral leadership team, the DSL or any of the Deputy DSLs, a school counsellor, the School Chaplain, Childline/NSPCC, the Samaritans.