



# FINAL REPORT ON THE LEADERS OF LEARNING PROJECT

MARCH 2014

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**Children in Scotland  
Princes House  
5 Shandwick Place  
Edinburgh  
EH2 4RG  
[www.childreninscotland.org.uk](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk)**

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This is a report on the findings of consultations with children and young people throughout Scotland to find out their views on how they learn and what could make their learning experiences in and out of school even more effective. The consultations were undertaken by Children in Scotland, YoungScot with support from Scottish Youth Parliament, and Children's Parliament on behalf of the Scottish Government.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank the teachers and senior managers of the schools that took part in this project for their time, support and cooperation.

The biggest thank you, of course, is to the children and young people who took part, who were willing to participate, share their experiences and ideas and provide us with a wealth of information that will influence the further development of Curriculum for Excellence.

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# INTRODUCTION

**Children in Scotland, the Children's Parliament and Young Scot, with support from the Scottish Youth Parliament, worked together to engage and consult with children and young people to identify how well they understand their entitlement to a broad general education under Curriculum for Excellence, including the importance of pupil participation, wider learning and wider achievement.**

The aim of this collaborative project was to enable children and young people to identify the support needed to ensure that their broader learning is valued and acknowledged and to work with other leaders in our schools, communities, workplaces and national learning bodies to achieve the goals of Curriculum for Excellence.

The project partners sought to explore five key areas with the children and young people they consulted with:

- Their own experiences of learning and what enables them to achieve their potential: identifying what works and what can create barriers
- How their wider learning and achievements can be better supported
- How these achievements can be better recognised and valued
- Their involvement in the planning around their learning and where more could be done to improve this
- Their perception of the recognition of their wider learning and achievements at key transition points.

The partners consulted with children from nursery to S3 in a range of early years, primary and secondary school settings drawn from seven different local authority areas across Scotland. They endeavoured to access a broad demographic of schools including those with both low and high socio-economic catchments and from both rural and urban areas. By adopting a cross-sectoral approach, the partners successfully reached a wide range of children and young people, including children in a special school. Within all the groups involved in the project, there were children and young people with additional support needs and pupils without additional support needs. In total, they consulted with 123 children and young people from four secondary schools and five primary schools across the City of Edinburgh, Stirling, Fife, Inverclyde, South Lanarkshire, Dundee and the Borders.

The partner organisations collaborated to shape the consultations and designed creative and participative programmes of engagement using a variety of media. Throughout all the work undertaken by the partner organisations, there were common threads and themes but also differentiated approaches to match the age, needs and priorities of the children and young people.

Alongside this work, Children in Scotland's development of the 'BeXcellent' Curriculum for Excellence website has involved a team of children and young people creating and managing a website for other young people, to share their experiences of learning through Curriculum for Excellence.

The longer-term legacy of both projects will be to share and promote the innovative and participative methodology used with schools across Scotland, to support them in developing their pupil participation work. It will also establish a starting point for future dialogue and action and, most importantly, the report presents the views of the children and young people.



# KEY MESSAGES



‘Teachers need to learn things – they need to learn from us. (...)’

## Overarching Message:

Children and young people who participated in Leaders of Learning shared how much they value their education and they understand how it benefits them throughout their lives, especially in preparing for adult life. They recognise the importance of the teachers and support staff that work with them and help them achieve their potential. They overwhelmingly endorsed a way of learning that corresponds with the aims of Curriculum for Excellence. They also clearly voiced that they want to be active participants in taking the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence forward. Their call for action is, ‘We can learn together!’

Throughout the Leaders of Learning consultation process, the following key messages emerged:

## Children and young people have an awareness of themselves and a sense of purpose as learners

Children and young people are reflective about their learning – what works for them and what creates barriers. They recognise what they gain from their learning experiences and see how this relates to and impacts on their future. They are able to see the interconnections between their core learning and their wider learning experiences, both in and out of school.

‘The things you do in and out of school help you get a job’

‘School helps you be ready for being older...coping as an adult’

‘I like partner work or group work then individual work’

## Positive relationships are a key to success

Relationships with teachers, or adults who have a teaching role in their life, are highlighted as a central factor in the learning journeys of children and young people. They voice a desire for relationships that are based on mutual respect and allow them to engage with adults in an equal and honest manner. They frame these relationships within an ethos of ‘learning together’.

‘My teacher is a little strict, but she is also kind and gentle and friendly. I think she is a good role model and it’s good copying behaviour. She gives me time to think and teaches me to find my own solutions.’

'Teachers don't ask us what we'd like to do. We would like to be asked what we'd like to learn.'



**Children and young people want a more active role in planning around their learning**

Children and young people want to work in partnership with their teachers to plan their learning. They think this would lead to improved understanding of their learning experiences, inclusion of personal choice and growth in pupil-led opportunities. Some children and young people feel that the process of setting targets feels tokenistic, like a 'tick the box' exercise. They speak about the need for real targets or goals in their learning that link school-based learning to their wider learning experiences.

'Teachers don't ask us what we'd like to do. We would like to be asked what we'd like to learn.'

**Technology and social media should be a consistent, integral part of learning**

Children and young people value the importance of technology in schools, including the potential for integrating the use of mobile phones into their learning experiences. However, across the schools, they experience differences and inconsistencies in the application of these media. Some children and young people highlight this as an opportunity for pupil-led learning, with children and young people taking the lead in raising awareness of technology and building capacity within school staffs.

'Teachers need to learn things – they need to learn from us. Like if they spend half a period trying to set up IT and don't ask for help.'

**Personal and emotional events impact significantly on children and young people's ability to learn and to achieve**

Children and young people repeatedly emphasise the negative effect stressful personal circumstances have on their ability to concentrate and make progress. They show a self-awareness and recognition of their own feelings. Many children are confident about getting the support and empathy they need in their schools. However, children and young people also describe the pressures of having to get into 'school mode' and the difficulty of doing this when things in their lives outside of school felt overwhelming.

'Bullying worries you and takes your mind off your learning.'

'I gain anger from people talking about their families'

'Where I lived affected how I was learning'

**Understanding their rights to education, learning and development was inconsistent among children and young people**

Children and young people's awareness of their rights varied across schools. They were able to talk about rights in basic ways, but did not always connect rights to their lived experiences in their families, schools and communities. Even in Rights Respecting Schools many pupils do not connect the knowledge they had of rights to other areas of their learning in or out of school.

'Education is important. You learn new things – it's where you learn the skills of life.'





# WHAT THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SAID

## LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Throughout the consultation process, it was clear that children and young people are thoughtful and insightful about themselves as learners and the personal situations that might influence their learning. They recognise their strengths, interests and potential, as well as those of their friends and classmates. They understand what they need to continue to do better and also what holds them back.

When asked about the purpose of school and what they thought the main benefits were, most of those consulted thought the end goal was to get a job and to develop the necessary skills to cope as an adult. Passing exams, learning to communicate well, developing independence and improving social skills were also considered important factors in their learning experience.

There was also a large variety of events in the young people's lives which they considered to be milestones in their learning; moments such as the death of a loved one were considered as important to personal development as more formal educational situations such as the transition from primary school to high school.

Participants incorporated varied and interesting life events in their learning journeys, with one commenting on the impact expulsion from an extra-curricular club had on them and their learning.

A common theme among the older pupils was subject choice and the age/life stage at which this took place. Participants commented on the stage of choosing subjects for qualifications and the importance of timetabling/columns in this process. Many suggested subjects could be divided into smaller chunks in order to meet the needs of their chosen destinations, rather than having to learn all aspects of a subject (some of which may not be relevant and take time away from other activities). They felt for Curriculum for Excellence to be all-encompassing, the structure of subjects and the selection timetable may need to change to reflect this.

As part of the investigation, the teams of children reflected on what kind of learning experiences worked best for them (in no order of priority):

- Group work or partner work
- Good explanations from the teacher
- Having enough time to complete tasks
- Experiencing approaches that engaged them
- Teachers devising new 'tactics' when a pupil has a difficulty
- Challenges
- Use of IT programmes that aid learning
- Opportunities to practise things
- Receiving praise and encouragement







'My teacher said that my work is brilliant and I should keep going'.

The children and young people were asked to note in their logbooks any learning experiences that had been, in their opinion, successful and to try to identify the reasons for this. Many of the pupils benefitted from positive feedback from teachers or other pupils.

'My teacher said that my work is brilliant and I should keep going'.

However, some pupils showed they had also developed their own internal measures of success.

'It was a feeling inside'.

They measured their success by the time they took to complete something, the finished appearance of a piece of work, or the number of correct answers. One child reflected that he knew he had been successful because he felt capable of sharing his knowledge and understanding with others.

'At the end I could explain it well to people. I knew more!'

In addition to exploring successful learning, the children reflected on what could create barriers to this. They identified (in no order of priority):

- Feeling they were not good at something
- Lack of time
- Finding something too challenging
- Having to memorise too many things
- Failing to see the point in an activity, leading to boredom
- Working individually
- Embarrassment.

A key activity the teams undertook was to explore their own learning journeys and highlight key people, times,

'I think learning happens in a place of excitement, a place of adventure.'



events and approaches that had had an impact on their ability to learn.

Several common themes emerged from this work:

- Family difficulties and family breakdowns
- Moving country/home/school/class
- Friendship issues
- Family events.

In journey mapping activities, the children tended to gravitate towards personal and emotional factors that contributed to or hindered their capacity to learn.

'If you're upset you're more scared when you're learning. You're just thinking about what upset you'.

By exploring what would make a 'perfect day' at school, a wide range of preferred subjects and activities emerged, with an emphasis on expressive arts and sport, but some common themes also arose:

- Time to relax
- Choices
- Challenges
- Time
- Active approaches.

'The Contemplation Room is probably the best room in the school – make every school have one please.'

Through making and using puppets to become another voice, a number of messages emerged from the

children at Redhall School. By using their own puppets, which they named and played with, we found that some children found their voice and, for the first time, shared their thoughts orally.

Children identified a good learning environment as very important. This was often described as a relaxed and quiet space, where you can work alone or with a small group of people you like. They also like to learn through doing different activities and many children emphasised that they learn best when teaching (and teachers) are fun.

'I think learning happens in a place of excitement, a place of adventure.'

Children recognised that guidance and help were essential in their learning journeys. They identified a range of people who support them in their learning:

- Parents and older siblings
- Teachers
- Coaches
- Grandparents or elderly community members
- Friends.

'I like working in a group because I think the people sitting next to me help me learn.'

Children easily recognised what gets in the way of their learning. They identified external and internal factors that impacted on their experiences of learning. They are keenly aware of how their emotions can have a negative impact on their learning. They feel that adults don't always appreciate their point of view and how they feel about life.

The most commonly identified issues were:

- Problems at home
- Being tired or upset
- Interruptions in class
- Health issues
- Relationships with adults (parents and teachers) and other children
- Pressures of exams and expectations for results
- Other children's bad behaviour
- Bullying and peer pressure
- Not understanding the subject
- Being new in school
- Laziness
- What other people think of them
- Chatting.

'Sometimes I feel sad and have lots of worries. I want teachers to understand that when I feel sad it's hard to learn.'

'I want teachers to be aware that I might be putting on a brave face and to take the time to understand what I might be going through at home and within myself. Not all worries, thoughts and problems are public and not everyone needs to know. [They should] respect the fact that I need a bit of space from time to time and respect that my concentration levels get affected by these problems.'

## WIDER LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENTS

In all schools the children overwhelmingly identified the learning they experienced within school as most important to them in achieving their goals. Wider learning opportunities that school offers were also highly valued.

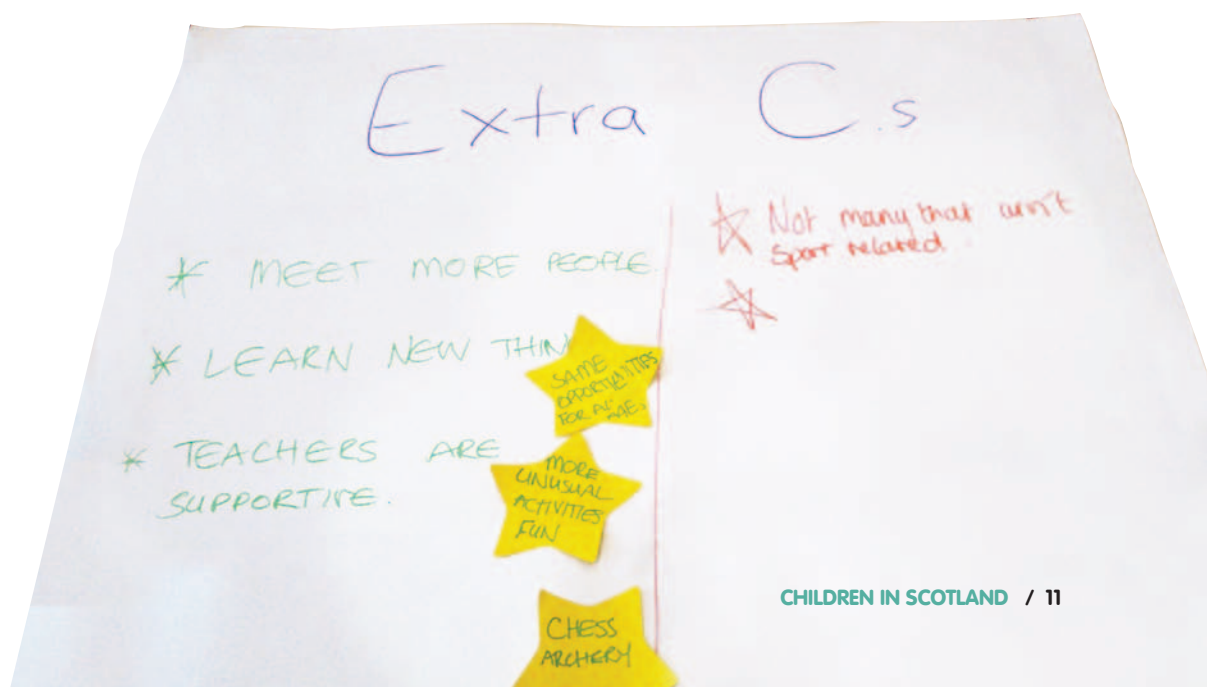
They identified the following places where they learned: school, home, clubs, sports, school trips, church, libraries, museums, travelling, television and computers, and in the street. They saw these as opportunities to learn new skills, meet new people and try new things.

'We think it's good that learning takes place not only in schools. We have lots of club and activities and hobbies.'

'If you're not the most popular person at school, then you can have friends at your clubs.'

'I watch people do gymnastics on YouTube and then I go to my club and try to do.'

'I'm learning how to take care of animals at home with my family.'



## Achievements in school

'I like reading and it teaches me lessons for life'

'I'm good at asking questions now'

'I'm proud when I put in a good shift at football'

'You learn different things when you visit places'

'I was Pupil of the Week and got an award for doing extra homework'

Children were proud of performing in school shows, helping run a stall at a school fair, having a responsibility such as playground leader and gaining medals and awards for sports. The benefit of going on residential trips was a common message.

'It's about learning to work as a team and getting along with people you don't know very well.'

Outdoor education also featured strongly as a learning opportunity children valued, as was feeling a sense of achievement, which was identified as very important. The young people recognised the value this has for themselves as learners, both in and out of school.

## Learning and achievements out of school

'When I passed my karate exam, I felt amazed and surprised!'

'It feels awesome to move on a level because it makes you feel great about yourself.'

'I like when my teacher told my parents that I had been good.'

Achievements were recognised in a variety of ways by different people within the children's lives. The young people thought it was important for achievements to

be recognised by family members, teachers and other school staff, and coaches or instructors from clubs. Awards, gifts, medals, house points and parties were common ways to mark achievements.

However, they most frequently identified praise and compliments as the best way for achievements to be recognised.

'I like being told how well I've done because it makes me feel happy, proud, special and confident.'

The extra-curricular offerings at school were discussed in detail by several groups.

Some pupils called for increased availability of extra-curricular activities. They suggested access to activities such as skiing, go-karting and scuba diving should be among the suite of options offered. Overall, they were keen for more social and fun activities to be included in their school lives.

Other participants spoke very highly of the extra-curricular opportunities offered to them. However, they also called for a wider range of activities to be available, rather than just sports. Pupils also highlighted how generous with their time and supportive their teachers were in terms of extra-curricular activities.



## RIGHTS AND EXPECTATIONS

The local investigation teams explored a number of issues related to wider learning, pupil participation, their involvement in planning around their learning and transition by undertaking a series of research activities.

Discussions and reflection with the primary pupils revealed that they believe the learning they do outside of the classroom is important. Many also felt that the High School they go to would want to know what they had been learning at primary school.

A large number of the young people said that the things they are learning in and out of school are important for their life after school. Many also felt that should make sure they get the chance to learn as many different things as possible.

Not many of the young people felt they were involved in planning their learning, but most felt that they had lots of chances to give their opinion about things that affect them in school.

Most agreed that they can get help with their learning if they need it, and felt that adults in school always listen when they give opinions about things that affect them.

When the team explored the reasons for some of these opinions, the children told them:

- The help they value in school and can expect is from teachers, support teachers, other pupils and resources that can support them
- In addition to the people in school, they value help from their families/carers and friends.
- Adults in school listen and encourage

In Redhall School the children were aware they had rights and could take us to displays and posters around the school that showed what their rights were. They shared that the most important rights, in their opinion, were:

- The right to be safe
- 'I like to be healthy'
- 'I think the right to learn'
- The right to play
- The right to have good friends
- The right to good listening (by adults).

The young people most easily understood the term 'broad general education' in its widest sense as 'where you learn the skills of life' and learning that encompasses 'a wide range of subjects from nursery to the end of school.'

When pupils were asked about the opportunities they had to give their opinions about things that directly affect them in school, many cited Pupil Councils, Committees, and Playground Leaders as ways to share opinions.

Involvement in planning was a difficult concept for all of the children and young people. Secondary students felt that any involvement with planning their own learning was restricted to choosing their subjects and choosing activities to take part in.

*'I believe I don't have much input into my education. For that to happen teachers would have to understand the best ways that I learn.'*

Children expressed a strong desire to be more involved and felt they should have a chance to share their opinions about how and what they are learning in school.

*'Children have the right to tell teachers what we think should be changed.'*





## CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE

Overall, there was a mixed response to questions on Curriculum for Excellence and the effect this had on the young people's learning. Even within each school, there were varying levels of understanding of the effect and purpose of Curriculum for Excellence, and more importantly, what it meant to them individually. However, the requirement for creative and engaging ways of communicating the new curriculum was a common theme.

The curriculum was clearly embedded in the culture of some of the schools, however, and where this was happening, pupils displayed knowledge, not only of the curriculum, but of where to find out more about it.

*"Without it, exams would be more stressful, you would panic more. It's helpful overall."*

Participants who were knowledgeable on Curriculum for Excellence were able to display an awareness of the four capacities of the curriculum. Key words such as "responsibility" and "contributor" were mentioned on more than one occasion, and one participant mentioned her "rights and responsibilities" under the new curriculum and how it helped to create a nicer school environment.

There was however, also feedback that more information was required about it and positive examples of the impact the new curriculum has had was suggested as a way to achieve this.

Some secondary pupils suggested that peer education should be used more as a method of communicating, but also as a means to consolidate learning for those pupils who understood a subject. This would allow the latter to develop additional skills and help the former gain further insights into the topic in question. Pupil-led education for teachers to help tackle issues such as bullying was also suggested.

Some young people spoke about the impact of their learning environment, in particular how new school facilities support the aims of Curriculum for Excellence. An example of this was the inclusion of multi-usage grounds in the campus. Participants made extensive recommendations on maximising unused spaces available in school for social and studying purposes. This stemmed from a desire to complete homework and additional study in school, rather than in their free time. They also reported a wish to take ownership and responsibility for social space in school.

Some young people also came up with various suggestions on the catering facilities in school, noting their location and the limited availability/access to the canteen.

Another common theme was a call for technology to be utilised more, to make classes more engaging and interactive.

The young people said despite their teachers having technology such as white boards in the classroom, these were not always used in an interactive fashion. Pupils wanted to have access to appropriate technology, rather than just be shown a demonstration. Some of the teams suggested allowing the use of mobile phones for downloading educational applications (for example, using fitness apps in P.E.). Some also suggested the use of social networking as a learning tool, for example using Skype to include pupils unable to attend a trip.

The use of iPads instead of jotters, and using Skype to formalise relationships with language subject pen pals were also suggested.

Several teams highlighted the need for supporting infrastructure such as WiFi to be functioning and available.

*"More interactive lessons would make pupils try harder."*

Some of the young people noted that much of the homework handed out relied on use of the internet at home, which was not an option open to everyone.



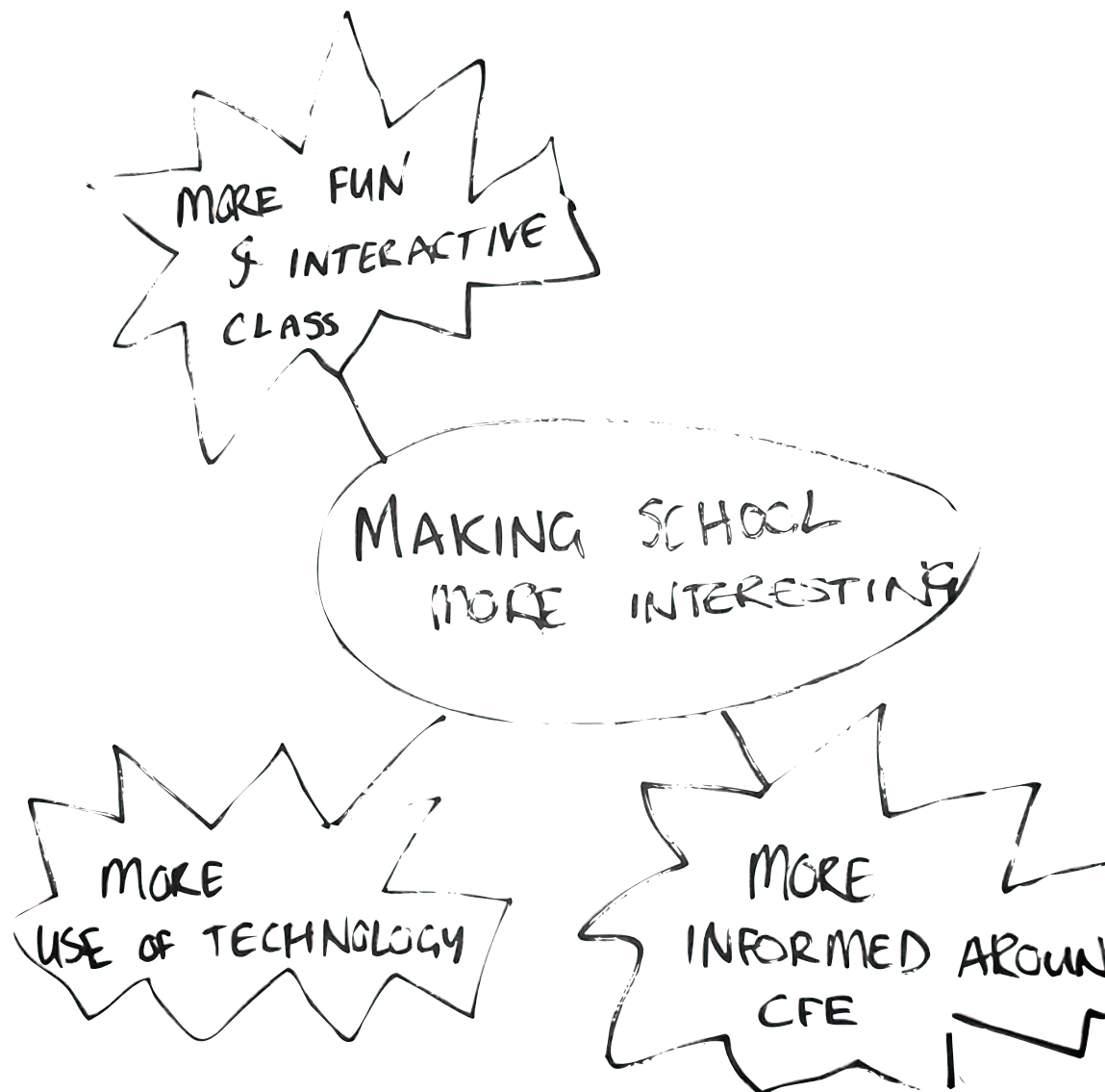


# CONCLUSIONS

Leaders of Learning shows what a significant asset children and young people are in the implementation of every aspect of Curriculum for Excellence. However, this potential is largely untapped.

The next phase of Leaders of Learning will engage with children and young people to develop further opportunities for pupil leadership, pupil participation and learner voice that are concrete and meaningful.

The project partners will also seek to demonstrate that these approaches will lead to improved outcomes for pupils and school staff and create the culture of engagement as envisioned within Curriculum for Excellence.



# SCHOOL PROFILES

The facilitators from Children in Scotland worked with groups of children from the following schools:

## **Redhall Primary School, Edinburgh**

Redhall primary school is located in the grounds of Longstone Primary School, nestled in Longstone Village, a suburb of South West Edinburgh. It is a state funded special school that provides education for children with a variety of additional support needs, in particular, moderate learning difficulties. In the 2012/13 school year, there were 61 pupils on their roll, of which 40% received free school meals, and 11 teachers. Architecturally, Redhall School is a bespoke design and the layout combines purpose-designed classroom wings, developed in collaboration with additional support for learning staff, with a creative solution to the site.

## **Donibristle Primary School, Dalgety Bay**

Donibristle is situated in extensive grounds on a hilltop overlooking the Firth of Forth, on the West side of Dalgety Bay. Donibristle is an open plan design within a modern building with a roll of 537 pupils and, like the other schools we worked with, is state funded. It is a coeducational, non-denominational large primary school, which includes a nursery. In the 2012/13 school year, the uptake of free school meals here was 4%, which is well below the average for Fife (23%) and indeed Edinburgh (22%).

There are efforts to work together in partnership with families to offer the best educational experience for the pupils, which include an accessible booklet that is made available on the website sharing information about the school and the curriculum and inviting dialogue with families.

## **Forthview Primary School, Edinburgh**

One of six primary schools that serve Pilton and the surrounding areas in Edinburgh, Forthview is a non-denominational, coeducational, integrated community primary school with a nursery attached. The new building opened in August 2003 and the school has a roll of 356 pupils and 22 teachers. In the 2012/13 school year, 50% of the pupils received free school meals, which is a 30% increase on the average for Edinburgh and significantly above the 22% Scotland-wide primary school average. Forthview organises a wide and varied programme of activities for parents and carers which includes a free crèche for the under 5s as well as providing a family support teacher whose job it is to support the families of Forthview and to promote and develop good relationships between home and school.

Children's Parliament worked with groups of children from the following schools:

## **Calderside Academy, Blantyre**

Calderside Academy is a state-funded secondary school in South Lanarkshire serving 1,354 pupils. With over 123 teachers, it is the largest high school in Blantyre. It is a Gaelic Medium school with an above average percentage of free school meals uptake: in the 2012/13 school year, there was a 24% uptake in a local authority with an average of 16%.

Calderside Academy offers online 'zones' regarding the curriculum and the wellbeing of the pupils at the school.

These include a Parent Zone, a Learning Zone and a Support Zone.

## **Braehead Primary School, Stirling**

An integrated community primary school, Braehead in Stirling serves 388 pupils which includes a nursery class. It is state-funded with an average uptake of free school meals for the area (15%), a figure which sits below the Scottish average. It was founded in 1972 and is semi open plan with 4 wings radiating from a central communal area.

The school's website is under construction but there is dedicated space for the shared experiences of parents and carers and for the pupil voice.





Calderside  
Academy,  
Blantyre

#### **Stobhill Primary School, Gorebridge**

Another integrated community school, Stobhill Primary School is situated in the heart of Midlothian and serves 148 pupils. It is a non-denominational, coeducational, state-funded primary school and, in the school year 2012/13, had an above average uptake of free school meals (38%).

Young Scot / Scottish Youth Parliament worked with groups from:

#### **St. Columba's High School, Inverclyde**

St Columba's High School is a catholic comprehensive school, for pupils from first to sixth year, situated in the Inverclyde Council area. The school roll is presently 553.

It is a new facility and participants spoke extensively on the impact of the new building on their learning and education. The feedback on the facility was extremely positive, with pupils reporting how much they wanted to be there to learn. They also commented on the positive impact on behaviour in the school.

"Positive attitude towards new building"

"More respect for the new school"

#### **Earlston High School, Earlston**

Earlston High School is a comprehensive, non-denominational, secondary school for pupils from first to sixth year. The school is a new building. Situated in the Scottish Borders, Earlston is a rural town which stands on the A8 about 35 miles south of Edinburgh. The school roll is presently 972.

#### **Menzieshill High School, Dundee**

Menzieshill is a comprehensive, non-denominational, secondary school for pupils from first to sixth year. The school is in Dundee. The school roll is presently circa 600.



# ASKING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHAT THEY THINK: THE PROCESS

**This chapter describes the range of approaches used by the project facilitators to support the children and young people to express their views, discuss with others, and research the improvements required.**

## CHILDREN IN SCOTLAND

Children in Scotland worked with groups of children in two mainstream primary schools and one primary special school. In total we worked with 39 children in the P5-7 age group.

- Forthview Primary School, Edinburgh
- Donibristle Primary School, Fife
- Redhall Primary School, Edinburgh

Two Children in Scotland staff facilitated the consultations and a drama specialist worked with each group for one session.

### Consultation Sessions

The methodology and approaches were geared to the needs of the children who had volunteered to participate in the 'Leaders of Learning' project. In Redhall School, staff felt it was more appropriate for them to ask children if they would like to participate. We requested that the Investigation Teams should include a representative range of children, to include children with a range of learning needs.

To begin their investigation and to develop an ethos of reflection and sharing ideas and opinions, the children thought about what they enjoyed most in a school day- their 'Perfect Day'- and what caused them problems or created barriers. They also discussed what they thought school gave them:

*'What's in it for you?'*

They began to build learning logbooks as a record of their investigation and attached large travel labels that identified themselves and sign-posted barriers that they felt hindered learning.

In Redhall School, we used a combination of Board maker pictures and key fobs that had cards showing a range of different feelings, as a means of the children sharing what they saw as their perfect day at school. The children recorded these by taking photographs of their Board maker 'picture' and we captured what they said they enjoyed about these activities or times. The children became Tour Guides and showed us round their school, taking us to different places where they learned things. We were able to capture places they liked learning, or did not, and get a sense of why. To get a deeper appreciation of the methods of





(...) The children thought about what they enjoyed most in a school day-their 'Perfect Day'(...)

learning that worked for them or what they felt created a barrier, we explored their learning through 'journey mapping' exercises. They began to plot what their learning journey could look like, then created their own individual learning maps. In class time, they identified learning experiences they thought had worked for them and, using a checklist, think about why it worked and how they knew if they had been successful. These were later added to their journey maps.

To explore the team's views on their wider learning and achievements and to establish what importance these have for them, we used a 'Concentric Circles' approach, plotting as a whole group, then individually, what they learned and thought was important for their future: in school, with school but not necessarily in the classroom and out of school. On the whole group 'Concentric Circle', the children used sticky dots to vote for what part of this widening circle of opportunities was most valued by them.

Each team member painted and decorated a small Treasure Chest and using 'gold coins', cut from card, they recorded the things they were really proud of or identified as achievements in or out of school.

To explore 'Rights and Expectations', they started as a whole group, making decisions about what each team member thought in response to a number of

statements. After each decision, we discussed the reasons they had for their choices. Following this the children worked in pairs with a number of additional statements and together they made further decisions.

Having explored their own ideas, we set the team members a challenge to decide:

- What key questions they would like to ask other pupils in their classes about their learning to test out how they felt.
- How they wanted to ask these e.g. a survey, a filmed interview, a taped interview, an oral interview etc

In the final session a drama specialist worked with each team to explore their ideas, their experiences and their points of view. She incorporated the use of simple puppets, made by the children, to give them an alternative method of expressing their views.

## CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT

Children's Parliament gives children the opportunity to voice their ideas, thoughts and feelings so that their concerns and opinions can be listened to and included in the wider social and political landscape. Children are experts in their own lives and the information they share can be used to shape the country in they – and we – live.

The Parliament aims to create environments where children feel safe and supported, so that they can share their experiences and explore new ideas. At the heart of the Parliament's work is a commitment to the human rights of children and developing relationships based on mutual trust and honesty.

Children's Parliament uses the creative arts as a way in to the issues at hand, not just because they make it fun, but because using model building, drama, photography, poetry and other art forms creates an opportunity to have open discussions between children and adults.

### Who took part

Children's Parliament was keen to work with children from a diverse range of ages and stages for the Leaders of Learning consultation. Their team engaged with children from two primary schools and one secondary school from three local authorities – South Lanarkshire, Stirling and Midlothian. Fifty-six children (approximately five children from each year group between nursery and S3) participated in the consultation.

- Braehead Primary School, Stirling (Nursery to P4)
- Stobhill Primary School, Midlothian (P5 to P7)
- Calderside Academy, South Lanarkshire (S1 to S3)

The consultation engaged with groups of Local Investigators within each of the three schools. To ensure that the consultation represented all children, children with a broad range of backgrounds, ability levels and learning needs were selected to participate.

A team of three Children's Parliament staff with experience in children's rights and participation, creative arts, and education developed and facilitated the Leaders of Learning consultation process.

### What Children's Parliament did

The Leaders of Learning consultation took the following format:

Nursery and lower primary (to P4):

- Two 1.5-hour workshops with small groups of five children from each year (nursery to P4)

Upper primary (P5 – P7) and secondary (S1 – S3)

- Three day-long workshops with full Local Investigation team of 15-16 children
- Final 1.5-hour sessions with small groups with approximately five children in each group

Initial sessions with each group began with a conversation about needs, wants and rights, identifying what children needed in their lives to grow up health, happy and safe. This provided an introduction to the main themes of the consultation around learning and education.

Based on the idea of learning as a journey, Children's Parliament developed a series of sessions that asked children to think of their learning journey as a storybook, with themselves as the main characters. Throughout these sessions, the children engaged in a variety of activities using discussion, individual reflection, small and large group tasks and the creative arts. The following activities were modified to suit the needs of the ages and stages within each group.





### Setting

To begin the development of their storybooks, the children were asked to think about what 'learning' and 'education' meant to them and where they thought learning and education took place. In small groups, the created maps to their 'Lands of Learning' that incorporated all of their ideas.

### Main Characters

Children's Parliament asked the children to reflect on who they are as learners. Using mind maps, character sketches and discussion, the children identified the skills, talents, interests and qualities they possessed that guided their learning journeys.

Additionally, the children discussed what it means to be a leader and how they can be a leader in their own learning. After identifying an aspect of leadership that they have within themselves, the children created a symbol to represent it.

### Supporting characters

In addition to thinking about themselves as the main characters, children were then asked to identify the supporting characters in their learning journey. They thought about who helps them learn and how they offer their support. Through the use of storyboards and drama, the children shared positive, supportive experiences they have had with these supporting characters.

### Antagonists/Conflict

Following on from the discussion of who helps them learn, the children discussed what gets in the way of their learning. They explored the situations, experiences and people that can act as barriers in their learning journeys. The children identified one that was a particular challenge for them personally and illustrated these as antagonists or symbols within their story.

### Moral of the Story

Finally, the children reviewed all the previous elements of their stories to develop an important lesson about learning journeys.

In the final stage of the process, children reflected on the previous three sessions and collated all the information from the work they had produced so far. In small groups, they created a mixed-media storybook about their learning journeys.



## YOUNG SCOT / SCOTTISH YOUTH PARLIAMENT

### Consultation Activities

The Young Scot and Scottish Youth Parliament's approach to consultation activities was based on the principles of co-design and youth led engagement.

The methodology and session plans were designed to ensure young people were free to express and gather views on the curriculum on their own terms.

Youth Investigation Teams were recruited to act as both participants and peer researchers.

While young people could nominate themselves to join the project, guidance and support staff were also involved in ensuring there was a good mix of ages, abilities and engagement among participants to ensure they were representative of the student body.

The teams were tasked with considering their own reflections on Curriculum for Excellence, as well as gathering this data from other key stakeholders such as pupils, teachers and parents. For this, they consulted with small samples of each group or a representative, eg. interviewing the head of the Parent Council. The purpose of this exercise was to provide additional insight to their research and to also challenge their own views and experiences.

The independence of the Youth Investigation Team was key to the approach, and staff from Young Scot and the Scottish Youth Parliament worked with a member of guidance staff from each of the schools to reinforce the groups' autonomous status.

In brief, the three key stages of our work with the Youth Investigation Teams were:

- Session One - Explore – Asking the Youth Investigation Teams to consider their own learning journeys, and reflect on the process of taking in and retaining information.
- Session Two/Three – Creating – Looking at the material gathered by the Youth Investigation Teams and supporting them to analyse, question and discuss their discoveries.
- Session Three/Four (if applicable) – Reflecting and Recommending – This session was concerned with bringing together ideas in a structured manner and deciding how the groups wished to present their information.

It was, at times, necessary to deviate from this structure due to various factors. In practice, the programme at each school took the following form:

### MENZIESHILL HIGH SCHOOL

The project team conducted four sessions with Menzieshill High School in Dundee. In between the sessions run by the partner organisations, the Youth Investigation Team undertook independent research. The team carried out the following activities:

- Surveys with pupil and teachers – It was originally intended this would be completed with parents also, however this did not materialise.
- Vox Pops – Pupils around the school were interviewed by their peers discussing a range of topics, from their favourite subjects, to how they felt about the difference the Curriculum for Excellence had made to their education.
- Fly on the Wall – Members of the Youth Investigation Team attended classes and carried out "fly on the wall" research.

Although it was intended to stick to the original session plans as much as possible, it became necessary to deviate from these in order to ensure the Youth Investigation Team secured sufficient evidence and had time to complete their project. An additional session was added to the original structure in order to achieve this.

### **St. COLUMBA'S HIGH SCHOOL**

Again, four sessions were carried out in St. Columba's High School. A Youth Investigation Team was recruited to investigate an aspect of life in their school and its impact on their learning. They chose to focus on their new school building. They used the following research methods:

- Survey Monkey online research
- Interviews with 2nd and 4th years
- Video interviews

### **EARLSTON HIGH SCHOOL**

The work with Earlston High School took place over two visits to the school. The group were encouraged to complete their own report at the end of the process. However, due to time constraints they did not conduct research projects in the same way as the groups at other schools. Young Scot and Scottish Youth Parliament staff supported the groups to interview one another to discuss the Curriculum and their experiences in school.



