

“School should be a joyful place”

Learning and school life in Scotland
A Children’s Parliament Report



ADVICE COLUMN

A Lesson in Making a good lesson

Lessons should be good fun for everyone
here are some tips on how to do this

- Take time to find out about our interests
- Remember there are times to be serious and times to be fun.
- Think about going outside for lessons. Not only ^{for} your class then have fresh air they can be free to explore nature and we can learn a lot about animals and plants.
- Introduce us to interesting role-models who can show us by their example that learning can be fun and worth doing.
- Read to us - and make the classroom have a lot of interesting books.
- Make sure computers are working.
- Teamwork is good (this includes in sports and music).
- Keep an even level of noise.
- No shouting.
- No shushing. - ssssshhh!
- 1 to 1 extra attention **always** for pupils with special needs and pupils behind in work.
- Give us responsibilities and allow us to be independent.
- Remember: Useful advice: If it's really boring for you **this** - will make it boring for us! So if **it** interests you it will interest us.

Image: As part of our Education Governance Review workshop children developed advice for a good lesson based on other Children's Parliament work and their own ideas.

Contents

Introduction	5
Part 1: A school that is excellent and equal	6
Part 2: Having a say about learning and life at school	12
Part 3: Support at school	15
Part 4: Getting parents and carers involved with school	17
Part 5: Teachers	18
Part 6: Other topics	19
• Play, sport and physical activity	
• Poverty	
• Technology	
• Homework	
• Wellbeing	
Appendix: More about Children's Parliament and links to referenced work	21





ENTERTAINMENT

BENEFITS

SUPPORT

INCLUSION

PLAYING

I enjoy learning in different ways.

don't stop your doing do well!

IT'S OK TO PLAY

JUST BELIEVE WE CAN DO IT

I want Choices!

I can play as much sports as I will enjoy!

I can play as much sports as I will enjoy!

FREE AND ASSISTIVE EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES

HELP PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS TO DO MORE SPORTS

I feel supported when I play with my friends

WE'VE DONE IT!

GO ON!

GO ON!

PLAYING big and other games and sports we all have fun too.

HELP US BE FREE

IT FEELS GREAT WHEN PEOPLE GIVE US ENCOURAGEMENT AND HELP US TO DO BETTER!

IT'S FUN TO PLAY FOOTBALL TOGETHER!

SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN SPORTS

Support group to play football!

can you let me play just because we fell out of school?

I got my new chair so I can play basketball now with the others!!!

I feel angry shout at me when you...

Introduction

In 2017 Children's Parliament will be 21 years old. This seems like a good time to reflect on what children have shared about their experience of, and aspirations for, school and learning.

Children's Parliament is Scotland's Centre for Excellence for Children's Participation and Engagement. Our work always starts with the intuitive idea of human dignity. We work with children in early and middle childhood. We develop open and honest relationships with children, valuing their worth and their views. We create opportunities for children to feel safe, challenged and trusted.

We use creative approaches and have developed a thematic and holistic approach to our work. The legacy for children and adults who participate is the experience of joyful relationships and the possibility of identifying new ways of being together, which are mindful of and informed by everyone's human rights.

This is a report about children's views of learning and school life in Scotland. It draws on children's participation in Children's Parliament programmes, projects and consultations from 2008 to 2016. Some work is named in the body of the report, all of the referenced work is identified in the appendix.

The illustrations come from several Children's Parliament programmes and consultations and from a workshop with children in December 2016 where they reviewed our findings and authenticated the key messages presented here.

The views and experiences shared in this report give us much food for thought, especially in the context of Scotland's aspiration of becoming the best place to go to school. What children have said has also been the basis of a formal submission to the Scottish Government's Education Governance Review (2016).



Above: Excerpt from *Imagining Aberdeen Mural* (2016)

Opposite: *Active Children Mural* (2016)

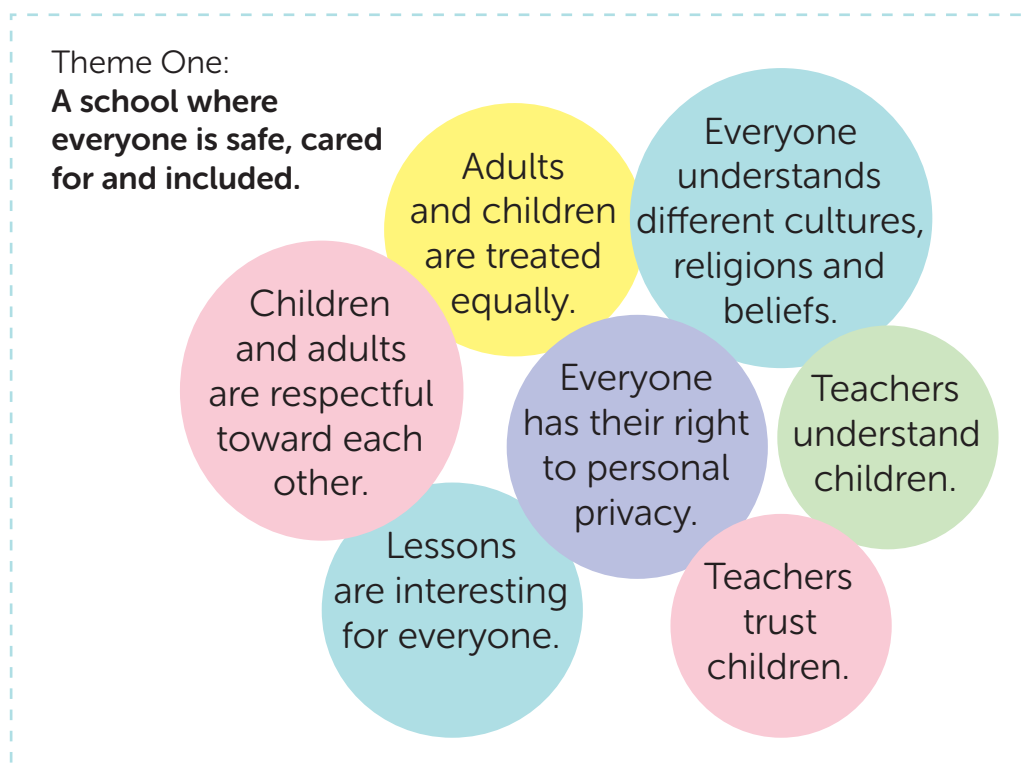
A school that is excellent and equal

The Scottish Government wants the key principles of excellence and equity to underpin our approach to educational reform. They also ask: are there other principles which should be applied?

For Children's Parliament, reflecting with children on what an excellent and equal school might be like, means asking: What would a school be like if everyone had the same opportunities and no-one was left behind? Why do some children struggle at school?

Excellence and equity are fine principles, but reaching a shared understanding that involves children and young people, means describing what it is like to be in a school or learning environment where excellence and equity are the experience. To begin, children understand the notion of different but equal, they understand and want respect for themselves and for others. Children want a good education, by which they mean the chance to learn, to feel safe and included at school.

In 2008 a team of children involved in the Children's Parliament programme in Fife undertook an investigation as part of the Scottish Government's UNCRC reporting (2008). The children wrote a description of what school would be like if it reflected the rights of the child. There were 6 themes, and within each theme several characteristics were identified. This remains, as far as we are aware, the only child-led and authored tool of its kind in Scotland and it describes what every school should be like. Whenever we return to children's experience and aspiration for school we come back to these same themes and messages. They are simple and straightforward and make more complex notions of excellence and equity feel real.



Theme Two:
**A school where
everyone is free to
learn.**

There is an even level of noise because that can be constructive.

Children go outside for lessons and are free to explore nature.

Children are given responsibilities and allowed to be independent.

Children meet role models to show learning is fun and worth doing.

There are times to be serious and times to have fun.

Teachers and adults find out about children's interests.

Pupils with special needs like dyslexia, behaviour problems or who are behind in work get more attention.

Theme Three:
**A school where
everyone is happy and
healthy.**

Children have a wide range of books and computers that are working.

Playgrounds are large, clean and safe; they have some soft surfaces and nice features - like ponds.

Children have someone they can talk to about their feelings, no-one else will find out, and you won't get into trouble for what you say.

There is active school work in and out of class; children work in teams to make learning fun (this includes in sports and music).

There is variety of choice of healthy, good, enjoyable food that is cooked in the school.

School is clean and there are welcoming views all around.

Theme Four:
**A school where
everyone has their say.**

Pupils have their voice heard on topics like spending money and choosing books and games. Teachers respect pupils and pupils respect teachers.

At least once a year everyone gets together to have a discussion about the school community – everyone takes part including parents, the janitor, the cook, the teachers and the pupils.

The school makes opportunities for adults to see the pupils' work.

The school has a suggestion box for ideas to improve the school.

Theme Five:
**A school where
everyone is important
and special.**

Everyone has achievements recognised, however small.

Everyone has time to talk.

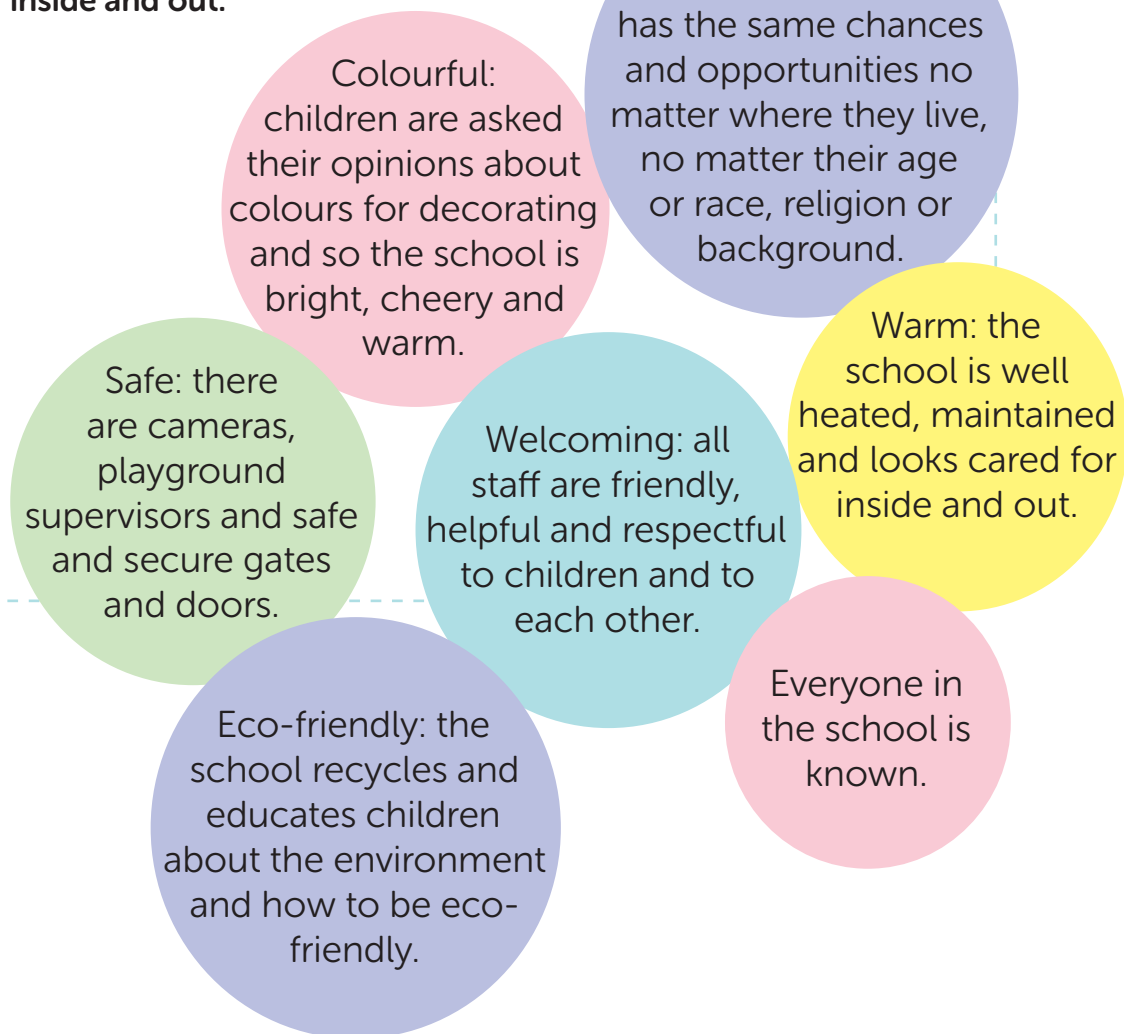
Everyone concentrates on the positives.

Everyone starts school with a chat and breakfast.

People find ways to encourage others.

There are chill-out and time-out rooms.

Theme Six:
**The school environment
that everyone wants:
inside and out.**



From recent work in the Imagining Aberdeen programme and Children's Parliament Investigates Learning consultation, it is possible to further illustrate how a school can aspire to and deliver excellence and equity.

Through the Imagining Aberdeen programme, 300 children have explored what school would be like were it to be a healthy, happy and safe place, as well as an environment where everyone does their best. Children's insight points to very similar characteristics as in our research above from 2008. In addition, Imagining Aberdeen children explored what gets in the way of a positive school experience (one which is concerned with excellence and equity) and they identify some major issues. The most common barriers for children were: distractions in the classroom, bullying and 'when you feel sad or down'. In identifying positive ways to respond to barriers to learning children saw the need to change relationships in school, they saw the need for relationships where adults took time and asked 'what's wrong?', where punishment (like the practice of withdrawing Golden Time) is not used because it does not change behaviour, where there is adequate individual support for children that need it, where there are adults who understand that life can be difficult at home, where families get help so they can help their child.

Children's Parliament Investigates Learning (2016, funded as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge) has deepened our understanding of excellence and equity and the value of children's insight, particularly the importance of framing attainment as a human rights issue. The programme was delivered in six Attainment Challenge primary schools. It focused on two areas in need of better profile and different approaches in our efforts to address the poverty-related attainment gap. The first of these elements is learner self-perception, research shows that how a child sees themselves as a learner and their understanding of what skills or characteristics a successful learner has is fundamental to creating and maintaining a connection with school and learning. Secondly, the programme sought to foster improved rights-based relationships between teacher and learner in the context of a set of creative conversations about learning. The conclusions of the work are of relevance to the Government's interest in addressing the attainment gap, as well as decisions about children's learning and school life being taken at school level.

- To be a learner who fulfils their potential children need to be nurtured and to know they are loved. While specific nurture interventions might be helpful for some children we need to create nurturing environments for all learners from the early years and through childhood and adolescence. Learning happens when children are happy and safe.
- It is not what we do to children, but what we do with them that will last; shifting learner self-perception and creating relationships based on human dignity is a process; it is a foundation, but it is not a quick fix.
- Learner self-perception matters for all learners but there are children for whom it needs to be an explicit focus. The programme points to particular issues for boys and looked after children.
- The empathic teacher is the key. Our interest began with the view that rights are made real when the child's lived experience is valued, understood and when adults fulfil their responsibilities as duty bearers to deliver the care, love and professional interventions that the child requires. A child's right to an education that is concerned with realising their fullest potential means getting alongside the child, valuing their lived experience, giving them love and care, and using our best professional knowledge and skills to make a positive difference. It's all about relationships.

Equity at school also means recognising that children and their families can experience discrimination, prejudice and inequality in the community, where this happens there is a burden that children often bring into school. Through *Me + Us* (2013) children showed how keen they are to explore what being Scottish means in contemporary society. *Me + Us* participants reminded us that children learn from adults, and the values and behaviours that they are exposed to at home and in the community may not match the general messages about equality that they receive at school. It is not inevitable that children will adopt negative adult values or behaviours, for example violence, racism, homophobia or sectarianism, but by addressing underlying themes of identity and belonging, children can learn positive values and feel empowered to challenge prejudice and hate.

A commitment to early intervention and prevention of inequality and discrimination means starting with inclusive values-based learning in childhood, in school. *Me + Us* (2013) evidenced that children have capacity to talk about and understand discrimination and a range of 'isms' – but for this to be about learning (and not just a space where you are told what to think) teachers and other adults must be confident to engage openly, and children must be free to share and explore what they have learned and heard elsewhere.

Finally, in terms of an education system concerned with excellence and equity we must address the experience of bullying. Responding to bullying as an issue for an individual or small group fails to address it as a key barrier to excellence and equity. Children's Parliament is overwhelmed by the pervasive nature of bullying in our schools and communities. The response must be for schools to recognise this and deal with it strategically; exploring all contexts, practices and mindsets. But it seems that in response to bullying adult duty bearers have individualised and trivialised it, we think that writing a policy will do the job, or we turn our heads so as not to see it.

Children's Parliament Investigates Bullying (2016) is working with teams of 9 to 11-year-old investigators to look at the issue. Key findings are emerging, these centre around the need for adults to be available and able to listen to concerns, to dispense with investigation and punishment, and instead focus on fixing relationships. The children are focusing on prevention and working on the importance of human dignity, empathy, kindness and trust. Interpersonal relationships based on these values must underpin our society's aspirations for an education system concerned with excellence and equity.



Having a say about learning and school

The Scottish Government is interested in identifying how governance arrangements can best support decisions about children's learning and school life to be taken at school level. There is also an interest in how the accountability arrangements for education can be improved.

For Children's Parliament, the current starting point is overtly adult-oriented. Children's Parliament work points to the need to start with the needs, experiences and rights of the child when it comes to how, where and why decisions are made about the child's learning and experience of school. In many Children's Parliament programmes we have asked children questions like: How do you have your say about learning at school: in the classroom, in school overall? What needs to happen to let you have your say properly?

Children tell us that they want to do well at school and that they thrive on opportunities to engage in learning that includes their views, helps them understand the purpose of what they do and the illustrates the progress that they are making.

Articles 28 and 29 of the UNCRC describe the child's right to an education concerned with "the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential". Although we have fallen short of full incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots Law (children in various Children's Parliament programmes and consultations have concluded that full incorporation is necessary) these articles and specifically this language is used in the Standard in Scotland's Schools Act (2000); the right to an education is enshrined in Scots Law. Further, the law says that "an education authority shall have due regard, so far as is reasonably practicable, to the views (if there is a wish to express them) of the child or young person in decisions that significantly affect that child or young person, taking account of the child or young person's age and maturity". It is time to stop asking children about what specific issues or areas they would like to have their say, and act now, as adult duty bearers, to make legal commitments a reality in practice, across all areas of teaching, learning and life at school.

Having established a right to have their say, how does this feel to children in practice?

In the Leaders of Learning programme (phase 1, 2014) Children's Parliament engaged children in a creative programme that explored learning. Children stated that they value their learning and like to go to school. Children like to and want to talk about their learning. Children know they have 'a right to an education'. But there are not enough opportunities to talk about what the experience of learning and going to school should be like. Children did not feel that they were engaged in planning or leading their learning enough. They felt some sense of control in terms of doing work on their own, finishing it when they wanted to, or making a choice about which activity to do. They did not report involvement in deciding on what they learned or how it was organised or facilitated. For some children learning can feel unchallenging or repetitive. Barriers to learning include problems or stress at home, interruptions in class including bad behaviour, health conditions, bullying and not feeling motivated (again reflecting issues already described earlier).

Children like when wider achievements are also valued and recognised – such as doing well in sports or hobbies or community activities. However, such recognition is piecemeal and dependent on the teacher's interest in recognising life outside school.

Across many Children’s Parliament programmes (see appendix) children express a strong desire to be more involved in school-life and feel they should have a chance to share their opinions about how and what they are learning in school. This means creating and sustaining opportunities that work with this in mind. Other agencies have reported on formal structures such as Pupil Councils when it comes to learner participation and engagement and have highlighted that these often have limited scope and impact. What children tell Children’s Parliament is that they want to be involved day-to-day, both individually and collectively – in the classroom and across school – on matters of teaching and learning. This means identifying what works well for them, but it also means recognising what is not (more on addressing infringements and complaints below).

Teachers need to see themselves as a reflective practitioner, with the skills and confidence to be both supported and challenged by children. If Scotland is to be the best place to go to school, a stated national aspiration, it needs to be the best place to be a teacher. Teachers with the skills, values and approaches that embed ideas of excellence and equity do so through relationships built on dignity, respect and kindness. Children taking part in the Teacher Employment Review (2011) consultation identified that teachers need to ‘love their job’.

Children’s Parliament talks to children about Curriculum for Excellence, and in particular about the core curricular areas which are the ‘responsibility of all’ school and learning centre practitioners: literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The premise of our work in talking about the curriculum is that in doing so we can learn how to democratise and make our decisions about children’s learning and school life more authentic.

In the Embark! project (2014) children talked about reading. The purpose of reporting on this here is to emphasise the importance and value of children giving us their insight, and then considering as adults how their experiences and views on learning can inform teaching and learning in school.

On reading, children like to have a choice in what they read; they recognise that sometimes it is necessary to read an assigned book in school and that these experiences challenge them and introduce them to new ideas, but their enjoyment of reading increases when they can select their own reading material. Children feel frustrated when they get stuck on words or when they don’t understand the main concepts, and without adequate help and support from adults this can negatively impact on their reading habits. For many children, the biggest challenges when reading are noise and distractions from classmates, friends and family. They feel frustrated and unfocused when they cannot get on with their reading because of outside interference.



Image: Child’s artwork created during the Embark! Project (2014)

Children emphasise the importance of, and pleasure in, reading on their own, but they also enjoy being read to and sharing in the collective experience of hearing a story. Children say that reading is a vehicle that allows them to travel to new places through the pages of a book. Children love the way reading can spark their imaginations and allow them to pretend to be someone or somewhere new. Children also discuss reading as a temporary escape from things that might be upsetting or difficult in real life. Children like to pretend that they are in a story or put themselves in the shoes of a main character. Reading provides an opportunity for children to explore a vast array of feelings, make connections to characters' experiences and develop a sense of empathy.

Children see reading as an essential life skill that impacts upon their ability to do well in their education and to get a job when they are older. They also discuss reading as a cycle, recognising that it is good to read now because as adults they will read to their own children. For children to whom reading does not come easily, finding a particular story, genre or format that inspires them can deeply affect their feelings towards and habits of reading. Technology plays a role in developing children's literacy skills and some children enjoy reading much more on a device, finding it cooler and more accessible than a book. Along with reading stories on devices, children use technology to play games that build vocabulary and improve spelling and to write their own stories.

Finally, a key aspect of having your say about learning and life at school must be access to redress when rights are infringed. Children's Parliament facilitated the Consultation on Raising Complaints (2016) on behalf of the Children and Young People's Commissioner in advance of new powers of investigation accorded to the Commissioner's office. Some broad findings from this work help highlight issues of participation and transparency of adult decisions and a fundamental imbalance in the child's experience of school.

Children understand that a part of their right to have their say should mean the right to complain and have that taken seriously. The right to complain is also seen as a sign that the rights of the child are taken seriously. But children worry about the repercussions of making a complaint. They do not want to hurt someone's feelings and sometimes it can feel like it is probably not worth complaining as nothing will change. Children feel that adults sometimes trivialise their worries or unhappiness. Children feel a complaint should be part of a process that addresses problems and finds solutions. They understand that not complaining can leave them feeling frustrated and have a negative effect on how they feel or get involved with things. In this consultation exercise, and in many others conducted by Children's Parliament, children identified that an adult with responsibility to seek or hear a child's complaint must be trained and have an understanding of children's rights and how to communicate with respect for children.

Children identify a range of matters they would like to have the opportunity and confidence to complain about – from personal experiences such as bullying or having something stolen, to wider experiences such as children in care not being treated well at school or at home, or those who need it not getting enough support at school. In discussing what can go wrong in school and other environments children see value in putting things in place to solve problems without having to complain – they like peer mediation, working together to find solutions, adults who step in and help resolve things quickly and the opportunity to campaign with other children. Children are more likely to complain if they have the confidence and skills, know where to go or who to speak to, trust that the person will listen and take it seriously, and know that something will be done about it.

Support at school

The Scottish Government is interested in what support and services should be delivered by schools, and what responsibilities should be devolved to head teachers and teachers to make this happen. Unfortunately, the Government's focus, as expressed in the Education Governance Review, is once again on the responsibilities and actions of teachers and head teachers, rather than the needs and rights of the learner. In this report, we focus on children as our starting point, and the fact that one in five children in Scotland's schools has an additional support need.

When children engage with Children's Parliament they identify the support children may need. Some children will need help at school in terms of support for learning. Some children need support to understand and manage experiences out with school, but which impact on and influence how they learn. Some children live with adverse childhood experiences, have lives which are complex and stressful, or they may come to school tired or hungry.

In Children's Parliament's experience, children talk about how family and community life interface with the experience of learning and school. In our StreetsAhead Glasgow programme (2011) children talked about growing up in the east end of Glasgow and showed that they have the capacity and honesty to identify and reflect on community problems, but do not feel defined by them. With appropriate child-centred approaches and time, children balanced concerns with optimism and aspiration. School can be a place to reflect on life in the community, celebrate what is best, and seek out and make the most of opportunities.

Across Children's Parliament work, children say they appreciate adult support and understanding but that there simply is not enough of it. Children are frustrated by disruptions in the classroom, but they do not blame their classmates.



Asking for or receiving help means taking a risk. We know this as adults, and we make choices about who we seek out in services. A challenge for children who need help is that they may not have much of a choice, and the school-based adults who give support may not present as empathic, listening or receptive. Children say that some adults do not pay attention, or tell them to just get on with what they have been told to do. Children (in both primary and in the early years of secondary school) want private information to remain private, they would like to have confidential, trained specialist adults in their school who they can talk to without fear of others finding out their personal worries or concerns.

A key issue for children and a block to respectful, trusting, helping relationships is adults' shouting. Children are regularly shouted at in school. Shouting is just one ingredient in the creation of a toxic atmosphere of disrespect and stress. Schools where adults shout are not safe places for children. Head teachers are responsible for the ethos and practices in their school and must stop adults' shouting.

The consultation question is about support at school. We assume this must be interested in the emotional/mental wellbeing of children as this is at the heart of realising one's rights; when children feel positive about themselves, their relationships, their abilities and futures they are more likely to engage positively with the world around them. When children are enabled and able to articulate their feelings it is possible to address and alleviate worry and stress. These are the beliefs, attitudes and experiences we build in Children's Parliament programmes and we see in some partner schools. Children who are aware of their emotions and manage them, cope with uncertainty and recover from experiences of adversity will be successful learners. To improve experiences and outcomes for children we need to influence the adults around them – shifting judgemental, negative and limiting interpretations (perhaps built by difficulties in 'managing' the child) to views and behaviours that are caring, supportive and optimistic. A school concerned with wellbeing is a school focused on relationships.

Research has identified that building positive connections with school and learning are protective. Children's Parliament Community Programmes (Glasgow and Fife 2012-2015) have shown a positive impact. These programmes build the child's understanding of rights, promote values and behaviours for citizenship, and raise aspirations. If the Scottish Government, through the Education Governance Review, is interested in what services and support should be delivered in school, then these should be concerned with similar approaches.



Getting parents and carers involved

The Scottish Government is interested in how parents can play a stronger role in school life. At Children's Parliament, we would suggest that this needs to start with some reflection by schools. Questions which help would be: Do we know why we want parents and carers to be involved in their child's learning and the life of the school? Do parents and carers currently have enough or too little say about what happens at school? If there are barriers to involvement, what are they and am I responsible for any of them? How could we encourage parents to get involved in their child's learning and life at school?

Across Children's Parliament's projects, consultations and programmes we seek to engage children who are living in areas of deprivation, or who may be one of the 20% of children in Scotland's schools with an additional support need. We also make significant efforts to engage parents, carers and family members in understanding the work and help us to recognise and celebrate achievement. To make parent and carer engagement effective in the context of children's learning and schooling, our experience tells us that school's must:

- Start with an understanding that the parent/carer themselves may have been failed by the education system.
- Establish the relationship early and sustain it across transitions.
- Start positively to ensure that our relationships are built on the shared understanding that we all want the best for the child.
- Focus on fixing emerging problems, and not on blaming.
- Use social media, as well as printed information, to communicate with home.
- Use celebrations and informal gatherings to have positive conversations.

In our work in schools, Children's Parliament sees successful parent and carer engagement where there is investment in professional staff who can form home/school links. Positive outcomes are achieved when proactive, friendly, approachable staff meet and engage with parents at home and in the community, before then supporting parents to get involved in school.

Children's Parliament work has also supported the development of the National Parenting Strategy and has put some focus on understanding and celebrating the role of Dads. This is an important aspect of parental involvement and engagement with learning; the insight from children will support school efforts in this regard. In the Dads Project (2013) children reflected on the role their Dads play in their lives and what being a Dad must be like. Children identified that the best thing about being a Dad included spending time and having fun with your child; feeling proud of your child; having a child you could talk to; seeing your child grow up and encouraging and giving advice to your child. Children recognised some challenges about being a Dad which included: working too hard and not having enough time with your child; worries about keeping your child safe or concerns for their future; worries about having enough money for your family to buy food and pay bills; making the right decisions for your child and family; and when you cannot be with your child because you live or work far away. For children who do not live with their Dads, or who live with Dad a minority of the time, there is a sense of missing him and wanting him to be more present in their lives, including support for learning and in school life. Parental engagement and involvement must take account of the different structure and nature of family life and the challenges of engaging Dads. In practical terms, this may mean that schools need to communicate with more than one home-setting for a child.

Teachers

The Scottish Government is interested in how to support teacher education and professional learning in order to build the 'professional capacity' we need. For Children's Parliament, there is a need to clarify what this 'professional capacity' should be concerned with. To start this enquiry we ask: When a teacher is doing their best for children, what do they know? What are they good at? What do they say to children? What do they do for children? How do they make children feel?

Moving on Up (2014) explored the transition from primary to secondary school. A key message from this project was that adults have (and must understand their) responsibilities to keep children safe, and that adults need to be explicit in expressing that they care for and will support all children. This work captured a key element of the responsibility that adults, including teachers, need to recognise and address; as duty bearers it is our moral and professional duty to help children realise their rights, and that we do so by being champions for the rights and wellbeing during our education practice, particularly at points of transition.

In both initial teacher education and CPD in school, teachers must be supported to understand that their values and capacity for empathic relationships, with each and every learner, is what underpins a positive learning experience.

Through the Imagining Aberdeen programme (2016) children have been exploring their lived experience and have identified the characteristics of an adult who is positive about children. Teachers are central adult figures in a child's life and these traits apply to them too. From the Aberdeen work, as an example of children's insight we draw the following: an adult should know how to be respectful, how to take care of serious situations, how to have fun and know that children are individuals. An adult should be good at paying attention, being nice, giving hugs, keeping children safe, working less and spending time with children. An adult should say things like: "I love you"; "Why so glum?"; "Be careful". Adults should treat children with respect, with honesty, kindly, by being strict but fair. Adults should make children feel loved, happy, safe and satisfied.

The Scottish Government has already produced a template for the 'Common Core of Skills, Knowledge and Understanding and Values for the Children's Workforce In Scotland' published in 2012 available at <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2012/06/5565>. This code applies to teachers and all staff working in the school environment. The work has been done, but it needs to be implemented.

Image: Excerpt from Imagining Aberdeen Mural (2016)



Other issues and topics

There are a number of other issues and topics that children have raised as important when we talk about learning and life at school.

Play, Sport and Physical Activity

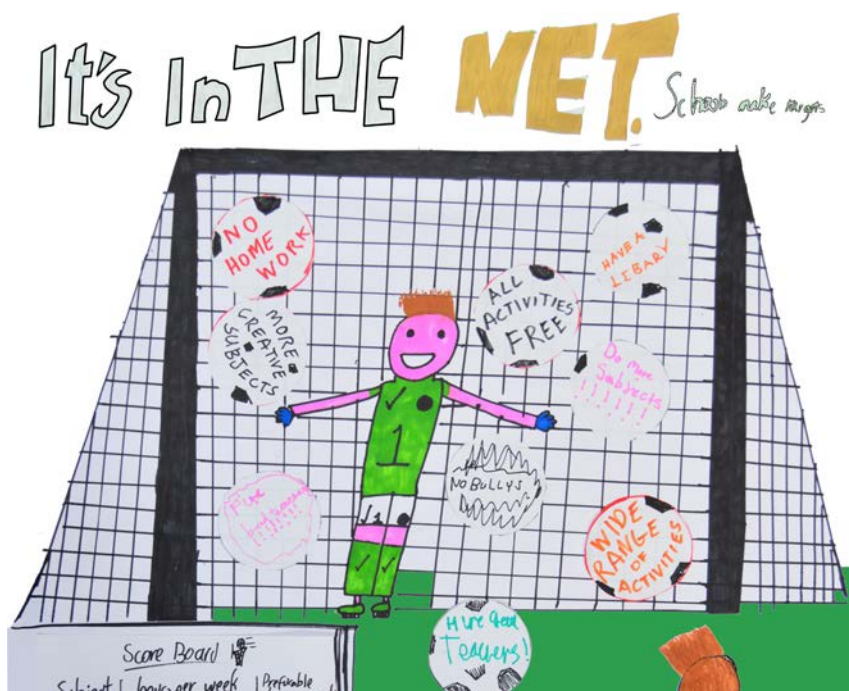
Children want adults to play with them more. In many Children's Parliament programmes, including in work with the International Play Association (Right to Play, 2011) children say that playing is the best thing about being a child. Play in the community can be restricted because of feeling or being unsafe in public places. Adult worries can restrict children's outdoor play experiences. Children like their screen time, but would do other things if they were available. If families and communities are struggling to support play, then schools need to do more. This can be during the school day but also when we think of schools and their grounds as community resources. Children want playgrounds to be stimulating and places within which to feel free. They want to do more fun things, to play in the classroom, and this should not just be limited to slots of Golden Time; time that can be deducted as a punishment for 'bad' behaviour or unfinished work.

Children want more PE at school. In the Children's Parliament consultation Children and Sport (2014), as well as other work on sport and physical activity, children report that PE at school is best when children have a say about what they are doing and when specialist PE teachers or coaches are involved. Children like additional after school, lunchtime and weekend sports at school, as well as community-based opportunities. Children say that facilities in primary school need to be better; they think that facilities in secondary schools are better because young people's PE and interests are taken more seriously. On occasion children report being excluded from PE or Games sessions in school as a punishment.

Children say that some things impact negatively on their sporting opportunities: the cost of taking part, dependence on over busy adults, gender stereotyping, lack of opportunities for children with disabilities, having fewer or different opportunities because they are young, adults who shout and take the fun out of sport. Adults who teach or coach sports should be kind, patient, calm, knowledgeable, and experienced, but most importantly they should not shout at children taking part.

Children say that sports clubs provide opportunities to have great teaching or coaching and to play a sport competitively. Being part of a club can take an interest or skill further than playing at school can. Children enjoy the opportunity to participate in and to learn about new and different sports and sporting activities, but it can be frustrating when projects or initiatives are short-term and end.

Image: Artwork from Education Governance Review Workshop (2016)



Technology

In two Children's Parliament consultations, GLOW (2014) and Developing A Digital Learning Strategy (2015), children said that technology is an important part of their lives and that it should be incorporated into more aspects of teaching and learning. The games children perceive as educational could be more like other games they play, with an emphasis on making them feel more fun. In general, there should be more fun/educational apps that support learning. Children like using technology, but they have different views about the amount of adult involvement or supervision that they want. Younger children like using technology with their parents or carers so that they can be supported in accessing what they need. By the early years of secondary school children appreciate feeling trusted to go online on their own. Children want adults to help them navigate technology so they feel safe, confident and capable. Across both consultations, while many of the children's ideas for enhancing the learning experience relate to technology/ being on-line, many also highlight their desire for broader environmental or relationship-based improvements to learning, including more personalisation and more help and support for all learners. With children using technology for fun and learning across school and home, this area of learning is clearly one in which adults from school and home need to be connected.

Homework

Some children like to have homework that helps them extend learning from the classroom, it needs to be relevant and linked to projects and topics they enjoy. Even if they are happy to do homework children may not have the space or quiet they need at home to do it as well as they want to. Many children see homework as an infringement on their free time and opportunities to play. They do not think that teachers want to give homework, or mark and return it.

Poverty

Poverty affects children day to day, in terms of practical things like having enough food to eat, a house that is warm and has the necessities of life, but also because worrying about money is stressful for adults. Children see, hear and feel this worry and stress.

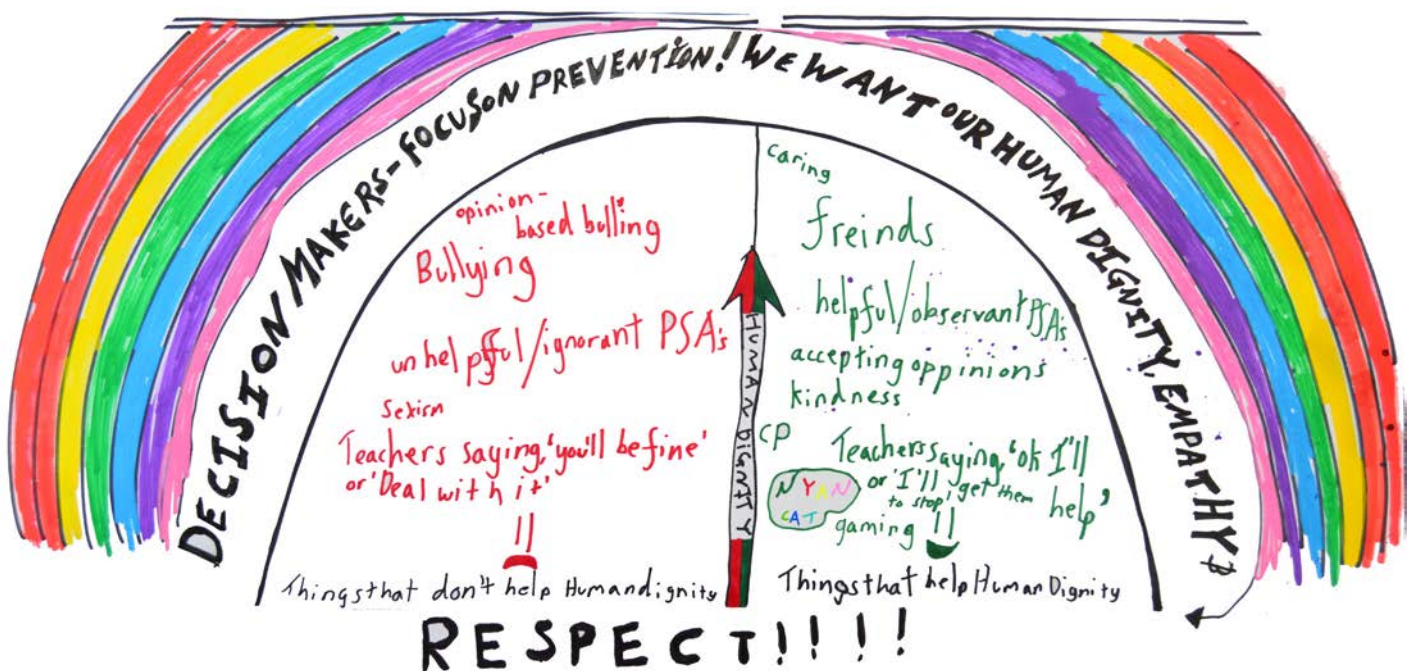


Image: Child's Dignometer created during the Education Governance Review workshop (2016)

In work for Scottish Government, consulting on the initial draft Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill, children identified child poverty as the most important barrier to a good life. Across many aspects of Children's Parliament programmes and activities, children say they worry that their family does not have enough money to buy what they need. Children identify that having to pay for things at school – what they bake in Home Economics, what they make in the workshop, or for trips – is unfair, it excludes some children and should stop. During Imagining Aberdeen (2016), 300 children worked on a set of requests to adults about what these adult duty bearers could do for children; one of the children's requests was "All children need enough to eat".

Wellbeing

Children's Parliament works with children to understand and make real their human rights. In legislation policy and practice there is increasing use of the term wellbeing. If we were to summarise what children articulate they need in terms of wellbeing it would be as follows.

Children's wellbeing at school would be enhanced by; everyone being treated equally and getting the individual support they need, more chances to play and join clubs, teachers listening to children and helping with any problems or worries (especially bullying), learning about life not just subjects, and every child being praised and rewarded for doing well.

Children's wellbeing in the community would be enhanced by; more things to do, help to make friends and play outdoors, safer and cleaner parks and environments, better and safer public transport, police that help you, opportunities to volunteer, and having someone or some place to go for support.

Children's wellbeing at home would be enhanced by family environments where they are loved and feel safe, where families do not worry about having enough money to get by, where they live in neighbourhoods where people are kind.



More about Children's Parliament and links to referenced work

In compiling this report, we have drawn on Children's Parliament work between 2006 and 2016. Some of the programmes, projects or consultation detailed here have been named in the earlier pages, others are not named but have been used to inform the report and the response to the Scottish Government's Education Governance Review. This is not a full list of Children's Parliament work over the period, rather detail of work which has addressed school and learning.

2016

Imagining Aberdeen

Children from: Aberdeen City

Number of children: 300

Project description: Children aged 8 to 12 from the City's four Attainment Challenge primary schools have been reflecting on life at home, at school and in the community. This reflection will inform the writing of the Children's Services Plan, supporting the Local Authority to meet requirements under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act and establish a further strand in the city's commitment to children's participation and engagement.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/imaginingaberdeen/>

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/imaginingaberdeen/>

StreetsAhead Tranent

Children from: East Lothian

Number of children: 250 children in whole class workshops and 16 children as the Mural Team.

Project description: Part of the Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design 2016, StreetsAhead Tranent explores children's views and experiences of their local community and built environment; examining how these factors impact on children's rights and wellbeing. The children also took part in the United Nations Day of General Discussion on children and the environment as part of the Under the Same Sky collaborative.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/streetsaheadtranent/>

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/streetsaheadtranent/>

CP Investigates Bullying

Children from: Edinburgh

Number of children: 200 children in whole class workshops and 48 children in Investigation Teams

Project description: Children aged 9 to 11 years old are exploring how to create school and classroom environments based on human dignity, kindness and respect. Through the children's investigation their schools are considering how to both prevent and respond to bullying when it happens.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/cpinvestigatesbullying/>

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/cpinvestigates/>

CP Investigates Learning

Children from: East Ayrshire, Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire, West Lothian

Number of children: 150

Project description: Part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, the work explored learner self-perception and the importance of rights-based relationships in the classroom.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/cpinvestigateslearning/>

Seen + Heard: Looked after children programme/Fife (2015-present)

Children from: Fife

Number of children: 23

Project description: Children's Parliament in partnership with Fife's Corporate Parent Board, supports groups of children to explore what it means to be healthy, happy and safe in care. Members of Children's Parliament (MCPs) learn about their rights, have a say in matters that affect them and build relationships with adults who make decisions about their lives. The children's views and experiences will inform decisions made by the Corporate Parent Board and help improve services for looked after children across Fife.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/seenandheardfife/>

Digital Teaching and Learning Strategy for Scotland

Children from: Edinburgh, Fife, Scottish Borders

Number of children: 93

Project description: Between September and December 2015, the Scottish Government formally consulted on the development of a 'Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy for Scotland'. The consultation document set out the Scottish Government's vision that all of Scotland's educators, learners and parents can take full advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technology in order to raise attainment, ambition and opportunities for all. The views and aspirations of children and young people were crucial in this consultation process, so on behalf of the Scottish Government, Children's Parliament facilitated workshops with children to gather their views.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/developing-digital-learning-strategy/>

Active Children

Children from: Angus, East Dunbartonshire, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Highland.

Number of children: 40

Project description: As part of the legacy of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, Children's Parliament worked with children across Scotland to explore their views and experiences of participating in sport and physical activity. The Active Children project resulted in a mural that highlighted key messages about inclusion, support, motivation, enjoyment and the benefits of leading active lives.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/active-children/>

Children's Parliament National Sitting 2016

Children from: Edinburgh, Angus, Falkirk, East Dunbartonshire and Highland

Number of children: 40

Project description: The theme of the Sitting was Active Lives. This event brought Members of Children's Parliament (MCPs) with key decision makers from Scottish Government, NHS, local authorities and universities. At the National Sitting, the children and adults viewed the Active Children mural, had discussions about what helps and what gets in the way of children leading active lives, and took part in a series of physical activities and games.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/childrens-parliament-national-sitting-2016/>

2015

Consultation on Raising Complaints

Children from: Midlothian, South Lanarkshire

Number of children: 14

Project description: In the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the Commissioner for Children and Young People has been given new powers to investigate complaints from individual children and young people. In preparation for this, the Office undertook a mapping exercise to explore the various complaints-handling bodies and regulators in Scotland, assessing if and how they take complaints and concerns from children and young people. Children's Parliament was commissioned by CYPCS to speak with children to gather their views on the theme of complaints and report their views and ideas.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/consultation-raising-complaints/>

Children and young people's understanding of Wellbeing

Children from: Edinburgh, Glasgow

Number of children: 47

Project description: In a series of workshops children and young people (target age group 10 to 20 as specified in the Scottish Government understanding of 'adolescence') engaged in discussion about wellbeing. Looking across key domains of home, school/learning and community participants explored: what wellbeing means to children and young people by considering what they need to be 'healthy, happy and safe'; negative and risk factors, exploring what prevents, undermines or harms wellbeing; and what action can be taken to improve wellbeing. Commissioned by Scottish Government Directorate for Education Analytical Services.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/adolescent-wellbeing/>

Children's Parliament National Sitting 2015

Children from: Aberdeen, Edinburgh, East Lothian, Glasgow, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Western Isles.

Number of children: 75

Project description: On April 1st 2015 children came together with adult decision makers invited from Local Authorities, 3rd sector organisations, NHS Boards, Scottish Government and other public bodies to discuss what we need to do to make Scotland the best place to grow up.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/national-sitting-2015-2/>

2014

Leaders of Learning

Children from: South Lanarkshire, Stirling, Midlothian

Number of children: 56

Project description: Leaders of Learning was an exploration of children and young people's experiences of learning, both in and out of school, and how they can be included in the planning and delivery of learning as outlined by Curriculum for Excellence. Young Scot, SYP and Children in Scotland also participated in the project, delivering other aspects. Funded by Scottish Government.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/leaders-of-learning/>

Moving on Up

Children from: Renfrew

Number of children: 130

Project description: Moving On Up was a collaborative project which saw CP work with Creative Artworks Scotland, Our Place Youth Project and Renfrewshire Council. Children had their say about what they need to support them in the transition from primary to secondary school. The project was funded by Renfrewshire Council.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/moving-renfrew-transitions-project/>

Children, Technology and GLOW

Children from: Renfrew

Number of children: 95

Project description: When Scottish Government decided to launch a new version of Glow, Scotland's online community for learners and teachers, they undertook a Privacy Impact Assessment to look at the benefits of and areas of risk for the resource. Children's Parliament facilitated a consultation with children looking at children's rights, information and technology, privacy and safety online.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/children-privacy-technology/>

Children and Sport/Sporting Chance

Children and Sport/Sporting Chance

Children from: South Lanarkshire, West Lothian, Fife, Scottish Borders

Number of children: 96

Project description: As the public consultation on the 'Giving Children and Young People a Sporting Chance: A Draft Strategy for Scotland' took place Children's Parliament were commissioned by the Scottish Government to undertake direct engagement with children of primary school age. Children explored their experiences and aspirations about participating in sport.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/sporting-chance/>

Mapping our Future

Children from: Glasgow, Fife, Stirling, Midlothian, Edinburgh

Number of children: 24

Project description: Children's Parliament was approached by the Scottish Government's Strategy Unit to provide support around its Horizon Scanning programme, which explores a range of possible futures and how our world might be different by 2021. The Scottish Government has made a commitment to putting the views of children and young people at the heart of the Horizon Scanning process. The children met with key civil servants to share their experiences and their ideas for Scotland. The groups focused on 8 themes that impact on children's lives: Play; School and Learning; Home and Family; Relationships; Community; Environment; Identity; Jobs and Future Aspirations.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/mapping-our-future/>

Embark! Routes to Reading

Children from: South Lanarkshire, Inverclyde, Edinburgh

Number of children: 100

Project description: As part of the Read On Get On national campaign, Save the Children commissioned Children's Parliament to facilitate a consultation with primary aged children about their experiences of and views on reading. The children explored why they enjoyed reading, what challenges they faced when reading, what and who could support them, and why reading is important.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/embark-routes-reading/>

A consultation with children on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill

Children from: Angus, Edinburgh, Fife, Stirling, West Lothian, Glasgow

Number of children: 107

Project description: This consultation gathered children's views on what they needed in life to be healthy, happy and safe and the role of adults in ensuring that their needs were met. Specific elements of the Bill were explored including the definition of wellbeing, the role of Named Person, Child's Plan and improving Foster Care. The work was submitted as a consultation response. Consultation funded by Scottish Government.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/children-and-young-people-bill/>

Me + Us

Children from: Edinburgh, West Lothian, Midlothian, Aberdeen, South Lanarkshire, Western Isles

Number of children: 60

Project description: Children worked in Local Investigation Teams to explore cultural identity, heritage and belonging. This project was funded by the Scottish Government Community Safety Unit (Anti-Sectarianism team) with the aim to understand sectarianism from the perspective of younger children.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/me-and-us/>

Dad's Project

Children from: Aberdeen, Edinburgh, East Lothian, Fife, Western Isles

Number of children: 50

Project description: Children's Parliament facilitated the Dads Project to explore children's views on fatherhood and the role of father figures in their lives – and to celebrate the role of dads in family life. In this project a dad/father figure could be a birth-dad but could also be another significant male carer. The profile of fathers and fatherhood has become more important on the policy agenda – The National Parenting Strategy, GIRFEC and our consideration of UNCRC implementation all mean we must consider more explicitly the importance of family life and the role of fathers. This project was funded by Awards for All.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/the-dads-project/>

Community Programmes (Glasgow and Fife) 2012 – 2015

Children from: Glasgow and Fife

Number of children: 1,588

Project description/Glasgow: From 2012 to 2015 Children's Parliament was part of the UK-wide Realising Ambition Lottery Funded programme, delivering an evidence-based programme to reduce the likelihood of young people offending.

Project description/Fife: From 2012 and 2014 Children's parliament received funding from Fife Council to continue our long-standing relationship with them.

Key elements of the Community Programmes included training for teachers, whole-class workshops and referral-based arts programme designed to support identified children to develop their life skills, build their aspirations for the future and develop their sense of wellbeing. The programme evidenced 3 key outcomes for participants: improved peer relationships; increased emotional wellbeing; and increased engagement in learning.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/realising-ambition/>

Streets Ahead Glasgow

Children from: Glasgow

Number of children: 200 children engaged through whole-class workshops and 20 children in the mural/film team.

Project description: Children shared their views and experiences of growing up in the East End of Glasgow and explored what their communities need to be healthy, happy and safe. The project was commissioned by the Violence Reduction Unit and the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence. School-based workshops involved 200 children, 20 of whom then attended a week-long mural and DVD project. The work drew on the role of mothers in US based responses to community/gang violence by exploring what insight, in this case, children could bring to some of the challenges being faced by local communities, specifically whether children can be the moral voice of a community. Additional funding and/or support came from Glasgow City Council, Scottish Government and Network for Social Change.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/streetsahead-glasgow/>

Right to Play: 'I'd Play all day and night if I could!'

Children from: Aberdeen, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Glasgow, Highland, Midlothian, Perth and Kinross, Scottish Borders, West Dumbartonshire,

Number of children: 379

Project description: Working with International Play Association, children aged 2 to 13 years old discussed the meaning and importance of Play.

<http://www.ipascotland.org/projects/right-to-play-report-2011/>

Fife Peer Education Group (2011-2013)

Children from: Fife

Number of children: 20

Project description: Having completed a 2-year community programme learning about rights, the children created a series of short films that explored the infringement and realisation of rights.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3mXe-jlcLg>

Teacher Employment Review

Children from: Angus, Edinburgh, Fife.

Number of children: 131

Project description: Following the McCrone Inquiry Report in 2000, Scottish Government undertook a Review of the Teachers' Agreement which defined the terms and conditions of employment of teachers in Scotland. The task was to consider evidence and make recommendations on future terms and conditions of teachers' employment. This process sought to secure improved educational outcomes for Scotland's children and young people, develop an appreciation of the changes required to respond to the evolving needs of society and realise the full potential of Curriculum for Excellence. Children's Parliament was commissioned to submit evidence and worked with 3 groups: P5-P7 children; S1-S2 children; S3-S5 young people. The workshops used the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence (Successful learner, Confident individual, Effective contributor, Responsible citizen) as a basis for the children/young people's exploration of learning and the people who help them learn.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/teacher-employment-review/>

Do the Right Thing

Children from: Angus, Scottish Borders

Number of children: 180

Project description: The purpose of our Do the Right Thing Local Projects was to promote awareness of children's human rights and the UNCRC, consider what UNCRC implementation looks and feels like locally and identify the challenges of UNCRC implementation in the day-to-day experience of family, community and school life. The project saw us continue to encourage local partners to consider the meaning of national commitments, and for Scottish Government and other key bodies charged with UNCRC implementation to learn from local experiences. Children's Parliament produced two publications to help share our learning with professionals working with children, linking learning to National Priorities and Human Rights Belong to All of Us.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/do-the-right-thing/>

2010

Best Start in Life

Children from: Fife

Number of children: 18

Project description: Professor Susan Deacon was commissioned by Scottish Government to find out about the importance of the early years of children's lives. Susan invited Children's Parliament to organise an event in Edinburgh, at which children could have their say about what helps create the best start in life. A group of 9 and 10 year olds from 6 primary schools in Fife took part in activities and discussions at Victoria Quay about children's needs and rights in the early years. A number of MCPs from the current Fife Community Programme were also involved to bring their own views and support younger children's participation.

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/best-start-in-life/>

Children's Manifesto

Children from: Angus, East Lothian, Fife, North Lanarkshire

Number of children: 100

Project description: Children's Parliament engaged with children to ask what we need to do in Scotland to make sure every child is safe, happy and healthy. The children's views were formed into a manifesto and presented to Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People as part of the 'Right Blether' national consultation. Children aged 6 – 14 took part in the consultation

<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/childrens-manifesto/>

2008

Improving the lives of children in Scotland. A report from the Children's Parliament Local Investigation Team on Education

Children from: Fife

Number of children: 18

Project description: The Investigation Team worked as part of a consultation being coordinated by Young Scot for Scottish Government and part of listening to children and young people's views in relation to the UNCRC Concluding Observations on the implementation of children's rights in the UK.

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2009/04/30132252/14>

2006-2011

From 2006-2011 Children's Parliament facilitated a number of community programmes, each working with 20 children for a 2-to-3-year programme, exploring children's human rights at home, at school and in the community.

- **South Ayrshire Community Programme (2006-2009)**
- **Western Isles Community Programme and Youth Ambassadors (2006-2011)**
- **Fife Community Programme (2007-2010)**
- **North Edinburgh Community Programme (2007-2008)**

Homework

Homework is a horrid method of education and should not be given out. It destroys your personal time and often weakens your bonds with both friends & family. Homework puts stress on you so you can never escape school. I personally think that everyone despise homework & even teachers hate making it. All in all homework should be banned. By Luca. 55

Bad teachers and good teachers
Some teachers just think the worst of you. It's annoying and they think that I muck about when I just write slower. Just because I have the world's fastest writers in my class doesn't mean I don't type. Just because I don't know were ink comes from doesn't mean I'm stupid. They are the stupid ones thinking that I am stupid. They should not put papers down if they don't know were plastic comes from. They shouldn't act like all the children know every thing about CDT. A question isn't a sign of stupidity its a sign of intelligence and wonder. These good teachers as well ones that think the best of you and not just of them selfs.

Listen! -
I really hate it when teachers don't learn the whole story and just assume someone is the worst. Instead of actually learning the whole story. So if something happens in school could the adults please listen to all the people involved in it instead of just assuming things.

ART

Art is my favourite subject but we only have it once a week! There should be at least 2 periods of art PER WEEK. Perhaps we could replace one period of R.E with one period of art? Or there should be an art club after school or lunch time.

Emma: St Thomas of Aquinas

ICT 4 EVER!

ICT should be used in every topic because you can learn things online as well as learning how to do that.

By IMRAN!



Healthy, tasty Food



MORE SCIENCE PLEASE

What I WANT IS SCIENCE BECAUSE WE DON'T GET SCIENCE AND I WANT SCIENCE. IT WILL BE MORE FUN AND EXPERIENCE FOR COLLEGE.

REHAN.

HE-

I think in he you have to pay to cook anything but some people don't have enough money to pay for this so it is unfair.

By Erin.

Floors

I think the teachers should organise our time tables around what floors they are on. My school is quite big and quite a lot of the time we are running from 1st to 2nd floor and the teachers get upset when we are late. I think they should reschedule the time tables around the floor levels.

- Grace.

ICT

ICT is one of my favourite subjects EVER. And normally we'll get into a good routine at the start of the year and it's goes to nothing. So I would like to keep a good routine because alot of people do like ICT but we hardly do it.

CDT-

At CDT you have to pay to take stuff now which is horrible to people who cant or dont have enough money to pay to take it home which will feel really bad as you have spent time making something you cant have and everyone else will have it - By Erin.

Above: Children's views as expressed during the Education Governance Review workshop (2016).

Back Cover: Excerpt from Imagining Aberdeen Mural (2016)



 **Children's
Parliament**
giving ideas a voice

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Children's Parliament

Summerhall


Edinburgh

EH9 1PL

0131 558 9030

www.childrensparliament.org.uk

 @creative_voices

 facebook/childrensparliamentscotland

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