



Healthy Schools
CORNWALL



**The Promoting Active
Democracy Loudly
(PADL)
5 Minute Guide
to Setting Up and
Running an Effective
Primary School Council**



Introduction

Do you want to set up or revamp an existing school council or pupil parliament but don't know where to start?

Then try our 5 minute guide to creating an effective school council and keep it running smoothly!



Why School Councils?

Having a school council can be a really rewarding experience for pupils and adults alike, creating strong lines of communication and positive links among the school community. It can also be a great way to get things done beyond issues such as the loos* and school dinners.

School councils are known to encourage leadership, co-operation and communication skills.

Effective pupil participation/pupil voice in schools can:

- Bring about personal growth and development for those involved
- Improve learning
- Improve citizenship
- Improve school organisation and decision making processes

* *Although loos are a vitally important part of school life, along with access to drinking water throughout the day.*



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My favourite school council story is from the head teacher interviews where the school councillor asked candidates “do you like children?” Even very short pauses before answering were noted down very carefully!

Every Child Matters in an Effective School Council

Being Healthy

Developing confidence, communication skills, and being happier as a result of being involved with school and class councils helps children develop emotional resilience. Students also help make their peers healthier by improving classic school council issues such as the loos, food in school and promoting physical activity.

Staying Safe

Effective school councils engender peer leadership, openness and awareness. These qualities help make schools safer and happier places. Quite possibly the most effective anti-bullying schemes are those driven by students.

Enjoying and Achieving

By taking the opportunity to become involved in the school community, essential life skills such as listening, diplomacy, compromise and communication are developed. Effective participation structures in school help raise attainment by improving the learning environment.

Making a Positive Contribution

Through school councils children's belief in their ability to make a difference develops. Life skills learnt through active participation enable students to contribute to their community and wider society.

Economic Well Being

Many school councils are given budgets to manage. The responsibility of running a budget helps children develop economic and financial awareness.



More information: www.cornwallhealthyschools.org

What is a School Council?

A school council is a body of pupils set up to **represent all pupils** on issues that affect them; anything from what is sold in the tuck shop to changes in school buildings. There is no fixed structure for a school council, and they range from a group of pupils from different classes who might meet on occasional lunchtimes to a fully fledged parliament.

To be effective the council must be representative of the views of all the pupils. The **least vocal pupils** must be given opportunities to have a 'voice'. This may be through class circle times, class councils, or a suggestions box/book, which may all feed ideas in to the main school council.

There should be a **democratic 'election'** for councillors, preferably by **secret ballot** (where children don't know who voted for who, as opposed to being asked to put their hands up to vote in full view of their peers, which might affect their vote).

A school council should consider issues raised by the pupils and have a system in place to **feed back** to them on actions, outcomes and achievements.

Pupil Parliament

A pupil parliament is a slightly different way of organising the school council. It is particularly popular in smaller schools to enable all children in school to sit in parliament and with some pupils elected as 'ministers' – including a prime minister – to take on more specific roles (very much like an ordinary school council).

What is a School Council for?

That's a question worth spending some time thinking about before you go much further!

What do you hope the school council will achieve for the school? For pupils themselves? What will the council do? What are the boundaries and possibilities?

There are some excellent training resources (see links) that can help you and your school councillors explore these questions further.



Top Tips to get going!

- Get support across the board (in and out of school)
- Consider having a whole school policy for pupil involvement
- Create a constitution for the way the school council will operate
- Work on image and profile and share the work of the council widely
- Be truly democratic and inclusive in your school council
- Explore pupil participation in lessons as a preparation for setting up council, or holding an election
- Train school council members in the art of being a councillor – including realism and patience!
- Hold effective and enjoyable meetings
- Have a budget or source of funding to enable the council to take effective action
- Enjoy the experience!



Top Tips - More Information

Support

There needs to be commitment and involvement from the Senior Leadership Team, teachers, school support staff and governors. Identify a link person – a teacher, governor, TA or enthusiastic parent who will be the champion for the school council and will help coordinate its work.

Whole School Policy for Pupil Involvement

Policies alone do not bring about change but the process of developing a policy will help the whole school community understand the foundation for successful, sustainable pupil voice and participation. It will help staff and students agree shared principles, set out how pupil involvement (including school council) can work, and provide a framework for accountability and evaluation. (There are some great tools to help - see the links page)

School Council Constitution

This is an important, living document that will set out clear guidance on the role of the school council and what it is for. It will ideally set out:

- Anything the school council will always do
- Anything it can't do
- What is expected of people involved in the school council
- How people will be chosen to join the school council and how long they will serve for

Image and Profile

Look for ways for making pupil participation and being on the school council 'cool' and very high profile. Create a buzz around the work of the council, its achievements and impact on school life.



Be Democratic (and be seen to be democratic!)

Look for ways of ensuring everyone can have the chance to be included in the school council, including the youngest pupils and those with learning or physical difficulties. Decide: Do you need to involve an equal number of boys and girls? Make membership of the school council open to all and hold elections and secret ballots to ensure that pupils feel able to stand for election and don't feel pressured to vote for their friends/the usual class stars in a hands-up ballot.

Explore Participation in Lessons

There are some very good resources available (e.g. in citizenship materials) to help explore participation and democracy (see also list at the end of this guide). This can be a good introduction to the work of the school council to help pupils understand why it is important and can make a difference to school life.

Training

Train school councillors when they take up their roles in how to be an effective councillor and in the arts of patience/realism. Make the training fun and get to the real work of the council quickly so they can soon see results from their involvement.

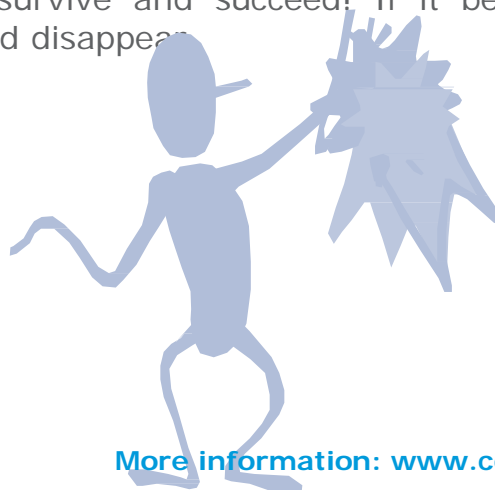
Hold Effective Meetings (see next page)

Money!

Having an annual/termly budget or access to a source of funding will enable the council to take responsibility for decisions and actions and to have degree of autonomy. They should be encouraged to look for and apply for other funding (in school and out) to help fund bigger projects and pieces of work.

Enjoy!

If everyone enjoys taking part or supporting the school council it is much more likely to survive and succeed! If it becomes a chore – it will quickly wither and disappear.



Holding an Effective School Council Meeting

Whether it's a meeting of the school council or the whole school pupil parliament – planning, organisation and someone in charge are the keys to success.

Have a Facilitator or a Chairperson

This can be an adult or a pupil. The role of this person is to ensure:

- The meeting keeps to time
- Everyone sticks to the agenda
- Everyone gets their fair say

Use an Agenda

A list of items to be discussed or decisions to be made. A good way of sticking to the point and gauging how much and what is being achieved.

The agenda should be planned well in advance and publicised widely – displayed on a school council display board for example and raised at assembly or class councils. Everyone at the meeting should know about the agenda in advance and be prepared for the items on it (this may take some extra preparation for younger children).

Take Minutes

Notes of what was covered, the gist of what was said and most importantly what was decided and who is going to do what by when! Again, make sure the school community know what happened at the meeting.

Use Voting

When people can't agree on an issue or decide a particular course of action. It can be a secret ballot or a show of hands.

In General

Have an adult to help run the council, oversee meetings (even if not chairing) and help councillors fulfil their roles. Ensure a positive start and ending to the meetings so that everyone feels encouraged and motivated. Think about when the meetings are held – do you need to provide food/refreshments for the children giving up their lunchtime? Can you ensure they get a few minutes in the playground after a meeting and before afternoon school starts?

The Primary PADL Award

PADL stands for **Promoting Active Democracy Loudly** and it has been running in both primary and secondary schools since around 2002!

PADL is an important part of the work of the Cornwall Healthy Schools Team and we are honoured to be involved in the Primary Awards.

The PADL awards are a great way to get recognition for the work of your school council and to challenge schools to improve and develop your school councils through increasing levels of quality and commitment, starting with a Bronze award and working your way through Silver and Gold towards the highest level, Platinum Award.

The awards are also intended to create links between schools and school councils through the peer review process where one school council visits another to assess their progress on the award criteria.

General Notes

School councils don't have to start at Bronze level if you think you are meeting the criteria for a higher award. You can go straight to a Silver or Gold, but you must be able to demonstrate you are meeting the criteria for lower level awards as well as the one you choose to go for.

A school council cannot go straight to the Platinum award from scratch. You must achieve Gold first and maintain it for at least a year before proceeding.

The Award Process

There are two elements to the award:

- Provide evidence (written or photographic) to demonstrate how you are meeting the award criteria (we have a simple online recording tool on the Cornwall Healthy Schools website for you to use).
- Host a visit to your school from your Healthy Schools Delivery Advisor, to meet with your school council



Setting Up an Effective Primary School Council — the PADL 5 Minute Guide

Bronze Award

For this award, all of the criteria below must be met

Council Procedures	Council links within the school	Council links beyond the school	Council activities
School Councillors are voted for anonymously by all children in the school	A link member of staff is appointed to support the council and provide feedback to other staff.	Children and staff are aware of Children's Rights (UN Convention for the Rights of the Child)	There are opportunities for the School Council to communicate with the rest of the school (e.g. on a notice board, in assemblies)
All councillors are equal and have the same chance to take part and put forward their ideas	Every class has the ability to feed into the council and feed back on their work	Parents and governors are aware of the existence of the school council	
Whole council meetings are held at least once every half term	The school makes sure that every child has a voice, including the youngest children		
The children are working towards holding officer positions on the council	Children's skills in participation are being developed within the curriculum		
Children have a say in the agenda of the council	The senior management team of the school support the school council, and there are ways for them to respond		
A constitution or ground rules are established for the school council	An appropriate time and place is allocated for school council sessions		
A system exists for change over of members which ensures continuity and gives everyone a chance to take part	All staff are aware of the school council and their role in relation to it		

Please tell us about the work that your school council has been involved in this academic year





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Silver Award

For this award, all the criteria for the previous award must be met, along with the criteria shown below.

Council Procedures	Council links within the		Council links beyond
School Council meetings are held at least once a month	Council activities Every class can put their views forward to the school council and there should be a class meeting then a council meeting then a class meeting again	The council has links to local schools, including secondary school	The school council contributes to the school's newsletter and website (where they exist) to inform all members of the school community about its work
Different methods / styles are used to discuss issues in the school council	A system is set up to help the youngest children take part (e.g. 'buddying' by Year 6) outside the school council sessions	The school has considered the role of the school council in relation to the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes	The council can show that it has achieved successful projects and new ideas, with funding provided as appropriate
Within the school council, officer posts are held by children, and they are voted in	There is a clear understanding of the role of the link teacher in relation to the school council	Parents and governors are informed about the role of the school council and its work	
There is an introduction and training process for new councillors	The school council has systems in place for two way communication with the senior management team		
Yr5 & 6 council members look after and support younger members in the school council	The school council has a system to present a yearly report of its achievements to the whole school		
In line with the curriculum, all children are taught about the fair process of councils, including class representatives as school councillors, nomination, manifestos	A regular timetable of meetings is planned in advance and displayed appropriately		
Children can vote for themselves as school councillors and present their manifesto to the class	All staff and governors are invited to a training session about school and class councils		
The school council list of things to talk about is mostly set by the children, in agreement with staff	If the school is involved in the Healthy Schools Programme, the school council is aware of what this means for your school		
A written constitution is in place and has been agreed by all council members	Different ways are in place to help children to put issues, concerns or suggestions to the school council, for example a		

Please tell us about the work that your school council has been involved in this academic year.





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Gold Award

For this award, all the criteria for the previous awards must be met, along with the criteria shown below

Council procedures	Council links within the school	Council links beyond the school	Council activities
The school is committed to having a school council in the long term	The council is involved in contributing to the School Improvement plan	The school council is actively involved in the local community	There is communication between the school council and the governing body
Every child has the opportunity to produce their own manifesto	The council has clear links to the governors and their meetings	Local councillors/MPs are invited to discuss issues with the school council	The children keep a record of budget spending, and report on it
The council has a process for checking and evaluating its own work	The school council is given a budget, the spending of which the children have the major say over	The time and place of meetings are shared with other people including parents and governors	
Meeting agendas are agreed by council members in advance, and displayed and available to all	The school council is consulted with over important decisions in school that affect children, including curriculum and policy	Parents, governors and other interested people are invited to a session to learn more about the school council	
Whole council meetings are held at least once a month, with class meetings in between	The school has, or is working towards, a Healthy Schools award, and the school council is part of the process	There are chances to communicate between the school council and parents and the wider community	
The constitution is agreed by all council members, and displayed in every classroom	Where a new staff appointment is to be made the school council has the chance to have their say	The school implements the UN Convention of The Rights of the Child through a written policy	

Please tell us about the work that your school council has been involved in this academic year.





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Platinum Award

For this award, all the criteria for the previous awards must be met, with the changes or developments indicated here also being met. The Platinum award may be gained **one year** after having achieved Gold level, or longer if Gold level has been sustained.

Council procedures	Council links beyond the school	Council activities
The school actively involves pupils in the School Development Plan process	The school is a Supporting School , and will assist pupils and link teachers from other schools.	The school will have supported at least two other schools with school council issues during the previous 12 months
The school actively involves its pupils in school policy development	The school council should be able to evidence that it has built links to its neighbouring schools/ Academy/Cooperative Trust schools and their school councils	
Twice a year the school council should seek the views of the school community (pupils and staff) on its effectiveness		
The school council will have supported at least two other schools with school council issues during the previous 12 months		
Please tell us about the work that your school council has been involved in this academic year		

Healthy Schools and Your School Council Work

Creating and developing an active and inclusive school council can also be a focus for your **Healthy Schools Award**, providing a needs-led outcomes focused piece of work that can make a difference to pupils.

You can find out more on our website.



More information: www.cornwallhealthyschools.org



PADL, Pupil Voice and curriculum links

Key Stage One

Developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities

Pupils should be taught:

1a to recognise what they like and dislike, what is fair and unfair, and what is right and wrong.

1b to share their opinions on things that matter to them and explain their views.

Preparing to play an active role as citizens

2a to take part in discussions with one other person and the whole class.

2b to take part in a simple debate about topical issues.

2c to recognise choices they can make, and recognise the difference between right and wrong.

2h to contribute to the life of the class and the school.

Developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people

4a to recognise how their behaviour affects other people.

4b to listen to other people, and play and work cooperatively.

Key Stage Two

Developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities

Pupils should be taught:

1a to talk and write about their opinions, and explain their views, on issues that affect themselves and society.

1c to face new challenges positively by collecting information, looking for help, making responsible choices, and taking action.

Preparing to play an active role as citizens

2a to research, discuss and debate topical issues, problems and events.

2d that there are different kinds of responsibilities, rights and duties at home, at school and in the community, and that these can sometimes conflict with each other.

2e to reflect on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, using imagination to understand other people's experiences

2f to resolve differences by looking at alternatives, making decisions and explaining choices

2g what democracy is, and about the basic institutions that support it locally and nationally

Developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people

4a that their actions affect themselves and others, to care about other people's feelings and to try to see things from their point of view

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All schools in England must promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and, within this, 'fundamental British values'. Schools should: "Encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic processes, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England." **Department for Education** guidance on **British Values** suggests that a school council that listens to "all pupils within the school" is a good way to do this.

"Ensure that all pupils within the school have a voice that is listened to, and demonstrate how democracy works by actively promoting democratic processes such as a school council whose members are voted for by the pupils." Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools, **DfE, November 2014**

Links for further information

See our PADL section on the Healthy Schools website, including information about our school council workshops and PADL award events

www.cornwallhealthyschool.org/PADL

Speaker's School Council Awards– www.speakerschoolcouncil.org

Organised and run by the Speaker's Office at Westminster, these are annual awards open to any and every school in the UK. Schools can enter the awards by submitting details of a specific project undertaken by the school that has made a difference to school life.

Smart School Councils – www.smartschoolcouncils.org.uk

An award winning social enterprise offering school council advice, ideas, support and resources. There are some good background materials for you to use to think about how to improve your school council and some excellent activity and training ideas for school councils themselves.

Pupil Voice Wales – www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk

Huge site containing lots of ideas/resources/good practice guides for both teachers and school council members themselves.

A Glossary of Useful Terms

Agenda a list of things that need to be talked about at a meeting

Ballot a way of voting in secret by marking a paper and putting it into a special box

Budget a sum of money given to the school council to decide to spend

Constitution a set of rules or guidelines that the school council have to agree to and follow

Curriculum what you have to study at school

Election choosing by voting for people to be school councillors

Hustings a chance to say all the things in your manifesto to make people vote for you

Manifesto your qualities and aims to make people vote for you. It can be in leaflet form, flier or poster

Minutes written record of a meeting including what was discussed, what was said and decisions taken

Nomination putting yourself or others forward to be voted for

Policy an agreed course of action, usually written down

School Councillors a member of the class, or year group, who puts forward the classes' views to the school council and feeds back to the class

Vote showing your support, e.g. by showing of hands or a ballot

