



National Assembly for Wales School Council Pack

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1. Our School Council in Context

Purpose: To highlight the similarities and differences between the National Assembly for Wales and school councils.

PSE Links:



Resources: Copies of the *National Assembly for Wales / School Council Comparison Sheet*.

Activity Outline

School Councillors should fill in the National Assembly for Wales / School Council Comparison Sheet. If the School Council doesn't have a logo or defined responsibilities these could be decided upon whilst completing the form.

Topics for Discussion

- How often should elections to choose representatives be held? What are the advantages and disadvantages of having long or short terms of office?
- One of the roles of the Presiding Officer is to keep order during Plenary. Does your School Council have a code of conduct for meetings? What are the penalties for breaking this code of conduct, and who is responsible for enforcing it?

Our School Council in Context

	National Assembly for Wales	Our School Council
Logo		
Established	First meeting held 12 May 1999.	
Number of Members	60 Assembly Members, who represent 40 constituencies and five regions.	
Meeting Place	 The Senedd, Cardiff Bay	
Chair	 The Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM	
How Members are Chosen	Elections are held every four years.	
Responsibilities	To represent the interests of the people of Wales, make laws for Wales and hold the Welsh Government to account.	
How to Contact Representatives	Go to www.assemblywales.org and type in your postcode to receive a list of your Assembly Members and their contact details.	

2. Issues of Concern

Purpose: To draw attention to the ways in which Assembly Members can be contacted, and to set up effective system for contacting School Councillors.

PSE Links:



Resources: A whiteboard or a large piece of paper for writing down ideas.

Background

A democracy is a political government carried out either directly by the people (Direct Democracy) or by elected representatives of the people (Representative Democracy).

School Councillors, like Assembly Members, are elected representatives. It is the job of both to listen to the ideas, suggestions and concerns of the people they represent.

Assembly Members do this by holding regular surgeries where the people they represent can meet them. It's also possible to contact Assembly Members by post, email or over the phone. Contact details of all Assembly Members are available on the National Assembly for Wales website – www.assemblywales.org.

In addition to this, members of the public are allowed to submit petitions to the National Assembly for Wales, calling for certain changes in the way Wales is run. Details and examples of existing petitions are also available on the National Assembly for Wales website.

Topics for Discussion

- Why is important that people have their say?
- What are the best ways of getting other pupils to share ideas or concerns with you?
- Should there be a set procedure for dealing with the concerns of other pupils?

Activity Outline

School Council members should devise a system that allows other pupils to contact them with their ideas, suggestions or concerns.

3. School Council Case Studies

Purpose: To draw further parallels between the role of School Councillor and Assembly Member, and to provide Council Members with practice in responding to a variety of situations.

PSE Links: 

Resources: Copies of *School Council Case Studies* and *School Council Action Planning Sheet*.

Background

Just like Assembly Members, part of a School Councillor's job is to listen to the concerns of the people they represent and come up with workable solutions.

Activity Outline

Pupils should discuss some of the School Council Case Studies, and then use the template provided to describe the plan of action they would take if dealing with a similar issue.

School Council Case Studies

A pupil has written a letter to the council, complaining about how dangerous the road outside the school is. Parents park their cars on the zig-zags and sometimes on the pavements, too. There is a 20mph speed limit, but this is frequently ignored by road-users. There used to be a school crossing warden, but she resigned after too many drivers were rude to her. Two months on, no one has taken her place. According to the pupil, it's a matter of time before someone gets hurt or killed outside the school.

Your school has decided to take part in this year's Environment Day. The local newspaper has already been on the phone, and is hoping to run a special feature on what your school does to mark the event. What will you do to promote your school as an environmentally-friendly place?

There have been problems with some of the older boys playing football in the crowded main school yard. Countless pupils have been hurt, and last week a dinner lady was rushed to the hospital after being struck in the face by a football.

No one wants to see football banned, but the current situation has turned the main school yard into a No Go Area for anyone who isn't quick enough to dodge leather footballs.

An exchange student from France recently made fun of your school library, saying it looks like something out of a history book. Other people have agreed. A pupil's grandmother commented that it hadn't changed at all since her day, and school inspectors have condemned it as a "boring environment that does nothing to encourage young people to read".

There has been a rise in cyber bullying at your school. A survey by the school council revealed that 64% of pupils have been bullied by text or email over the last three years. What can be done to reverse this trend?

The popularity of the school canteen has hit an all-time low. A growing number of pupils now either bring their own food in, or go into town to buy lunch. The result has been an increase in litter and a rise in

complaints from members of the public about rowdy pupil behaviour. How could the school canteen be made more appealing to pupils?

There has been an outbreak of vandalism in the school toilets. The graffiti on the walls has multiplied tenfold and pupils have now started throwing spit balls at the ceilings and flooding the sinks. What steps could be taken to encourage pupils to respect this area of the school a little more?

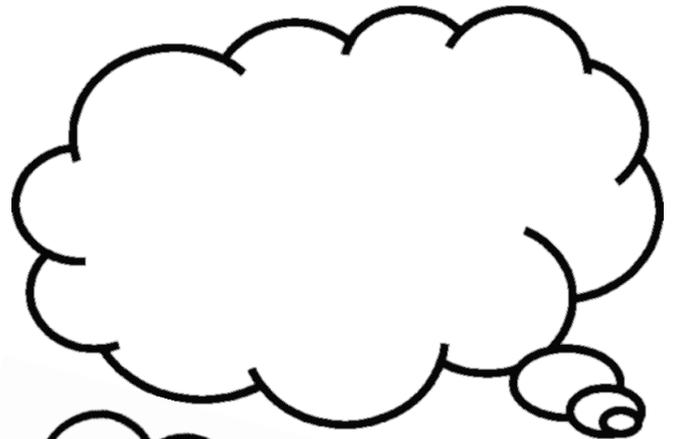
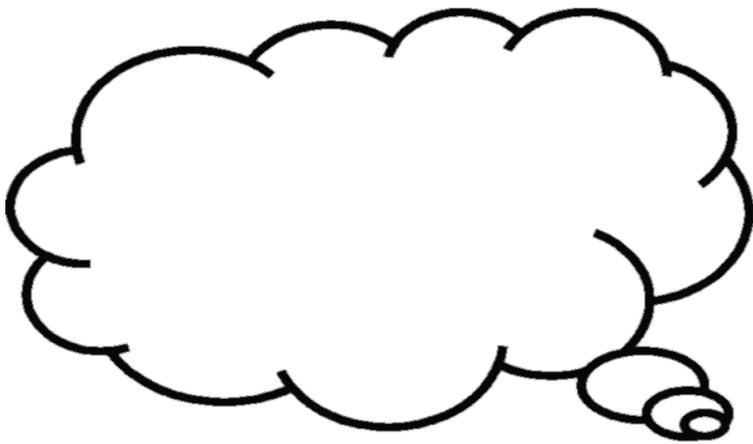
The local council has asked your school to launch a campaign to stop parents from smoking by the school gates. It's a big problem across the county, and there are fears that as well as producing a lot more litter, it's encouraging young people to experiment with cigarettes. If your method of tackling the problem is successful, it will be used in other schools throughout the area.

Over recent months relations have deteriorated between pupils at your school and those at another school further down the road. There have been reports of fights at lunch time and after school, and many now change out of their uniforms before leaving the school premises to avoid being targeted. What could be done to improve this situation?

School Council Action Planning Sheet

The Problem

Possible Solutions



Final Decision

Resources / Money Needed

Who Needs to be Involved or Consulted?

Name	Reason

Action Plan

Priority	What Needs to be done?	When?	By whom?
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

7			
8			

4. Law-Making

Purpose: To raise awareness of the Assembly's law-making powers, and give School Councillors the opportunity to create legislation of their own.

PSE Links:



Resources: Copies of *Ballot Paper*

Background

On 03 March 2011 the people of Wales voted in favour of giving the National Assembly for Wales full lawmaking powers. This means that they can pass laws within any of the following devolved areas without getting the permission of politicians in Westminster first.

- 1: Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and rural development
- 2: Ancient monuments and historical buildings
- 3: Culture
- 4: Economic development
- 5: Education and training
- 6: Environment
- 7: Fire and rescue services and safety promotion.
- 8: Food
- 9: Health and health services
- 10: Highways and transport
- 11: Housing
- 12: Local government
- 13: National Assembly for Wales
- 14: Public services
- 15: Social welfare
- 16: Sport and recreation
- 17: Tourism
- 18: Town and country planning
- 19: Water and flood defences
- 20: Welsh Language

Topics for Discussion

- If you could create any new law for Wales, what would it be?
- Should all countries in the UK follow the same laws, or is it important that the National Assembly for Wales, the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly are able to make their own laws to reflect regional differences?

Activity Outline

Pupils should work in small groups to come up with a new school rule. Proposals should be vetted first, and any unsuitable or impractical ideas removed.

Pupils should then create a short presentation, explaining why their new rule would have a positive effect on school life, and then present it to the rest of the school.

Each presentation should be followed by a question and answer session, where other pupils can request additional information about the proposed rule and how it would work.

At the end of the session everyone must vote for their favourite rule proposal, using the ballot template provided (insert your own rule proposals into the boxes before printing out).

The rule proposal with the most votes will become 'law' within the school for a day, a week, a term, or however long the headteacher allows.

**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Pleidlais Cyngor Ysgol**

**National Assembly for Wales
School Council Ballot**

Pleidleisiwch dros un o'r canlynol .
Marciwch X mewn un blwch.

Vote for one of the following.
Mark an X in one box.

1	(Insert rule proposal here)	
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

5. Committee Work

Purpose: To highlight the work of Assembly Committees and the importance of gathering evidence before bringing in any changes or improvements.

PSE Links: 

Resources: Copies of *School Council Fact-Finding Mission* forms
Boxes to collect filled-out forms

Background

Committees are smaller groups of Assembly Members who carry out work on behalf of the Assembly. Committees undertake inquiries, which can be short – just one meeting – or last for some months. The Committees gather and scrutinise oral and written evidence from a wide range of people.

This way of working lets Members look at issues in far more detail.

Topics for Discussion

- Why is it important for politicians to invite a wide variety of outside experts to their meetings?
- If your school council were divided into committees, what kind of issues would the committees look at?

Activity Outline

Over the space of a week members of the school council should invite other pupils to fill in the *School Council Fact-Finding Mission* forms. In the next council meeting all the ideas and concerns should be arranged into categories. Some category suggestions are listed below:

- School Canteen
- Toilets
- Pupil Behaviour
- Lunchtime / After-School Activities
- School Environment

School Council members should be divided into small committee groups to conduct enquiries into some of the issues raised in the fact-finding mission. These findings should be presented to the rest of the school council (and the headteacher if possible), either orally or by PowerPoint.

Suggestions for Gathering Information

- Conduct interviews with pupils and willing members of staff
- Find out what other schools are doing to tackle this issue, either through the internet or by contacting pupils or members of staff at that school
- Create more detailed surveys and questionnaires and analyse the results
- Invite other pupils to a debate / idea-sharing session, where everyone can have their say
- Gather evidence – in some cases it might be useful to take photographs or film footage that can be shown to members of staff and other school councillors.
- If you or someone else comes up with a fantastic idea to solve a problem, look in to it further. Is it affordable? How workable is it? Are there any risks involved? Is it within the school rules and regulations?

School Council Fact Finding Mission

As school councillors it's our job to listen to any concerns you have about life in school and any ideas you might have on how to make things better. Please help us by filling in this form and putting it into the box provided.

You do not have to tell us your name, but if you'd be willing to come to a school council meeting and explain your idea or concern in more detail please add your contact details to the bottom of this form.

My Idea or Concern:

Name:

Class:

School Council Fact Finding Mission

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My Idea or Concern:

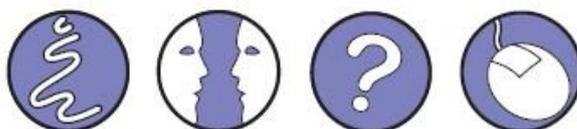
Name:

Class:

6. What Makes a Good Representative?

Purpose: To encourage pupils to think about the skills required to be a good School Councillor.

PSE Links:



Resources: Copies of *School Councillor Job Description*

Access to the internet, or magazines, newspapers, scissors, felt tip pens and glue

Background

Assembly Members come from all walks of life. What they have in common is a skill at representing the concerns of others and the drive to make Wales a better place. Assembly elections are held every four years, and it is left to the public to decide whether or not their Assembly Members have done a good enough job of representing them.

Topics for Discussion

- What are skills required to be a good School Councillor?
- Are there any non-political celebrities who'd make outstanding representatives? Why?

Activity Outline

Pupils should think about the duties undertaken by School Councillors and the skills required to do the job effectively. They should then complete the School Councillor Job Description, either individually or in small groups.

School Councillor Job Description

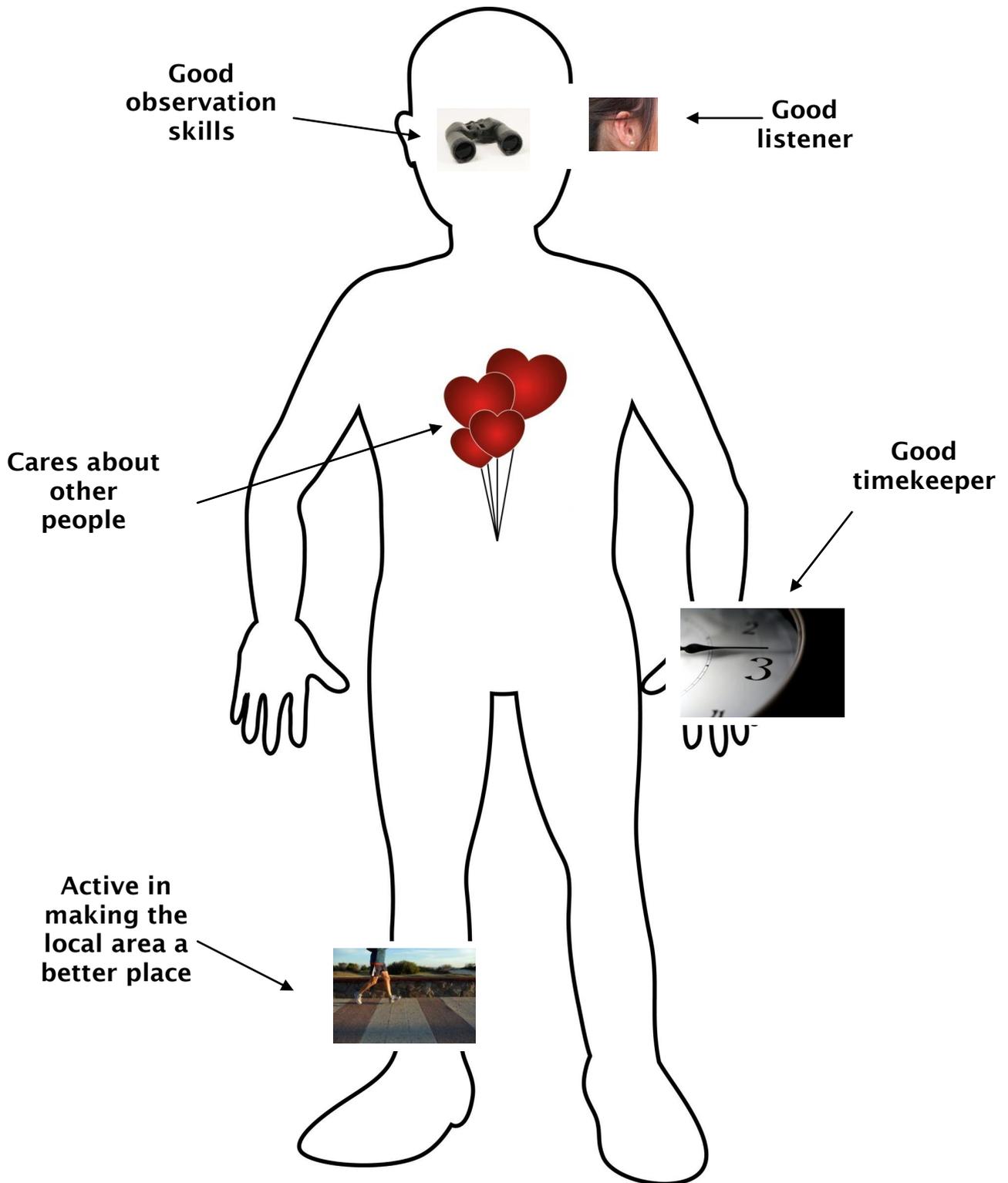
Main Responsibilities

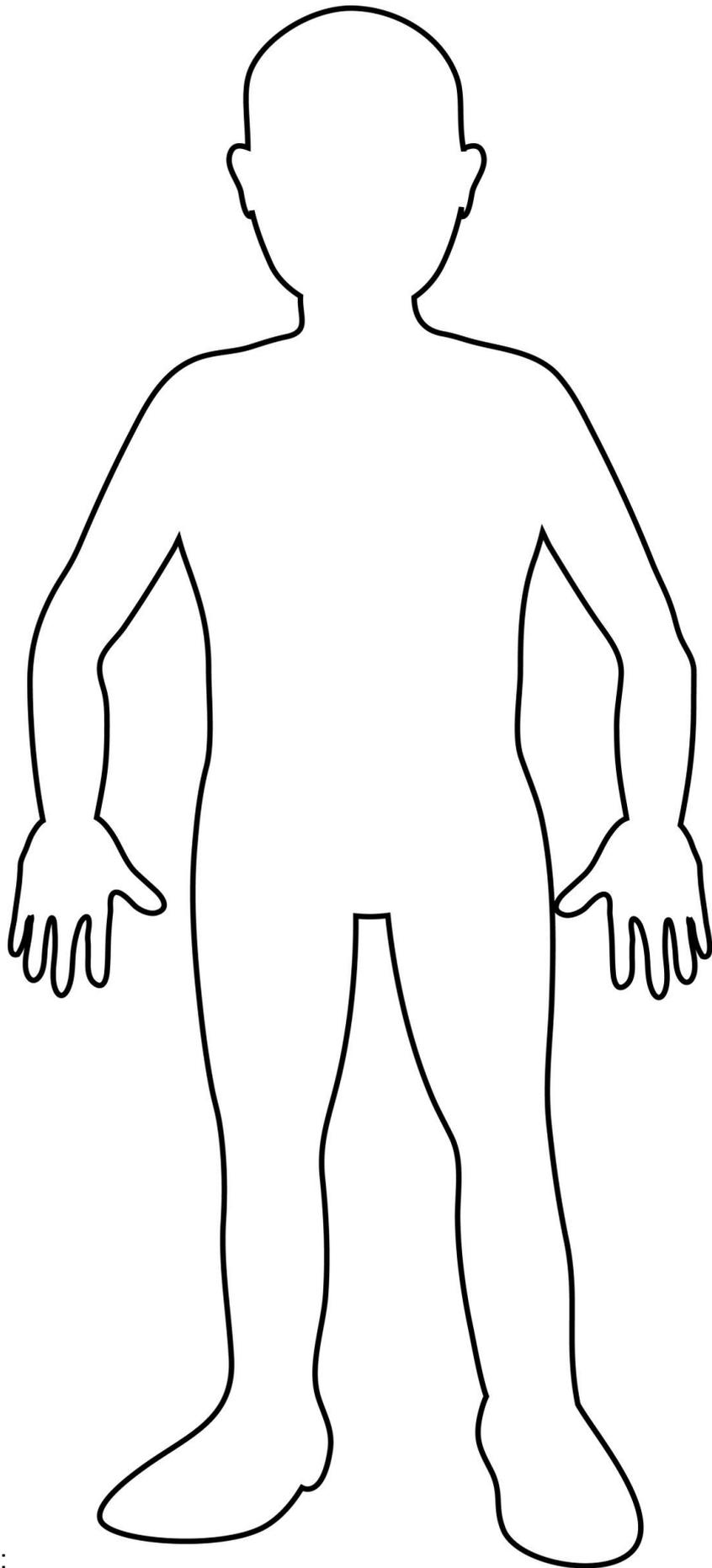
These are the most important things a School Councillor does as part of the job:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Essential Skills

Use the outline on the next page to show the kind of skills that make a good school councillor. You can use felt tip pens, clip art, or pictures cut from newspapers and magazines. An example is shown below:





:

7. Openness and Transparency

Purpose: To draw attention to the ways in which the National Assembly for Wales lets people know what goes on at its meetings, and to encourage School Councillors to come up with a system of their own.

PSE Links:



Resources: Dependent on the format School Councillors choose to use.

Background

The design of the Senedd was based around the concepts of openness and transparency. Members of the public are welcome to attend both Plenary and Committee meetings of the National Assembly for Wales. In addition to this, transcripts are made available online within 24 hours of the end of each meeting.

The screenshot shows the National Assembly for Wales website. The header includes the logo, the text 'National Assembly for Wales', and navigation links for 'Accessibility', 'A-Z', 'Site map', 'Help', and 'My Account'. A search bar is also present. The main content area is titled 'Record of Proceedings' and is divided into four columns: 'Plenary Meetings', 'Committee Meetings', 'Assembly Questions', and 'Written Statements'. Each column contains a brief description and a link to the relevant content. The 'Plenary Meetings' column states that transcripts are published within 24 hours and provides a link to 'Plenary Meetings >>'. The 'Committee Meetings' column notes that transcripts are available for public scrutiny and provides a link to 'Committee Meetings >>'. The 'Assembly Questions' column explains that answers to oral questions are published the following day and provides a link to 'Assembly Questions >>'. The 'Written Statements' column states that written statements are published on the site and provides a link to 'Written Statements >>'. At the bottom of the page, there are links for 'Second Assembly' and 'First Assembly'.

Topics for Discussion

- How does your school council let others know what's going on?
- Who needs to know?
- Why is it important that those represented know what happens at school council meetings?
- What's the best way of letting people know what's going on?

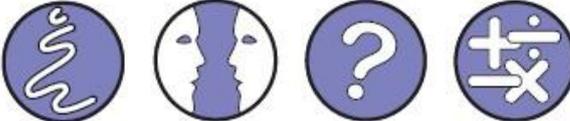
Activity Outline

School Councillors should agree on a format for a school council newsletter or e-bulletin, and distribute it amongst pupils at regular intervals throughout the school year.

Alternatively a podcast could be created for the school website, or a video to be shown during registration or in assembly.

8. Scrutiny

Purpose: To show the benefits of scrutiny both on a national level and within school councils, and to encourage School Councillors to evaluate their own work as representatives.

PSE Links: 

Resources: Copies of the *School Council Evaluation Form*.

Background

Another role of Assembly Members is to look closely at the work of the Welsh Government and hold them to account over the decisions they make.

The Welsh Government consists of:

- The First Minister
- Welsh Ministers
- The Counsel General
- Deputy Ministers.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

They are supported by Civil Servants who work across the devolved subjects that include key areas of public life such as Health, Education and the Environment.

Topics for Discussion

- Why is it important in a democracy that governments are held to account over their decisions?
- Are there any other professions or organisations of people that have their work scrutinised on a regular basis?
- Who in the school community would be in the best position to hold your work as a school council to account?

Activity Outline

Councillors should fill out the evaluation form as a school council, and then ask the people they represent to complete the same form. This could be done by giving a copy to each pupil, or one evaluation form could be collected per class. The results should be compared and then displayed as charts, graphs or similar. This information could be used to identify future priorities for the School Council.

School Council Evaluation Form

Please help us improve our school council by circling the face that best matches how you feel about the statement before it.

1. My school council meets regularly, punctually and in an ordered way.



2. My school council keeps me informed on what goes on at meetings and any new developments.



3. Members of my school council are easy to approach and always willing to listen to concerns and ideas.



4. My school council is very good at researching and finding solutions to problems.



5. My school council is effective in making school a nicer place to be.



Please use the box below to write down any ideas you have that might improve the performance of your school council.

Thank you for your time in completing this evaluation.

9. School Council's Questions

Purpose: To show how members of the Welsh Government are submitted to in-depth questioning on their work on a regular basis. To give pupils the opportunity to do the same to their School Councillors.

PSE Links: 

Resources: A big enough room

Background

Every week Assembly Members are given up to 60 minutes to question the First Minister on the decisions made by the Welsh Government. The other Welsh Ministers, Commission Members and the Counsel General are questioned by Assembly Members every four weeks.



Carwyn Jones
First Minister for Wales

Activity Outline

Council Members should organise a School Council Question and Answer session. The event should be advertised using posters and other pupils should be invited to submit their questions beforehand. Council Members could be nominated to deal with specific topics, such as the school environment, uniform and the food that's available on site.