



Respect

Resilience

Responsibility

Student Voice Policy

Date: November 2023

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Introduction

At Woodlands we look to develop student autonomy and want students to be engaged with their own learning. Students are empowered and their feedback is listened to, guiding change and improvements at Woodlands. We are committed to involving students in decision making and operational management processes. We firmly believe that embracing student views and offering opportunities for students to have direct involvement in assessing and shaping their own learning experience will have significant impact on developing the school's quality improvement processes and increasing students' successes. Student participation and representation bring to life the British value of democracy, as well as the school values of Responsibility and Respect.

Benefits of student voice

Effective student voice provides numerous benefits to Woodlands and its students:

To the students:

- Improved participation, retention, achievement and progression
- Better feedback on the students' experience which informs quality improvements
- Students become empowered, more self-confident and motivated
- Students have active opportunities to engage with the British value of democracy
- Students have the opportunity to become directly involved in social action for the benefit of others
- Services and facilities are improved to better meet the needs of students
- Identification and sharing of good practice
- Promotion of an environment of mutual respect
- Increased respect for each other and the school, feeding into an enhanced sense of pride for Woodlands and the wider community
- Enhanced CV for college applications, higher education or employment with training.

To Woodlands:

- Improved participation, retention, achievement and progression
- Students are more engaged and independent, holding each other to account
- Better quality information about the students' perspective so improvements can be made
- More informed decision making about resource allocation and investment
- Students are more motivated to put something back into the school
- Enhanced reputation of Woodlands within the community.

Mechanisms of Student Voice

We recognise that students are active participants in their educational process and therefore have a valid and worthwhile contribution to make to the evolution of the school. In addition, viewing students as the passive recipients of education can lead to their disengagement from school and the development of negative feelings towards it.

At Woodlands we develop student voice via three key strategies:

1. Listening to students individually
2. Collaborating with students
3. Developing student leadership

1. Listening to students individually

Woodlands aims to create an ethos that fosters dialogue with students, enabling them to take a full and active part in their learning experience in a way that delivers success. Listening to the views of students about their education helps students feel that they are respected as individuals and as a body within the school. It can encourage them to feel that they belong, and that they are being treated and respected in an adult way. Students who are at risk of disengaging may come back on board if they think that they matter to the school. Consultation must be genuine and students assured their views are valued and incorporated in decision making processes by staff by:

- Student views being given careful consideration
- Students receive feedback on their views
- Students receive some explanation of any decisions made as a result of the relevant consultation.

(i) Period R Values Focussed Programme

Tutors follow a tailored tutor programme which provides scope for structured conversations allowing students to share their views and provide feedback on specific topics.

(ii) Parents' evenings & Progress Days

Students are encouraged to attend parents' evenings to allow staff to have personalised conversations with students and their parents regarding their academic progress and any pastoral and wider school issues. Progress Days are designed as the opportunity for students to have a 1:1 conversation with a senior member of staff about their progress and academic targets.

(iii) Year 11 mentoring

Every year 11 student is assigned a staff mentor with whom they meet on a fortnightly basis. This provides valuable opportunities for 1-to-1 conversations regarding academic progress, post-16 plans and any concerns including behaviour, revision, stress management and GCSE exam preparations.

(iv) School Council questions and feedback

The School Council meet half termly as a full body to discuss issues, suggestions and questions raised by individuals within their peer group as well as themes suggested by the leadership team. Each tutor

group has an elected representative to discuss these issues and plan for a way to bring about improvements to the school, including opportunities to meet directly with the Headteacher.

(v) Student perception survey

Each term all students across the school are given the opportunity to complete a student perception survey so that the school is able to collate the views of students on a range of areas and be able to respond accordingly.

(vi) Curriculum reviews

Students have the opportunity to contribute to the department annual curriculum review process. Selected students give feedback on their experiences of departments and this in turn forms part of the subject development plans actions moving forwards.

(vii) Additional student surveys

Students have the opportunity to take part in a range of additional surveys throughout the school year. These can be whole school data collections for planning and support purposes (such as the wellbeing survey), or can be more ad hoc or smaller scale surveys to identify specific information, such as Y11 prom planning. Sometimes the school will offer the chance to take part in external data collection, such as a Local Authority service, in order to develop local provision or data gathering.

2. Collaboration with students

Teachers and students working together as co-stakeholders on issues of importance to the school helps to develop feelings of engagement and belonging, and ensures that students feel that they are valued and respected.

(i) Interview panels for teaching posts

As part of the selection process for all new teaching staff a student panel will have an opportunity to formally interview candidates. The Headteacher will consider the recommendations of the student panel in addition to other relevant evidence in selecting the best candidate for the post.

Students will be selected for student panel based on their contribution to school life. The panel is made up of student representatives from the Prefect team and school council who are all part of the teaching and learning school council focus group and are prepared thoroughly for all interviews.

(ii) School Council Focus Panels

The school council is divided into focus panels each with a focus on different aspects of school life:

- The Teaching & Learning Panel - liaise with relevant senior school staff on important areas of the schools teaching and learning strategies including taking a lead role in interview panels.
- Respect Panel – look at behaviour and welfare and support areas such as the anti-bullying ambassadors and mental health champions
- Other groups will be established according to the school's priorities – for example the School of Sanctuary group.

Each of these groups work collaboratively with the SLT or staff member responsible for the area on key topics and issues that arise throughout the year and are led by the prefects appointed in each of these areas.

3. Developing student leadership

Encouraging students to become leaders fosters a sense of importance and belonging among students, and shows they and their views are valued, trusted and respected.

"If students feel secure, valued and supported in school, they are more likely to commit themselves to the school's learning purposes."

(MacBeath, Meyers & Demetriou, 2001)

Encouraging students to become leaders also helps prepare them for the working world and life beyond Woodlands.

(i) Prefects and Head Prefects

Towards the end of Year 9 students are offered the opportunity to apply to join the prefect team. Those selected to join the Prefect team will, during Year 10, undertake a range of roles to develop their leadership experiences. At the end of Year 10 they are then invited to apply for the key roles on the Senior Prefect team. Candidates applying to be Head Prefects will be asked to deliver a presentation of why they should be considered for the role and how they would improve school life to the staff and student body. These students will play a key role at public events and provide vital information to visitors and guests. In addition, the Head Prefects meet regularly with the Headteacher to discuss and make recommendations.

(ii) Student Mentors and Induction Buddies:

Selected students in the prefect team, mentor younger students around social issues, academic progress and attendance, In addition, induction buddies are allocated to new students joining the school to ensure they settle well into Woodlands.

(iii) Student Council Councillors and Deputy Councillors

Each tutor group is represented by one councillor and one deputy councillor who act as the voice for their peers in their tutor groups at School Council. Councillors and deputy councillors work in a variety of committees organised at School Council to address issues arising throughout the school year.

Ensuring each tutor group is represented at School Council guarantees that each year group is represented in committees, and that School Council is a reflection of the student body. In addition, student accountability is increased through increased student leadership in each tutor group.

(iv) Student Council

The Student Council meets at least once every half-term to discuss all aspects of school life and the work of the different committees. The School Council is led by an Assistant Headteacher. The School Council discusses matters such as, rewards, attendance, progress and behaviour. Members of School

Council also contribute to specific groups responsible for developing particular projects to improve students experience and school life, as well as liaising with the wider community. Each committee consists of tutor group councillors and is led by at least two prefects and supervised by a designated member of staff. Each committee will present their work to their peers at School Council meetings and, if appropriate, present their work to their peers in assemblies.

(v) Voting Voice

Voting Voice is a vehicle to collate students' views on a number of topical subjects. These may either be based on current affairs in national and international news or pertinent questions regarding school life for which students' feedback is required to inform decisions. Voting Voice takes place regularly in the Period R programme and the results are shared in assemblies and during tutor time. The aim of this is to develop students' cultural capital by providing them with opportunities to engage with topical issues and to partake in democratic discussions and foster understanding of the school values as well as wider British values.

There are many other forms of leadership our students are involved in, including:

- Librarians
- Sports Leaders
- Anti-Bullying Ambassadors
- Cyber Ambassadors
- Mental Health Champions

Processing of Student Voice data

Feedback from students is both quantitative and qualitative. Data is collated through staff-student conferences, voting voice, questionnaires and more informal conversations. Results of student voice are shared in a number of ways:

- Assemblies
- School website
- Social media
- Tutor time
- School Council

Despite much of the data being qualitative and subjective, we still collect it and analyse it rigorously. It is an absolutely valid and important way of getting student feedback and we are scholarly in the way we examine and utilise this data. Taking student feedback seriously helps us generate a cycle that recognises the subjectivity of the experience while simultaneously understanding how vital the contributions are to informing change and improvements in the schools. In addition, this also encourages and honours leadership within the student body and promotes democratic processes and British values within Woodlands.