

STUDENT VOICE

SIXTH FORM COLLEGES ARE EXCELLENT AT LISTENING TO THEIR STUDENTS AND INVOLVING THEM IN MANY WAYS IN THE RUNNING OF THEIR COLLEGES.



Sixth Form College Corporations have student governors, and, because they appreciate the 'customer' input, Colleges welcomed the doubling of the student representation in 2008. All Sixth Form Colleges have a student council and student consultation is well established. In addition, all Sixth Form Colleges run student satisfaction surveys and consider carefully the responses received. Students are involved in capital projects, whether a total rebuild or a refurbishment and students are also involved in the appointment of teachers and senior managers and often in lesson observation.

Luton Sixth Form College

Young people have a unique perspective on learning and teaching and the whole programme of activities at Luton Sixth Form College are underpinned by consultation with the learner. All students are afforded the opportunity to actively shape their education and the newly elected Student Council is an excellent example of this.

This year's elections witnessed a dramatic upsurge in voting, which was due to the change in the electoral process. The College introduced the Tutor Group Representative (TGR) system for each class, giving all students the opportunity to stand for election. Once duly elected the TGRs carried the mandate of all their classmates to the TGR conference. They were then invited to nominate themselves for full Council and over the next two weeks campaigned their case. In total there were 240 TGRs who then came together to elect 15 student council members with each TGR carrying the mandate of their class.

All TGRs are on an email distribution list and all College events are promoted through them. If there are any areas of concern or issues these are sent back through the TGRs who have contact with their class during Tutor Group periods. The system is efficient and effective and the newly elected Council's action plan fully reflects the student voice and reflects each of the key themes related to Every Child Matters.

Members of the Council also have representation on all decision making bodies within the College, including the Corporation. The students are enthusiastic, exuberant, acknowledged and are engaged. They continue to make their mark throughout all aspects of College life.

Birkenhead Sixth Form College

At Birkenhead Sixth Form College, students' views are considered to be a vital part of the College's success and development. They have a very active Student Council, who are elected each year and meet regularly with senior staff and are supported by a Graduate Mentor. They hold "drop-in" sessions for students to pass on their views and have a representative on the College Governing Body.

In addition to the Student Council, the College's Virtual Learning Environment 'Moodle' provides an opportunity for all students to make their comments in a virtual "Suggestion Box" which is reviewed by Senior Management. Students are kept up to date with any changes in response to their comments via notices in tutor groups displaying their comments and the College's actions.

BSix Brooke House Sixth Form College (London Borough of Hackney)

BSix Brooke House SFC in Hackney, London, appoints student Learning Advocates who actively monitor provision in teaching and learning and service standards across the college.

Their first task is to gather feedback on Teaching and Learning from fellow tutees and the wider student body. They collate the findings and present them to Curriculum Heads and Senior Managers. They are fully prepared for this with coaching on how to gather and use research and how to give effective presentations.

The next step is to act as “mystery shoppers” and use a range of college services. They are guided on the basic quality criteria to examine. The project Coordinator uses her previous experience as a service manager and her knowledge of how to deliver outstanding customer service to prepare them. Once the research has been done they collate the findings in a document and arrange to pass on the feedback to service managers in an informal meeting.

The Advocates then receive training on lesson observation along with the college’s Teacher Leaders. This part of the project is led by the Vice Principal for Teaching & Learning, and the College’s external partner from the Institute of Education. They then carry out lesson observations and give teachers feedback on this.

The next step is ‘The Great Debate’. Advocates organise a debate on issues surrounding learning and student responsibility. The focus is on getting students to reflect on current performance and behaviour and adopt best practice. This is attended by both students and staff.

Coulsdon College (London Borough of Croydon)

In July 2008, three Coulsdon College students organised a week long Learner Voice Conference under the banner ‘Academy of Young Leaders’.

The event focused on introducing young people to Community Leadership in Business, Citizenship and Arts over a number of days and culminated in the Learner Voice Conference at Coulsdon College and the Unity Cup 5-a-side football tournament in Hammersmith.

Workshops covered topics such as:

- Young Leader in Sports Coaching
- Young Leaders in Music and Performance
- Young Leader in Active Citizenship
- Young Leader in Team Leadership

Guests included Malcolm Wicks, MP North Croydon and Privy Councillor, Harbhajan Singh, Chaplain at the O2 and Thomas Sampson, Youth Parliament Member.

In summer 2008, one of the students organising the Learner Voice Conference was selected, along with 99 others across the UK to become one of the Prime Minister’s first Global Fellowship Students.

Woodhouse College (London Borough of Barnet)

Each tutor group in the College elects a representative who attends fortnightly meetings to raise and discuss issues affecting students. The Principal attends these meetings twice a term for a Principal’s Question Time. The tutor group representatives have a time allocated at tutorials to gather views and report back. Tutor group representatives also have a role in determining and delivering the tutorial programme – for example, this year, they ran the tutorial on awareness raising about modern slavery, an issue they had collectively decided to highlight and campaign on.

From the tutor group representatives, a College Council is elected which meets regularly with senior management and from where the two student governors are chosen. The Council has an important role in College decision - making processes. Last year it was involved in decisions, for example, on a new college timetable structure, changing various college rules, and in the selection of the new catering company to run the canteen.

Tutor group representatives and the Council have been involved in quality improvement planning, for example in departmental self assessment and action plans. The College is about to start a pilot where the student voice is used in lesson observation.

Hills Road Sixth Form College (Cambridge)

Hills Road Sixth Form College piloted an innovative Student Voice project in 2007-8 which involved 18 staff and over 40 AS and A2 student volunteers. Students were asked to complete ‘lesson reflection sheets’, commenting on the activities covered in a series of lessons and identifying those they found most/least beneficial to their learning. After a six week period, this information was collated and meetings were held in which students gave direct feedback to their teachers; these meetings were supported by a ‘facilitator’. The aim of the project was to provide an informal forum for staff and students to discuss effective teaching and learning strategies and to reflect on best practice. Following on from last year’s successful pilot, the project has been extended in 2008-2009 to include 35 staff and over 100 student volunteers.



Students at BSix