

# A Parent Guide to pupil voice

*Some of your questions answered*

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## **Why use the voice of the child?**

How many of us like to be consulted in the things that happen to us? At work for example, when changes are put upon us, it can create a real fork in the road. We can decide to embrace it or, at worst, it may result in us looking for a new job. When we feel included and listened to, we are more likely to engage in situations.

This is exactly the same for our children. They think and feel just like we do. Children are much more likely to engage in something if they have been included in the decision making process.

## **Listening to our children can:**

- Help to build stronger and more positive relationships
- Reduces anxiety
- Can improve attitudes and behaviour
- Help us to see an impact (we can measure it)
- Increase wellbeing and engagement
- Give us valuable solutions and ideas that we may not have thought of
- Save us from 'second guessing'
- Allows us to see things from our child's point of view
- Gives us a valuable insight into their thoughts, feelings and wishes
- Put us in a very advantageous position as we gain knowledge about our child and are therefore much more likely to be successful

## **How do I include my child's voice?**

Before you start it is important to consider the following things:

- Check in with your own emotions – is this a good time for you?
- Check in with your child's emotions – is this a good time for them?

- Have you both got time to talk without any thing else planned?

If you are happy that the above areas are in check, next think carefully about how you go about starting the conversation. Some things to consider might be:

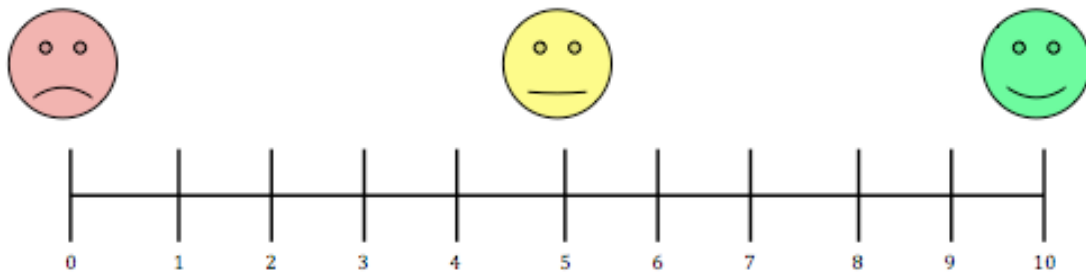
- Don't abruptly stop your child while they are in the middle of something they are enjoying.
- Pre-warn them that you would like to spend some time with them so that they can come away from what they are doing gradually.
- Think about where would be a good place to talk – out on a walk? Or maybe while doing a fun activity together like: cooking, Lego, play-doh or colouring?

### **Use of Language**

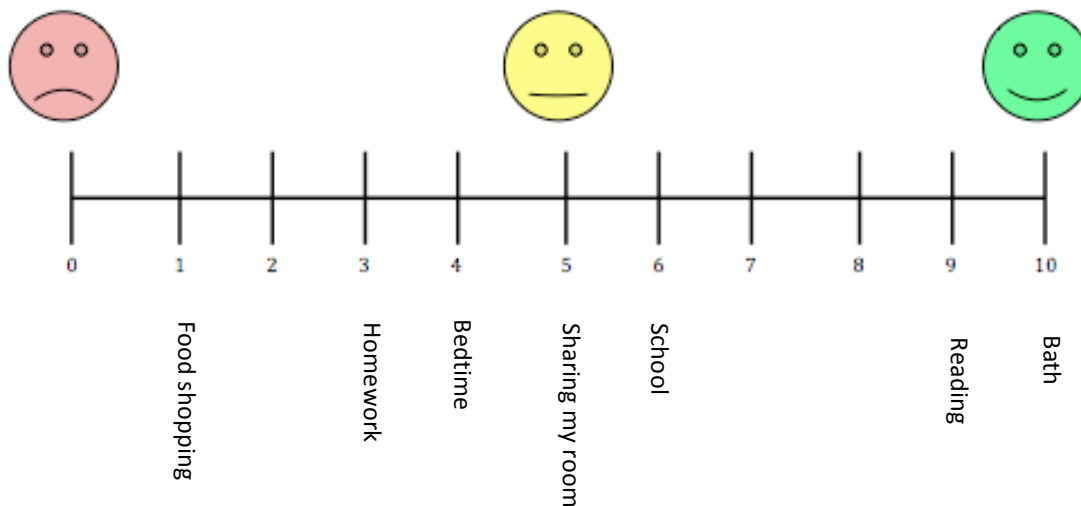
- Listen non judgmentally
- Let them be themselves – an individual
- Validate rather than dismiss. Your child's thoughts and feelings are very real for them. Thoughts and feelings are very different to factual events. Validate them whether you agree or not.
- Consider your body posture / non verbal cues
- Practice your poker face
- Let the student speak without interruption
- Speak when there is a natural pause / they have come to a stop
- Don't tell them everything is going to be ok when we don't know as adults if it will
- Don't try and rescue them or over protect them

Do's	Don'ts
I've noticed that...have I got that right?	I know you don't like...but...
How do you feel about... / how does that make you feel?	Don't worry about it
What do you think about...?	Don't be silly / that's silly / that's not true...
What are your thoughts on...?	I really don't think they'd do that...
Can you tell me a bit more about...?	I really don't believe that... / of course that won't happen...

### How do I capture my child's views?



- Scaling is particularly powerful as it is measurable.
- Check that your child understands the scale by asking some example questions first. It is helpful if they point to the number as well as / instead of saying it.
- Any answer is fine (and actually very insightful). Some children will give decimal answers. Some will give minus numbers or numbers much higher than the scale (like 6 million) that is fine too!
- No right or wrong – try not to react if you are surprised or doubt their answer. Be present. Listen.
- Simply observe the answers given and record them.
- Once all the questions have been asked, reflect and then ask further questions based on what you have heard. For example:



- “I can see from your scores that you do not rate homework very highly. Can you tell me a bit more about that please?”
- “What might need to happen for us to get that score from a 3 up to a 5?”
- “I can see that you have given reading a high score. What is it that you enjoy so much about reading?”
- “What do you feel needs to happen to increase your score about sharing a bedroom?”

## Using grouping or ordering

### How things make me feel

Situation	Self-evaluation	Discussion	Strategy recommended
Lunchtime	(Enter the colour that the child refers to, or a score out of 10.)	Any points/reasons/further info that are useful to know?	What does the student think might help with this?
Writing			
Reading			
English			
Break time			

**KEY**

- I can manage this
- This could make me feel uncomfortable
- This could make me feel nervous/ anxious/frustrated...
- This could make me feel mad
- I will not manage this

- This type of activity can be useful for a child who is unable to use a number line or is non-verbal / a selective communicator.
- For younger children / children with developmental delay, you could simplify they 'key' by limiting the colours to red/yellow/green.
- You could add visuals to the colours if needed (thumbs up/neutral/thumbs down or faces).
- This could be done as a sorting activity at a table or on the floor. The child could add corresponding words (on cards / post-it notes) under each area of the key.

### Key points to remember:

- **W**ho is best to talk with the child? Consider relationships
- **W**hat? Activity will you use?
- **W**here? Will the pupil feel at ease?
- **W**hen? Is the best time for the pupil and you? Ensure you set aside time and do not tend to interruptions. Be aware of your own and the child's emotion state.
- **W**hy? Are you doing this? What do you want to gain?
- Listen non judgementally

5 W's

### Listening to the voice of your child only works if...

- You do something with the information that you gather
- Act on it – **WITH** your child
- Monitor – **WITH** your child
- Review – **WITH** your child

Child

### Remember:

- Every child has a voice, thoughts, feelings and wishes
- You know your child best