Activity SL5b – Pupil Voice

SL5 There are monitoring processes to inform the development of science teaching and learning

Further criteria that this task may help to evidence: SL5; L1; L3; WO1; WO2, as well as provide a starting point for your self-assessment and an impact of your actions at the end of the year.

The children may help you to identify issues or successes in areas which should be addressed in your action plan, we suggest that you carry out this task early on in your PSQM year, and carry out follow up interviews 6-9 months later to evidence progress and impact of your actions.

The most important part of any of this activity is to show that the voices of the children have been heard. You may decide that it is inappropriate / not relevant to implement some of their ideas but try to explain why so that the children understand.

You will need to compile a short list of questions that you wish to ask of the children, for example:

1. How often do you have a science lesson?
2. What is science/scientist?
3. What do you like about science?
4. How could your teacher/school improve science?
5. What's been your favourite part of science this year?
6. Do you work on your own or in groups in science?
7. What do you think you will do next in science?
8. What do you find hardest in science lessons?
9. Is there anything about science that you do not like?
10. What would you like to do more of?
11. What would you like to do less of?

You also need to decide on how to conduct the pupil voice, which could range from:

- Randomly choosing 2 pupils from each class;
- Identifying three pupils with different attainment in science from each class;
- Using the School Council/Eco group;
- Involving the whole school;

NB: It may seem easier, fairer and less time consuming to undertake this activity as a whole school survey, but you are encouraged to undertake it face to face, with as many pupils as time will permit, but ideally at least two from each class.

- Voting system for any number of pupils. Recent developments with the hand held/ interactive voting systems means that some newer ones can allow pupils to type a short response, so you could conduct the interviews with a larger number of pupils, capturing their immediate response anonymously and then opening up conversation.

Suggestions for conducting interview:

- Invite your group of children from a class to join you for 20-30 minutes (if following this route):
- Have your list of questions to hand, but do not expect to be able to note down everything that is said. Set time aside as soon as interview is over to make any notes, or make an audio recording.

- Prepare a couple of interesting/ short/ quick demonstrations/ hands on experiments that you can engage the children with, so that the session does not come across as a Q&A time, such as putting a needle through a blown up balloon, or making a lava lamp with sparkling water and oil
- Let children know that the reason for talking with them is to find out what they think of science at the school. Engage them in one of the prepared activities, and start talking with them about it and gradually intersperse the questions you wish to explore about their science experiences.
- Remember to thank them for their time. A useful strategy is to give them a piece of equipment or activity they can take back to their class and their teacher. If you do your homework ahead of time this might even link to and extend the science they are doing in class at the moment!
- At the conclusion of all the interviews it is important to pull together all the comments, and look for any emerging issues, patterns, pluses and minuses. You will need to do this quite quickly so you don't forget all the verbal contributions!
- You must now decide how you will respond to these. Some issues will be easily addressed, some it might be in appropriate to implement, but you can find ways of raising it and explaining/showing how it is not appropriate, some will have longer term implications.

Sharing the Voice

There are many ways to do this:

- Display board in a prominent place to highlight those suggestions you have acted on;
- Newsletter to parents or on the website, explaining the plans for the next year to address the issues and suggestions from the children;
- Half termly meetings with School Council to feedback on updates. The Council could then produce a presentation, possibly in Photostory as opposed to PowerPoint. This presentation is to illustrate science teaching and learning at the school, not just one class, but a year in the life of science teaching. It should last no more than 3-5 minutes. Again, once it is presented, possibly with clearly identifiable pluses and minutes/ recommendations, the school must be seen to act upon the voice;
- A display tree of coloured notes, with the initial ideas and updates / actions in different colours;
- Use of a Wordle (www.wordle.net) which shows frequency of words used. This can be very static so the important thing is to revisit this later in the year with another interview and overlay the words of have them side by side to show change;

Reviewing 9 months later

This can be done in several ways, in addition to some of the ideas already mentioned above:

- Ask the same/similar questions as the first interview and compare the answers, and analyse the results to share with both staff and the rest of the school;
- Review the 'Wordle' if you produced one and discuss what words would stand out now;
- Share the main Principles of Science you produced in the style of a Concept Cartoon and ask the children for their thoughts and ideas about how accurate they are to science in the school and what has been done to make them true.

Evidence in submissions from schools has shown many varied approaches to this task, with a wide range of issues emerging. The best methods involve talking to the children and acting on the simplest idea very quickly, so the children feel valued immediately.