

THE VOICE OF THE CHILD STRATEGY



Cyngor
Gwynedd

The Voice of the Learner in Education

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THE VOICE OF THE LEARNER IN EDUCATION

Purpose of the appendix

The purpose of this appendix is to show, in a clear and practical way, how the voice, experiences and perspectives of learners feed into education arrangements in Gwynedd. The appendix reiterates the Voice of the Child Strategy by setting out the link between the experiences of learners in school, curriculum development, teaching and learning, well-being, self-evaluation, improvement planning, the work of governing bodies and the wider arrangements of Cyngor Gwynedd.

The voice of the learner is not just an individual activity or a formal structure. It is a principle that informs the way schools listen to learners' experiences, consider their perspectives when making decisions and use this information to improve learning experiences and school life.

Policy Statement

Schools in Gwynedd will operate on the basis that the voice of the learner is an essential element of inclusive, ambitious and effective education. The voice of the learner is not an additional activity or a separate compliance requirement; it is integral to creating a school culture, developing the curriculum, improving teaching and learning, promoting well-being, self-evaluation and improvement planning.

- Each learner will have regular and meaningful opportunities to express their views on their learning, well-being, relationships and experience of school life.
- Schools will ensure that learners' views are actively sought, appropriately recorded and used to inform relevant decisions.
- Democratic participation structures, including school councils and learner forums, will represent a wide range of learner experiences and not just the voice of a narrow group.
- The voice of the learner will contribute to the development and refinement of the curriculum, learning experiences and well-being arrangements within the context of the Curriculum for Wales.
- Schools will provide learners with clear feedback on what has happened as a result of their contribution, including an explanation when change is not possible.
- The voice of the learner will be part of the school's self-evaluation, monitoring and improvement planning processes, and will be considered by leaders and governing bodies as part of school accountability.

Operating principles

Rights-based approach

Learners are holders of rights. Their right to be heard applies to decisions about their daily experiences at school and to wider decisions about education in Gwynedd.

Purposeful listening

There should be a clear purpose to all activities that gather learners' views. Learners should understand, as far as possible, why their views are being sought, who will consider them and how they can influence.

Inclusion

Schools will use a variety of approaches to ensure that all learners are able to contribute, including those who are less confident, learners with additional learning needs, disabled learners, learners experiencing social or emotional barriers, and those who do not normally participate in formal structures.

Relevance to learning and well-being

The voice of the learner will be used to understand learning experiences, belonging, safety, well-being, equity and the curriculum. This information should help schools to improve learners' educational experience in practice.

Transparency and feedback

Listening involves a duty to complete the circle. Learners will receive appropriate feedback on how their views were used, what action was taken, or why it was not possible to act on a particular point of view.

Accountability

Evidence of the voice of the learner will be included in self-evaluation arrangements, improvement plans, school council minutes, reports to governing bodies and relevant monitoring.

How the voice of the learner feeds into education arrangements

The following stream shows how the voice of the learner moves from the experience of an individual or group of learners to classroom, school, governing body decisions and, where appropriate, county arrangements such as Llais Ni: Gwynedd Schools and Youth Forum:

Learner voice source	How it is gathered	How it feeds into decisions	Evidence of quality assurance
Learning and well-being discussions with learners	Class talks; individual or group discussions; circle time; well-being activities; creative or digital approaches.	Helps teachers and leaders understand learners' daily experience, what works well and what is a barrier to learning or well-being.	Discussion notes; themes collected; examples of changes to classroom or school arrangements; feedback "You said – We did".
School Council and learner forums	Elections or arrangements for representation; regular meetings; gathering peer opinions; agenda items from learners or leaders.	Provides a democratic pathway for learners to raise issues, represent wider perspectives and influence school life.	School council minutes; actions; attendance; evidence collected by representatives and reported back to peers.

Learner voice source	How it is gathered	How it feeds into decisions	Evidence of quality assurance
Feedback on the curriculum, teaching and learning	Learner surveys; discussions after units of work; learning walks; listening to learners as part of monitoring; feedback on learning experiences.	Informs curriculum refinement, selection of learning experiences, teaching strategies, suitable support and challenge for learners.	Customised curriculum plans; self-evaluation records; monitoring reports; examples of changes to learning experiences.
Surveys, questionnaires and digital resources	School questionnaires; well-being surveys; anonymous methods; digital platforms; opinion-gathering activities on specific issues.	Identifies themes across groups or the whole school, helping leaders prioritise improvement actions.	Analysis of results; themes; action plans; reports to leaders and governors.
Specific groups or the voice of learners who are at risk of being under-represented	Well-being groups; ALN groups; discussions with vulnerable learners; advocacy support or alternative methods of communication.	Reduces the risk that decisions are based solely on the voice of the most confident learners, and helps schools adapt provision to various needs.	Evidence of inclusive approaches; reasonable adjustments; supporting records; themes of target groups; impact on support plans.

Learner voice source	How it is gathered	How it feeds into decisions	Evidence of quality assurance
Self-evaluation and school monitoring	Listening to learners as part of learning walks, scrutiny of work, well-being reviews, attendance and behaviour monitoring, and quality assurance activities.	Ensures that learners' views and experiences are a source of evidence when evaluating the quality of provision and planning improvement.	Self-evaluation reports; School Development Plan; monitoring records; improvement actions that refer to the voice of learners.
Complaints, compliments and informal feedback	Conversations with staff; comments from learners; feedback to pastors or leaders; patterns that emerge through school arrangements.	Able to identify strengths, concerns or obstacles before they become more formal issues.	Appropriate records; analysing themes; response actions; evidence of feedback to learners.
Llais Ni: Gwynedd Schools and Youth Forum	Themes from schools, school councils and learner forums are shared, where appropriate, with regional or county arrangements.	Enables learners' experiences in schools to influence relevant education priorities and county decisions.	Forum minutes; county themes; actions; reports or updates to services and young people.

1. Listening and gathering

Schools will provide a range of regular opportunities for learners to share views on their learning, well-being and experience of school life. The methods should be appropriate to learners' age, development, language, ability and communication needs.

2. Understanding and analysis

Schools should consider what learners say alongside other evidence such as attendance data, well-being, progress, staff observations and the views of parents or partners where relevant. The analysis should identify themes, strengths, obstacles and areas for improvement.

3. Planning and prioritising

Learners' perspectives should inform the school's priorities, the School Development Plan, curriculum development, well-being plans and learner support arrangements. When learners' opinions differ from what is possible or appropriate, the logic should be clearly recorded.

4. Implementation and adaptation of provision

Schools should be able to demonstrate how learner feedback has led to actions, changes or improvements. This can include adapting learning experiences, improving communication, strengthening well-being arrangements, changing a school's arrangements or developing new participation opportunities.

5. Impact review and feedback

Schools should review whether the action taken has made a difference from the learners' perspective. Learners should receive clear feedback on the impact of their contribution, including through simple methods such as "You said – We did – What changed".

Routes for raising, referring and escalating a matter:

Learner raises a matter → a member of staff or a school council listens → the matter is recorded → a relevant leader responds → governing body or Llais Ni: Schools if required → feedback to the learner → check the impact

If a matter is not resolved by the school council or at a school level, it should be explained how it can be referred to the relevant leader, governing body, Education Service or Llais Ni: Schools Role titles should be used rather than names of individuals.

Security, confidentiality and accuracy

Schools will offer a confidential or anonymous method of raising a matter where appropriate. Learners will be able to check that a summary of their point of view reflects their message and will be able to correct a misunderstanding.

Updates and feedback

Learners will be informed that the matter has been received, who is responsible and when an update is expected. An update will be given prior to a final decision if the process continues.

Additional assurance question: Can the learners themselves explain what happened to their opinion and what difference it made?

The role of self-evaluation, monitoring and quality assurance

The voice of the learner is part of a school's accountability at all levels. Staff are responsible for listening to learners and using this information to improve learning experiences. School leaders and governing bodies are responsible for ensuring that the voice of the learner is systematically considered when evaluating provision, in improvement planning and impact monitoring.

- School self-evaluation: using learners' views and experiences as part of evidence when evaluating the quality of teaching, learning, well-being, inclusion and the curriculum.
- School Development Plan: ensure that relevant improvement priorities reflect what has been learned by listening to learners.
- Monitoring by leaders: include discussions with learners, surveys or other methods as part of regular monitoring, avoiding relying solely on the views of adults.
- Scrutiny by governing bodies: asking how the voice of the learner has been collected, used and shared back with learners.
- Cyngor Gwynedd engagement: consideration of learners' views as part of a dialogue with schools, support for improvement and relevant county arrangements.
- Whole-system learning: using themes from Llais Ni: Schools, learner forums and the Gwynedd Youth Forum to inform wider education priorities.

What should we see in effective practice?

- Learners understand that their views are valued and know how to share views or raise matters.
- Participation structures, including school councils and learner forums, are operational, democratic and represent the wider perspectives of learners.
- Schools use a variety of methods to hear from learners who do not always contribute through formal meetings.
- Learners' perspectives influence curriculum development, teaching and learning, well-being, school arrangements and improvement priorities.
- There is clear evidence of the connection between what learners said, the decisions made, and what changed.
- Learners are able to give examples of changes or improvements that have occurred as a result of their contribution.
- Leaders and governors consider the voice of the learner in monitoring provision and challenging progress.
- Themes of the voice of the learner feed into county arrangements where relevant, including Llais Ni: Gwynedd Schools and Youth Forum.

Measuring impact

To demonstrate that the voice of the learner has a real impact, schools and the Education Service should be able to show evidence at three levels:

Level	Question of assurance	Examples of evidence
Individual learner	Has the learner had a meaningful opportunity to express an opinion and has their experience been understood?	Learner discussions; support records; individual or group feedback; examples of adaptations to learning or well-being; evidence of feedback to the learner.
Class, group or school	Is there a consistent practice to gather, analyse and use learners' voices to improve provision?	School council minutes; surveys; monitoring reports; School Development Plan; examples of "You Said – We Did"; self-evaluation records.
Governing body	Do governors get relevant evidence of the voice of learners and use it to scrutinise quality and impact?	Headteacher reports; committee minutes; governors' visits; challenge questions; records of discussions or presentations by learners.
Strategic or county	Do themes of learner voices influence school support, education priorities or relevant county decisions?	Llais Ni Themes: Schools; the minutes of the Gwynedd Youth Forum; reports to management teams or services; changes to guidance, support or priorities.

Key questions for schools and governing bodies

- Do learners have regular and meaningful opportunities to share views about their learning, well-being and experience of school life?
- Do participation approaches involve learners of different ages, backgrounds, abilities, needs and confidence?
- Is the school clear about which issues learners can influence and which issues have limitations?
- Are learners' opinions recorded and summarised without losing the meaning of their message?
- Is there evidence that learners' views have influenced the curriculum, teaching and learning, well-being or school arrangements?
- Do learners get feedback on what has happened as a result of their contribution?
- Does the School Development Plan or self-evaluation arrangements reflect themes from learners' voices?
- Do governors ask questions about the quality, representation and impact of the voice of the learner?
- Is there a clear procedure to raise school matters to a regional or county level when appropriate?
- Can the school show examples of "You said – We did – What changed"?

Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility in relation to the voice of the learner
Learners	Sharing opinions, experiences and ideas; contribute to school life; help identify what works well and what could improve.
Learner representatives	Gather views from peers, represent wider perspectives, contribute to school councils or forums, and help share feedback with learners.
Teachers and practitioners	Creating opportunities for learners to voice their opinions; using feedback to adapt teaching, learning and support; record relevant themes and act on them.
School Leaders	Ensure that whole-school arrangements for the voice of the learner are clear, inclusive and effective; use the information to inform self-evaluation, improvement planning and curriculum development.
Governing bodies	Ensure that the voice of the learner is seen as part of leadership and accountability; scrutiny of evidence; asking how learners have influenced decisions and improvement.
Cyngor Gwynedd - Education Service	Supporting schools to develop effective practice; use relevant themes from the voice of learners when supporting improvement, policy development or planning education priorities.
Gwynedd Youth Forum and Llais Ni: Schools	To provide a pathway for themes from schools to move to county arrangements, and to ensure that learners are able to contribute to wider education issues where appropriate.
Partners	Supporting learner participation where they work with schools or services; share relevant themes and contribute to improvement actions where appropriate.

Summary

This appendix confirms that the voice of the learner is a core part of education in Gwynedd. It links learner experiences to curriculum development, teaching and learning, well-being, self-evaluation, improvement planning, scrutiny by governing bodies and county arrangements. The proof of success is that it can be shown that the voice of the learners has improved experiences and outcomes.

