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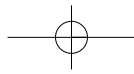
F O R W A R D

ATL is pleased to have commissioned an in-depth study into the structure and form of the School Council in two schools. We add our thanks, to those of the researchers, to the headteachers, teachers, staff, and students of the schools who contributed so much by explaining their understanding of the role of the School Council. We feel sure that the description of an effective Council and the recommendations from the research will be of interest to many schools. The picture the research paints of the importance of schools as places where children and young people are listened to; involved in decision making; enjoy mutual respect with adults; and consequently grow in confidence and responsibility, is one teachers, too, will aspire to. The research demonstrates that 'citizenship' cannot be just a curriculum subject but has wider implications for schools.

Julie Grant
ATL President 2001-2002

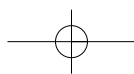
In '*Schools: achieving success*' the Government has emphasised its commitment to schools playing an important part in encouraging children's active participation in decisions that affect them and to the key role of citizenship in promoting political literacy and social responsibility. This research illustrates that School Councils can, under certain circumstances, provide just such an 'apprenticeship in democracy'. It is not only the day to day working of School Council that will be of interest to ATL members, but the wider school practices and characteristics the researchers identify as just as essential. The commitment these teachers show to the well-being of children and young people is repeated across the country. But the research, quite rightly, points to the importance of leadership and leadership training, in order that, as the NCSL puts it, leadership is distributed throughout the school community and builds an '*evolving consensus around values that will unite and excite*' all its members. The Government's aims are undoubtedly a further challenge for the teaching profession, but the message from this research is that there is the potential for schools to find ways of combating disaffection and enhancing social inclusion through its approach to citizenship. ATL hopes that the research will be read with interest by many of its members, and others, as a contribution to a wider debate on an issue of concern to us all.

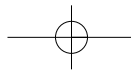
Peter Smith
ATL General Secretary



CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	4
Executive Summary	5
Introduction	11
Section One: Methodology	14
Section Two: Review of the Literature	18
Section Three: Research Questions	33
Section Four: Case Studies	40
Section five: Conclusions and Recommendations	70
References	76
Appendix	79





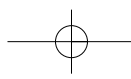
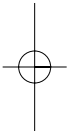
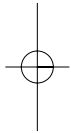
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We should like to acknowledge the contributions of Daniel Zylbersztajn who worked as a research assistant on this project. He has spent countless hours transcribing the tapes of interviews and has made invaluable contributions to our emerging thinking.

Thanks to all those who acted as 'expert' interviewees. Their thinking has been instrumental in shaping the direction of the research.

We are hugely grateful to the staff and pupils at the two case study schools. The generosity with which they gave their time and the openness and honesty of their responses to our questions and observations have been critical to the success of the research. The commitment of these schools to our research is a testimony to their democratic practice.

Finally, thanks to ATL for funding this project, particularly to Meryl Thompson whose commitment to the research and critical eye has been a constant source of support and direction for the project.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes the findings of a research project investigating the role of school councils in promoting citizenship education. **The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)** commissioned the research. The stated aim of the research was to examine the contributions that school councils can make to citizenship education in primary and secondary schools.

We began the research with a commitment to a **maximalist** model of citizenship in which young people have opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable them to take an informed and active role in local, national and global society. The citizen envisaged is one who is engaged in all aspects of the social world, who has clearly defined rights, responsibilities, a knowledge and understanding of injustice and inequality and the will and skills to promote a more equal and just society. In theory, school councils are a key element of this model of citizenship education in that they can provide pupils with first hand experience of democratic structures and processes and provide opportunities to develop the attributes of maximalist citizenship in all pupils.

Early in the research it became clear that for school councils to make an effective contribution to this model of citizenship, they need to be located within the wider structures and practices within schools that promote pupil participation and genuine involvement. Thus we became convinced that it is within the context of what we might term 'democratic schools', that schools councils can most effectively contribute to a maximalist citizenship education. The research, then, was concerned with the nature and form of effective school councils and their relationship to other democratic structures and practices. **We took the view that it is particular kinds of school councils within particular institutional settings that can contribute most effectively to citizenship education.**

Methodology

The research was undertaken between June 1998 and December 2000. It took the form of a **qualitative** study comprising a review of literature, preliminary interviews with 'experts' in the field and fieldwork in two schools, one primary and one secondary school. The schools provide the case studies for the research.

The particular schools were chosen because they had many of the surface characteristics we thought might be necessary for providing the type of school council which could make the most effective contribution to citizenship education. The aim of the fieldwork was to provide illustrations of democratic schools and effective school councils. The two researchers spent three days in each school. The approach was ethnographic, documenting the 'lived reality' of school councils and democratic schools through first-hand observation and in-depth interviews with those directly involved.

Literature review

The review comprised of the following elements.

- **A review of the literature on citizenship education, (largely confined to initiatives and debates in England from the late 1980s through to the revised national curriculum (2000)).**

The review concluded that the revised national curriculum (2000) embraces citizenship education in a more explicit and 'radical' form than we have seen to date. Whilst the curriculum does not reflect a pure maximalist model of citizenship, it does provide opportunities for schools to promote important elements of this model. For example, schools can use the curriculum rationale and citizenship curriculum to promote global citizenship, anti-racism, and the celebration of diversity. School councils are still not given a statutory role in schools as they are elsewhere in Europe. However, schools are now being explicitly encouraged to develop school councils as an essential element of citizenship education.

- **A review of the literature on school councils, and on democratic schools.**

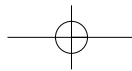
Our review of the literature on school councils would suggest that school councils have the capacity to make important contributions to citizenship. They can serve a number of important purposes for pupils and for schools. These include:

- contributing to good relations and discipline and promoting social inclusion
- giving expression to children's rights
- providing a democratic experience and promoting democratic skills.

However, this capacity is often not realised in schools. The reasons for this are partly to do with what might appear to be technical weaknesses in the structure, form and scope of councils but these weaknesses are often symbolic of wider whole school weaknesses in relation to pupil participation and engagement. The review of the literature on democratic schools would suggest that there is a dynamic interplay between effective school councils and democratic schools. School councils flourish most effectively in the context of a wider democratic ethos and structure but they also play a significant role in promoting and sustaining that democracy.

Main findings from the case studies

1. The fieldwork confirmed the view that **it is particular kinds of school councils within particular institutional settings that can contribute most effectively to citizenship education.** In the two schools the school council plays an effective role in promoting a maximalist model of citizenship. The reasons for the effectiveness lie both in the **structure and form of the council** in the schools and in the **wider school contexts** in which they operate.



2. The structure and form of the school council

In the case study schools, the school councils shared some common characteristics. These characteristics are important ingredients of an effective school council. The characteristics are:

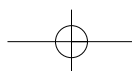
- meetings are time-tabled into lesson times
- the council is whole-school rather than being class or year-based
- there are explicit representation and reporting mechanisms
- meetings are run formally with agendas and minutes
- the council has a formal constitution
- the council is formally consulted about major policy decisions
- the scope of the agenda can be determined by pupils as well as staff
- the council is under the direct oversight of the Headteacher.

3. Developing 'maximalist' citizenship

The school councils in the case study schools provide significant experiences of citizenship. The data suggests that in both these schools the council acts as a vehicle of pupil empowerment – providing them with the right to be heard and consulted, the power to make decisions and giving them the responsibilities associated with these rights. In both schools the pupils are not involved in 'tokenistic' activity, but rather are engaged in a serious purpose. They were aware that the council makes decisions that affects their lives, that it can change things in a real way and they have confidence in its power to do things. The schools had set up school councils to enable pupils to exercise their rights to have a voice and to provide an 'apprenticeship in democracy'. However, the school council in both schools also contributes to the promotion of social inclusion and helps to combat disaffection. Thus in these schools the school council serves a number of interrelated purposes for schools and pupils.

4. Wider school structures and practices

The case studies provided confirmation that the nature of the institution is a critical factor in developing and sustaining effective school councils. In both schools the school council is set within a wider democratic climate and structures. This gives it a reality and power as the structures and ethos provide other ways in which pupils are listened to, consulted, asked to take responsibility, treated with respect and valued. In this way the seriousness of the council's role and power is affirmed and supported. The fieldwork supported the view that school councils can only be effective in institutions where there is a genuine and consistent commitment to pupil participation and where this commitment is realised through whole school structures and practices. In the case study schools, we were convinced that the 'lived reality' for pupils was one in which they felt valued, listened to and empowered.



5. Some emerging issues

· *Staff involvement in the school council*

In the case study schools, the data revealed a lack of staff engagement in the school council. In these schools the Headteacher played a significant role in the running of the school council but other staff remained marginal to its work. In neither school did the council systematically report to staff or did they have any direct input into agendas or meetings. Whilst we believe that the direct oversight of the school council by the Headteacher is important there is a strong case for finding strategies that engage all staff in its work.

· *Training for pupils*

In the case study schools the quality of the meetings of the school council would be further enhanced through systematic training for counsellors. The skills required to effectively chair and participate in such meetings are complex and need to be developed in a systematic fashion from an early age.

· *The leadership and management of democratic schools*

Whilst in both the case study schools there is a democratic climate and democratic structures for pupils, there are tensions around the participation and empowerment of the adults in the institution. The fieldwork confirmed our view that there would seem to be a dilemma for leaders of democratic schools in relation to adults. The dilemma centres on the rights of those adults who don't 'buy in' to an ethos and practice of pupil empowerment. In both the schools there were unresolved tensions about whether such adults should have the right to dissent. It is our view that these tensions may be inherent in any school where there is a strong commitment to pupil democracy and participation. It may be that if the leader has to act as a gatekeeper to pupil democracy then s/he may sometimes be almost forced into a position where the rights of some staff have to be put at risk in order for pupils' rights to be maintained.

Recommendations

The recommendations are concerned with the nature of effective school councils and the kinds of whole schools settings in which they best operate. The recommendations are aimed at teachers, senior managers, and policy makers.

1. Structure and form of the school council

If schools are to develop and sustain school councils that are effective in promoting citizenship, then they need to ensure that the form and structure of the council fulfil a number of **criteria**. These include:

- whole school membership and representation
- frequent and regular meetings planned for the year and held during lesson time
- a written constitution

- chaired meetings with formal agendas, minutes and agreed procedures for discussion and decision making
- explicit and effective reporting mechanisms in relation to pupils, staff, governors and parents
- a formal consultative role in major policies and decisions, including the selection of new staff
- the scope and power to debate major issues within the school
- a budget for the council and consultation over the uses of the school budget
- direct involvement of senior management
- formally structured involvement of other staff.

2. Systematic training for all pupils and staff

There is a need to implement a more systematic training programme for pupils in line with that provided in many other European countries. The training should be part of the PSHE/citizenship curriculum in primary and secondary schools and should form part of an entitlement curriculum for all pupils. LEAs could play a useful role in co-ordinating local training programmes for staff.

3. National guidance for schools

We welcome the emerging guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) around pupil participation, including guidance on school councils. We would recommend that further guidance be given to schools on how they might best provide coherence across a range of emerging initiatives to do with citizenship and pupil participation. For example, further work needs to be undertaken to help schools make more explicit and coherent links between the PSHE/citizenship curriculum, school councils and other whole school initiatives such as conflict resolution and peer support and mentoring.

4. Statutory requirement

We would recommend that school councils become a statutory requirement for all schools as they are in some European countries and in some of the emerging Southern democracies such as South Africa. We are aware that this idea was discussed and eventually rejected by the members of the working party on citizenship (Crick Report, 1998) but remain convinced that such a requirement would do much to underline the importance that the Government gives to the role of citizenship in schools.

5. Whole school democratic practice

Schools should be helped to continue to review their structures and practices in relation to whole school democratic practice. The emerging QCA guidance on pupil participation is a helpful step in this direction. Schools need to regularly review the range of opportunities that they provide for pupils to have their voices heard, be consulted on major issues, take decisions, and exercise their rights and responsibilities. Schools need to monitor the effectiveness of these opportunities,

including the effectiveness of the school council. Schools also need to regularly review their core values, ethos and climate to ensure that they are providing a climate in which all members of the school community feel valued and of equal worth.

6. Initial teacher training and continuing professional development of teachers

We recommend that democratic practice be given more priority in the training of new teachers and in continuing professional development (CPD). The revisions to the 4/98 Standards for ITT may begin to move us in the right direction. The welcome emphasis on the values and dispositions required of new teachers, and the requirements that trainee teachers have an understanding of the programme of study for citizenship and the national curriculum framework for PSHE (and citizenship for Key Stages 1 and 2) are a move in the right direction. In addition, the new Standards encourage ITT providers to offer PSHE/citizenship as an area of primary specialism. The CPD funding for citizenship could also make a contribution to further development. However, there is a long way to go in this area and there is always the danger that such work is 'put on the back burner' in the face of other competing initiatives.

In relation to school leadership, we recommend that the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), in developing the Leadership Development Framework, include opportunities for leaders and emergent leaders to grapple with the complexities involved in achieving what the think tank set up by the NCSL describe as 'distributive' leadership. In particular, leaders are given opportunities to explore strategies that may enable them to better combine pupil democracy with the empowerment of staff.*

6. Further research

We recommend that further research be undertaken to explore the following issues.

- The relationship between school councils and the range of other initiatives with respect to citizenship in the broadest sense. Useful work could be done in documenting ways in which schools attempt to provide consistency and coherence across these initiatives and in how they maintain priority for such work in the face of competing and sometimes conflicting demands.
- The tensions in leading and managing a school committed to democratic practice for pupils and staff and the effectiveness of the strategies that leaders adopt to overcome such tensions.
- The voices of children and young people in schools – much useful work could be done in further documenting the views and experiences of pupils as emerging citizens. In particular, we can learn much from their understandings of what a school that genuinely strives to engage their active participation might look like.

*This framework is based partly on the recommendations of the think tank set up by the NCSL. The recommendations include a set of 10 school leadership propositions, of which one is particularly pertinent to the leadership of democratic schools. This proposition states that 'School leadership is a function that needs to be distributed throughout the school community'. This is described as distributed leadership. It goes on to describe such leadership as involving 'building an evolving consensus around values that will unite and excite members of the school community' (2001 NCSL).

INTRODUCTION

This research was commissioned by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) and is concerned with the contribution that school councils can make to citizenship education. We were conscious from the outset that this would not prove an easy task. School councils take a number of forms and serve a variety of purposes. Similarly, citizenship education is understood in different ways. The history of both, particularly in England, demonstrates the complexity of meaning given to school councils and citizenship education. The research attempts to unravel some of these complexities and provide some tentative suggestions as to how school councils can most effectively contribute to citizenship education.

This report is in a number of sections. The **first section** provides a rationale for the research and outlines the methodology adopted. The **second section** sets school councils within the context of citizenship education and democratic schools. In this section we review the literature on citizenship education, school councils and democratic schools.* We provide an overview of the major initiatives and debates around citizenship education in England since the 1980s, culminating in the new citizenship curriculum within the revised national curriculum. In doing this, we link the different models of citizenship education to historical and contemporary socio-political contexts. We then review the literature on school councils in relation to citizenship education. Finally we relate school councils and citizenship education to wider school structures and processes, focussing particularly on democratic schools.

In the **third section** we clarify research issues emerging from the review of literature and identify research questions. In particular we use 'experts' in the field to test and refine our emerging ideas as to the significant characteristics of schools and school councils that are best able to make an effective contribution to citizenship education.

The **fourth section** comprises case studies of two schools, one primary one secondary. The schools were chosen because, in addition to having a well-established school council, they appeared to be schools that might have many of the indicators of whole school democratic practice. They were also schools that were receptive to our research intentions and committed to being involved in the research process. The case studies are illustrative in that they unpack or describe what a democratic school might look like, with a particular focus on the nature and role of a school council. We attempt to describe the schools in terms of the lived reality for teachers, pupils and others rather than conventional 'performance indicators'.

The **fifth section** outlines our conclusions and makes some recommendations for schools, teachers and policy makers and for further research in the area.

Defining citizenship education

The reader will be aware that citizenship education means different things to different people, depending on their political and educational perspectives. The literature

11 *We provide definitions of democratic schools in Section Two of the report. However, we are working with a definition derived from Apple and Beane in which a democratic school is described in terms of how successfully the school strives to engage all members of the school community in the decision-making process.

review in Section Two of the report explores some of the different models of citizenship education in England. However, it is important to make clear that we came to this research with a commitment to a particular version of citizenship education, what some have described as 'a maximalist version'* (Mc Goughlin, 1992). This commitment meant that, from the beginning, we were concerned with what school councils could contribute to a particular kind of citizenship education. The **maximalist** model that we have adopted is one in which citizenship education provides opportunities for young people to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable them to take an informed and active role in local, national and global society. The citizen envisaged is one who is engaged in all aspects of the social world, who has clearly defined rights, responsibilities, a knowledge and understanding of injustice and inequality and the will and skills to promote a more equal and just society. Griffith puts it another way when he describes citizenship education as:

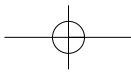
'...an education that prepares pupils for global citizenship by granting them active, democratic citizen's rights throughout their education; that uses the curriculum as a vehicle for developing a young citizen's explicit awareness of these rights and their ability to act upon them within an ethically informed critical context of distanced reflection' (Griffith, 1998).

Elsewhere we have argued that a maximalist citizenship education is one that provides:

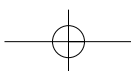
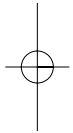
'... learning opportunities which give them [pupils] first-hand experience of participation, equality, membership, freedoms, rights, responsibilities through schools councils, through extracurricular activities, through teaching and learning styles which encourage participation, control, autonomy and collaboration. They need opportunities to explore and question important issues that confront them now and in the future – such issues will range from the very personal through to the global. They need to develop a range of skills, personal and social. They will need to experience equality of opportunity and to develop a positive and informed awareness of inequalities and how to combat them. This requires them to have opportunities to explore areas of their lives and those of others in a critical, questioning stance, areas which cut across the heart of democratic living and citizenship' (Inman and Buck, 1995).

School councils can be seen as a key element of maximalist citizenship education in that they can provide pupils with first hand experience of democratic structures and processes and can foster many of the attributes of a maximalist citizen. However, school councils are a necessary but not sufficient ingredient of a maximalist citizenship education. Pupils also require opportunities to develop knowledge, skills

*The notion of maximalist citizenship derives from the work of Mc Goughlin who distinguishes between minimalist and maximalist citizenship and draws out the implications of these two models for citizenship education. The main differences are described in relation to three core aspects of citizenship – membership, rights and responsibilities and participation. i. A minimalist view of membership of society sees membership in terms of a formal and legal status, often bestowed by the state and involving e.g. having a passport, voting rights etc. A maximalist view of membership involves a sense of real equality and justice for everyone and a conception of identity as one which is both central to citizenship and is recognised as both individual and cultural. ii. A minimalist version of rights and duties is concerned with formal rights but with an emphasis on public duty, while a maximalist version puts rights and duties in the context of a wider understanding of cultural, social inequalities. iii. A minimalist view of participation essentially involves notions of representation, voting and pressure group politics whilst a more maximalist view sees citizens as being fully engaged in all decisions affecting their lives.



and attitudes through the broad curriculum, including discrete curriculum provision in the form of PSHE/citizenship. It is also clear that if school councils are to make an effective contribution to this model of citizenship then they need to be located within the wider structures and practices within schools that promote pupil participation and genuine involvement. It is within the context of what we have termed democratic schools, that school councils can most effectively contribute to citizenship education. The research, then, is concerned with the nature and form of effective school councils and their relationship to other democratic structures and practices. It is our view that particular kinds of school councils within particular institutional settings contribute most effectively to citizenship education. This then became the starting point for the research and we used the review of literature, preliminary interviews and the fieldwork to explore this contention.



SECTION ONE: METHODOLOGY

In this section we:

- outline and provide a rationale for our overall methodological approach
- describe the research methods adopted for the study.

The research was undertaken between June 1998 and December 2000. The specific objectives of the research were to:

1. clarify the relationship between school councils and citizenship education
2. identify the necessary characteristics of schools where school councils can make most effective contributions to citizenship education
3. identify strategies that will help schools to develop and sustain effective school councils
4. make recommendations to enhance the contribution that school council can make to citizenship education
5. contribute to the development of appropriate research design and methodology with regard to further research in this area.

The research took the form of a qualitative study. Our own backgrounds as teachers and researchers in the broader field of pupils' personal and social development are firmly located within a qualitative perspective. We have argued elsewhere (Inman, Buck, Burke, 1998) that the complex nature of pupils' development in areas such as citizenship can only be understood through qualitative means. We and others have also argued that understanding effective school provision for such complex development requires qualitative approaches (Eisner, 1994; Lyseight-jones, 1998).

The fact that citizenship and citizenship education are contested terms, open to a diversity of meaning and opinion, meant that we needed instruments that could capture the different participants' meanings and understandings. This provided further justification for adopting a qualitative approach.

We adopted the following range of research methods.

1. *A review of the literature on citizenship education* (largely confined to initiatives and debates in England from the late 1980s through to the revised curriculum (2000)).
2. *A review of the literature on school councils and on democratic schools.*
3. *Two sets of preliminary interviews*
The first set of interviews comprised a small pilot study with a group of young people. The purpose of these interviews was simply to trial a variety of approaches to interviewing young people. The second set of interviews was with a range of what we have called 'experts' in the field in that they were

people with a known commitment to and interest in citizenship education. The interviewees comprised:

- a national curricular adviser
- an LEA inspector
- three secondary school teachers from a range of disciplines (art, English and science)
- two primary teachers.

4. *In-depth fieldwork in two schools (one primary and one secondary).*

The process of choosing the two schools was lengthy; we were looking for schools that would provide illustrative material of 'good practice' in relation to school councils. The particular schools were chosen because, in addition to having a well-established school council, they had many of the surface characteristics of whole school democratic practice. In choosing the schools we looked at how the schools described themselves to the outside world through their prospectuses and web-sites; at what had been said about them in Ofsted inspection reports; and from discussions with LEA advisers. Finally, we talked with the Headteachers of the two schools about our research intentions and as a result were convinced that these were schools that were open to the research and would be committed to the work we were trying to do.

The aim of the fieldwork was to provide illustrations of democratic schools and effective school councils. The two researchers spent three days in each school. The approach was ethnographic, documenting the 'lived reality'* of school councils and democratic schools through first-hand observation and in-depth interviews with those directly involved (Hammersley, 1999, Gordon, Holland and Lahelma, 2000). Through this approach we hoped to gain an understanding of what Stephen Ball has called the 'Folk Knowledge' within the schools (Ball, 1988).

School A

An 11-19 co-educational comprehensive in inner London. The school is multi-cultural and multi-lingual. Data was collected via the following methods:

- i. In-depth semi-structured interviews with:
 - five Year 8 pupils
 - six Year 11 pupils
 - six Year 12/13 pupils
 - two main-scale teachers
 - one head of year
 - one senior teacher
 - one headteacher

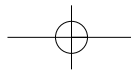
*The term 'lived reality' is one that is commonly used in qualitative research and refers to the use of observation and in-depth interviews to get at the participants' understandings and meanings of a situation. This method attempts to observe the everyday reality, as experienced by the participants.

- one school administrator
 - one vice-chair of governors (see the appendix for details of interview schedules).
- ii. Analysis of school documentation with reference to the school council and the structures and practices that might facilitate democracy. The documentation comprised:
- school prospectus and other documentation for students and parents
 - whole school policies and procedures
 - the constitution and minutes of school council meetings
 - relevant minutes of governors' meetings
 - additional documentation on school initiatives relevant to the research, for example, extra-curricular initiatives or school projects.
- iii. Observations of lessons – these included observations across the curriculum areas and across the age groups from Years 7 to 13. Observations were initially recorded using an observation schedule.
- iv. Observations of school council meetings.
- v. Observations of extra-curricular activities, break and lunchtimes.

School B

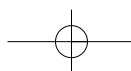
A 3-11 largely white primary school in semi-rural central England. Data was collected via the following methods.

- i. In-depth semi-structured interviews with:
- members of the school council
 - a group of children from Years 1 - 6
 - a member of the Senior Management Team
 - three teachers
 - one headteacher
 - one school administrator
 - one classroom assistant (see the appendix for details of interview schedules).
- ii. Analysis of the school documentation with reference to the school council and structures and practices that might facilitate democracy. The documentation comprised:
- school prospectus and other documentation for children and parents
 - whole school policies and procedures
 - the constitution and minutes of school council meetings



- additional documentation on school initiatives relevant to the research, for example, extra-curricular initiatives or school projects.
- iii. Observations of lessons. These included observations of classes, from reception through to Year 6, and covered the broad curriculum areas. We observed the teaching of maths, English, humanities, dance and PE. We also observed two circle times. Observations were initially recorded using an observation schedule.
- iv. Observations of school council meetings.
- v. Observations of extra-curricular activities and break and lunchtimes.

Whilst we started the study with a particular view of school councils and citizenship education, we attempted throughout to remain open to emerging issues and new ideas, some of which took us in new directions. The cycle of interviews, observations, analysis of documentation, together with our ongoing review of the literature, enabled us to continually share our emerging ideas and hypotheses with teachers, advisers and other researchers and to begin to formulate and refine the research questions.



SECTION TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this section we review the literature in order to:

- provide an overview of citizenship education in England from the late 1980s onwards
- explore how the potential contribution of school councils to citizenship education is discussed in the literature
- explore how the link between school councils, citizenship and democratic schools is identified in the literature.

The purpose of the review is to provide a context in which to understand the role and form of school councils in relation to citizenship and democracy. The review also provides a 'springboard' for the research questions and fieldwork. However, this was not a one-way process, since the preliminary interviews took us in directions that frequently forced us to look again at the literature in a new light.

Citizenship and citizenship education

There is not space in this report to document the long history of debate around citizenship and citizenship education. Both have been more than adequately reported by others (Brown, 1991; Heater, 1990; Davies et al, 1999). For the purposes of this report we give a brief overview of the initiatives in citizenship education in England since the late 1980s. The intention is to provide the reader with a wider educational and political context in which to understand the potential of school councils to contribute towards citizenship education.

Citizenship education in England has, to date, been characterised by a number of features.

1. A lack of consensus as to what is meant by citizenship in England or as to what might constitute the proper purposes and forms of citizenship education in schools. The literature on citizenship and citizenship education points clearly to the fact that both citizenship and citizenship education are contested terms (Beck, 1998; Kerr, 1999; Kennedy, 1997). Both terms are associated with a variety of differing and, at times, opposing educational and political perspectives.
2. Largely as a result of this lack of consensus, citizenship education in England has been marked by a lack of clarity as to its purpose and form within the school curriculum.
3. Whilst there have been eras when there has been intense interest in citizenship and citizenship education, this has not led to citizenship education being given any statutory force until the revised national curriculum (2000) (and then only for secondary schools).

The 1988 Education Reform Act and citizenship education

Whilst citizenship education had been intermittently on the curriculum agenda throughout the 20th century, there was a renewed interest in citizenship and citizenship education in the 1980s. This led to a series of national initiatives on citizenship education. These initiatives need to be understood within the context of the Conservative Government of the period. Much of the debate reflected the political concerns of that period and was set within the context of a particular 'New Right' agenda in which citizenship was seen predominately in terms of duties and responsibilities rather than rights, and there was an unproblematic acceptance of the rule of law. The wider political ideology was one that gave prominence to the free market, individualism and minimal state interference.

Key initiatives included the Speaker's Commission, which reported in 1990, and Curriculum Guidance 8 Education for Citizenship (1990). As both have been well documented and reviewed elsewhere (Brown, 1991; Beck, 1998) we will limit ourselves to a brief analysis of this period, concentrating on the particular models of citizenship education being proposed and the references made to the role of school councils in promoting citizenship.

The Speaker's Commission

The commission was an all-party body set up to consider 'what is meant by citizenship and how this applies to institutions, voluntary organisations and individuals'. Whilst the brief of the commission was not confined to young people or to education, its report had much to say about the place of citizenship education within schools. Bernard Weatherill, then Speaker of the House, made clear his view when he said, *'I believe that citizenship, like anything else has to be learned. Young people do not become good citizens by accident'*.

In its report the commission made explicit the case for citizenship education within schools and within the informal education sector. The commission took the view that young people needed to acquire a range of citizenship skills. These skills include those of participation and require the development of pupils' capacities to *'...debate, argue and present a coherent point of view, to participate, for example, in elections... take responsibility by representing others, for example on a School Council'*.

The report stressed the need for schools to 'empower' young people and argued that *'the school through its arrangements and relationships should foster that development'* (Speaker's Commission 1990). It identified the need for young people to actively participate in their school and communities and recognised that involvement in school councils was one form of such participation.

National Curriculum Council, Curriculum Guidance No 8 (NCC, 1990)

Citizenship education was included as one of the five cross-curricular themes emerging from the 1988 Education Reform Act. In the foreword to Curriculum

Guidance 8 (NCC, 1990) Duncan Graham said, *'Education for citizenship is essential for every pupil'*. This was underlined by John MacGregor, the then Secretary for State for Education and Science who, in a speech given to the National Conference on Citizenship in Schools in February 1990, said that *'unless citizenship forms a part of what schools seek to convey to their pupils, the aims as set out in the Act will not be achieved'*.

The aims of citizenship education are described in Curriculum Guidance 8 (CG8) as:

'To establish the importance of positive, participative citizenship and provide the motivation to join in; to help pupils to acquire and understand essential information on which to base the development of their skills, values and attitudes towards citizenship'.

In the introduction schools are urged to:

'lay the foundations for positive participative citizenship in two important ways:
i. by helping pupils to acquire and understand essential information;
ii. by providing them with opportunities and incentives to participate in all aspects of school life'

(NCC, 1990).

The drafting and publication of CG8 seems to have been the subject of intense political and educational sensitivity (Beck 1997; Kerr, 1999; Fogelman 1997). Graham commented on the degree of ministerial 'panic and interference' in the drafting of the guidance, suggesting that the Government of the time saw the Speaker's Commission report as left wing and were concerned that CG8 should not reflect this position. In retrospect it is clear that CG8 was the result of compromise concerning the nature and purpose of citizenship education, reflecting the wider political debate as to the proper nature of citizenship within a democratic society. As a result, CG8 became a contradictory document with some elements of more maximalist citizenship education set within a largely minimalist model (Inman & Buck, 1995). One of the striking things about CG8 was that there was no attempt to acknowledge the contested nature of citizenship or to provide any rationale for the particular model of citizenship education contained within it.* The guidance merely asserted that citizenship education was an indispensable part of the curriculum and went on to list the areas of knowledge, understanding and skills that pupils should acquire to develop effective citizenship education.

Schools councils emerge in the section of CG8 that deals with whole school activities, opportunities and experiences. We are told that education for citizenship necessitates schools that provide opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility, be involved in decisions about features of their lives at school and have some control over their use

*In contrast, the Crick Report (1998) does provide a rationale for citizenship education and sets this rationale within a wider debate concerning citizenship.

of time. School councils are given as an example of how these opportunities might be provided. However, most of the examples of whole school approaches given in the guidance put an emphasis on the learning of duty and responsibility (Inman & Buck, 1995).

1990s

The fate of CG8, alongside that of the other cross-curricular themes, has been reviewed elsewhere (Whitty et al, 1994; Inman and Buck, 1995). The fact that they were non-statutory and emerged as a 'bolt on' addition to the national curriculum meant that many schools found it difficult to give the time and status to citizenship education within the revised curriculum. The revisions produced by the Dearing Review of the national curriculum further marginalised citizenship education, as no mention was made of the cross-curricular themes within the final report (Dearing, 1993). During this same period the new inspection system was introduced (Schools Act 1992). The various editions of Ofsted's *'Framework for Inspection'* (1993, 1994, 1996, 2000) have included references to aspects of citizenship education. However, as we have commented elsewhere, the references have usually been limited in scope and have given little guidance as to how inspectors should evaluate provision and outcomes in relation to citizenship (Inman and Burke, 1998). Clearly this will change as a result of the new requirements from 2002.

In the mid-nineties a renewed national interest in citizenship education emerged. This time the discussion took a slightly different form. The 'short-term trigger' was the apparent wider societal concern about the changing, and possibly eroding, political and moral fabric of society and the consequences of this erosion for the attitudes and behaviour of young people (Kerr, 1999). Some of the events that helped to trigger the new debate have been documented elsewhere (Inman, Buck and Burke, 1998). Citizenship education was explicitly linked to other aspects of personal and social development, particularly spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and values development. These discussions fed into the review of the curriculum.

The national curriculum review 1997-1999

The Labour Government had a stated public commitment to citizenship and citizenship education when they were elected in 1997. In November 1997, David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (DfEE), set up an advisory group to 'provide advice on effective education for citizenship in schools'. The working group was one of several commissioned by the Government to look at aspects of pupils' personal and social development within the curriculum. The final report of the advisory group, *'Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools'*, known as the Crick Report (1998), strongly argued the need to create 'active citizens'. Such citizens were defined as people with the knowledge, skills and values to be willing, able and equipped to have influence in public life. The report describes the purpose of citizenship education as:

'to make secure and to increase the knowledge, skills and values relevant to participative democracy; also to enhance the awareness of rights and duties, and the sense of responsibilities needed for the development of pupils into active citizens; and in doing so to establish the value to individuals, schools and society of involvement in the local and wider community'.

What kind of model of citizenship and citizenship education was proposed by the report? How far were the proposals in it different from earlier initiatives such as CG8? In particular, did they represent a more 'maximalist' model of citizenship than the earlier initiatives?

The report did promote a model of citizenship and citizenship education that, in parts, is more radical and maximalist than, for example, CG8. In particular, the report stressed the need for emerging citizens to acquire:

- an understanding of, and the skills to practise, citizens' rights as well as duties
- knowledge and understanding rather than the need to know 'essential information'
- critical capacities of reflection, enquiry and debate
- an ability to distinguish between law and justice and to challenge the status quo where appropriate
- the will and skills for community involvement, as well as community service.

It can be seen that the report had many elements of a maximalist model. The citizen envisaged is one who is engaged in all aspects of the social world, who has clearly defined rights, knowledge and understanding of injustice and inequality and the will and skills to promote a more equal and just society. The Crick Report then moved some way from a minimalist model of citizenship. However, there are mixed messages for maximalist citizenship within the report. The inconsistency of approach is also reflected in the way that the report discusses school councils. It emphasises the importance of schools engaging pupils in discussion and consultation about all aspects of school life on which pupils *'might reasonably be expected to have a view, and wherever possible to give pupils responsibility and experience in helping to run part of the school'*. It acknowledges the important role that school councils can play in promoting consultation and in providing opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility. It also makes clear that consultation and participation depend on particular kinds of school organisation. However, the report makes no recommendations as to the specific forms of school organisation that would best promote active citizenship. In particular it chooses not to recommend that school councils should become compulsory.

The revised national curriculum (2000): the emergence of a citizenship curriculum

In May 1999 the Secretary of State published proposals for the revised curriculum, including those for citizenship education. The proposals went out to consultation and at the end of 1999 a DfEE/ QCA booklet was published setting out the requirements for citizenship education from 2002 and providing guidance for teachers as to how to implement citizenship education in schools. Further guidance was provided in the QCA initial guidance booklets for *Personal, social and health education and citizenship at Key Stages 1 and 2 and citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4* (QCA 2000). As the reader will be aware, citizenship education has become a new foundation subject in secondary schools with programmes of study and Key Stage attainment targets. At Key Stages 1 and 2, citizenship is combined with PSHE within a non-statutory framework.

This is the first time that citizenship education has had a statutory place in the curriculum, albeit only at secondary level. It is also important to note that the revised curriculum has, for the first time, an explicit rationale 'setting out the fundamental principles underlying the curriculum'. This rationale gives centrality to pupils' personal and social development and citizenship is defined as a key purpose of the curriculum.

Citizenship education in the national curriculum has three interrelated strands – social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. The political literacy strand takes on a greater weight at Key Stages 3 and 4. Citizenship education is described as giving young people a range of knowledge, skills and understandings to play an effective role in society at local, national and international levels. At Key Stage 3 and 4 the knowledge, skills and understandings are explicitly broken down into three interrelated parts:

- knowledge and understanding about becoming an informed citizen
- developing skills of enquiry and communication
- developing skills of participation and responsible action.

Citizenship education and social inclusion

The new citizenship curriculum needs to be put in the context of the stated values and policies of the Labour Government from 1997. The conception of citizenship within the curriculum is intimately related to the drive for social inclusion. The need for social inclusion is set against the dangers of exclusion, defined in terms of alienation and apathy. David Blunkett described citizenship as providing '*the lifeblood of our democratic system*'. However, critics of the Government have raised doubts as to how far the conception of citizenship, as defined by the Government, meets the maximalist citizenship criteria of equality and justice for all. One of the key issues would seem to be whether real social inclusion and citizenship demands material moves to reduce inequality. Engaged citizens, the critics argue, need to have a material stake in their society. Inclusivity is problematic when some people are, by definition, left out in

relation to critical areas such as wealth, employment and welfare. The concern for fairness needs to be accompanied by an equal concern for equality. As Will Hutton has argued, *'Its (Government) rhetoric is focused entirely on ending social exclusion by pulling the marginalised into 'society', but the inequalities of distribution and opportunity within this wider society are to be left largely untouched'* (Hutton, 1998).

If the critics are right then some doubt must be cast on the practical realities of the Government's commitment to enhancing genuine participative democracy. It would seem to us that, unless more attention is paid to combating material inequalities then education for citizenship is likely to be less effective than we would wish. As it stands, we could envisage a situation where there is a gap between citizenship education for social inclusion and the lived reality of many emerging citizens who find themselves excluded from the mainstream society. There are at least two possible outcomes of this situation: one is that young people become increasingly cynical about democratic procedures and opt out of the 'inclusive' society; alternatively, young people may continue to challenge the status quo but not in the 'peaceful and responsible manner' outlined by the Government.

School councils and the national curriculum

Whilst school councils have no statutory place in the revised national curriculum 2000 they are identified as important vehicles for the promotion of citizenship in schools. In the initial QCA guidance school councils are used as one example of ways in which schools can develop responsibility in pupils, enable them to participate in decisions and learn about democracy. *'Involvement in the running of the school through school or class councils and other decision-making also promotes responsibility and learning about democracy'* (QCA, 2000).

'For example, pupils may participate in the running of the school through school and class councils or committees with a variety of voting systems' (QCA, 2000).

Pupil participation has also increasingly been identified as an important component within a range of national initiatives around personal and social development. For example, the Healthy School Standard and the initiatives around emotional literacy both recognise the importance of pupil participation (National Healthy School Standard 2000, Antidote 2001).

In conclusion, the revised national curriculum (2000) embraces citizenship education in a more explicit and 'radical' form than we have seen to date. Whilst the curriculum does not reflect a pure maximalist model of citizenship, it does provide opportunities for schools to promote important elements of this model. For example, schools can use the curriculum rationale and citizenship curriculum to promote global citizenship, anti-racism, and the celebration of diversity. School councils are still not given a statutory role in schools as they are elsewhere in Europe. However, schools are now being explicitly encouraged to develop school councils as an essential element of citizenship education. For example, the School Councils UK work for DfES provides some very useful models and guidance for schools.

School councils and citizenship education

We have so far only touched on school councils in relation to the changing national policy with respect to citizenship education. We now focus more directly how the literature explores the contributions of school councils to citizenship education. *'Education for citizenship includes involving students in whole school matters and allowing students to make decisions about their own learning. The same activities and methods of school organisation improve discipline and recognise the human rights of children'* (Ashworth, 1995).

If citizenship education involves pupils in opportunities to participate and be involved in the decision-making processes within the school, then it would seem that school councils must have a role within citizenship, since they provide one forum whereby pupils can develop these skills. In reality, however, whilst research shows that many schools have some form of school council or similar forum their effectiveness in relation to citizenship education cannot be taken for granted (Ashworth, 1995; Baginsky and Hannam, 1999).

In this section we explore school councils in relation to citizenship. We review the literature on school councils, in particular looking at their role and purpose within schools and their links to citizenship education.

Schools Councils UK, a national charity committed to developing school councils, defines school councils in the following way:

'A school council is a classroom-elected body of pupils whose purpose is to represent their classes and be a forum for active and constructive pupil input into the daily life of the school'.

This definition somewhat masks the varied forms that school councils can take and the different purposes that they may serve for schools and pupils. The literature would seem to indicate that school councils could serve a number of inter-related purposes.

· School councils can contribute to the promotion of **good relationships and discipline** by providing pupils with opportunities to participate and take on responsibilities within the school. The Elton Enquiry Report (1989) recommended that students be given more responsibility and argued that where they participate in decisions about their own learning there were significant benefits for themselves and schools. The report argued that students behave better when they are given more responsibility. School councils can also encourage a sense of collective responsibility. The DfEE Circular 8/94 Pupil Behaviour and Discipline advocated school councils as a means of involving students in school life and taking responsibility. The evaluation of the pupil council initiatives undertaken by the Priority Area Development in Liverpool provides a similar picture of school councils contributing to a decrease in

anti-social behaviour in pupils and enhancing the relationships between pupils and teachers. (Khaleel, 1993). Owen and Tarr's research in a school for students with disabilities suggests that school councils can be effective in combating anti-social behaviour. Trafford makes the same point in his work (Trafford, 1993). A slightly different version of this position can be seen in the view that school councils provide opportunities for pupils to **learn to care for others and to engage in service to the community.**

- Research suggests that school councils can contribute to a **more inclusive school** and form part of a range of strategies to combat disaffection and alienation of some pupils. The Commission for Racial Equality Report on exclusions found that schools which had lowered their exclusion rates had established structures for involving students in the life of the school. Osler, in describing the findings of the report says of such schools: *'They had effective structures for involving children in management and decision-making such as a school or class council'* (Osler, 1997 quoted in Davies, 1998).

Research by Davies for School Councils UK provides further evidence that effective school councils can have an impact on **pupil exclusion and inclusion.** Her qualitative study of school councils in ten schools indicated that the impact of effective school councils on pupil inclusion/exclusion can be seen as a continuum from what she describes as direct impact through measures such as peer control to a more indirect impact through the ability of the school council to convey important messages to pupils about, for example, being listened to and shown respect (Davies, 1998).

- School councils provide a forum through which pupils can have their voices heard and exercise their rights. This view of school councils is based on a children's rights model. (Franklin, 1986; Davie, 1989; Hart, 1992). School councils are viewed within this model as one mechanism by which a school can ensure that their pupils have the opportunity to exercise their rights as described in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, *'the child who is capable of forming his or her own views (has) the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child'* (UN Convention on the Rights of The Child, Article 12).

The Advisory Council on Education takes this view of school councils when they say *'School councils help schools become communities by giving everyone a stake in what is going on. What's more, it's a child's human right to be listened to, and to have his or her views taken seriously'* (Ashworth, 1995).

An important feature of this model is the notion of a safer school environment as described by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). The NSPCC takes the view that school councils are an important mechanism whereby children can be both listened to and enabled to participate in decisions that affect their lives. As such they can *'encourage children and young people to become more resilient and enable them to be better protected'* (Baginsky and Hannam, 1999).

· School councils contribute to citizenship education through providing young people with direct experience of the processes of democracy. The decision making mechanisms within school councils represent a site for the living out of democracy, providing opportunities for pupils to explore matters of importance and to share in decisions about how to resolve such matters on an equal footing with adults (Holden and Clough, 1998). School councils can form an important component of a set of social practices that encourage students to act in Giroux's words '*as if they lived in a real democracy*' (Giroux, quoted in Ball, 1988). They promote a range of skills necessary for effective democratic living (Ashworth, 1995).

'If a school council is to contribute to education for citizenship, pupils must be involved in the decision-making process, in exercising rights and responsibilities and in participating and contributing to the school community' (Holden and Clough 1998).

In this sense school councils can provide an 'apprenticeship in democracy'. This view of the purpose of school councils reflects the position of much of the current thinking about citizenship education within Europe.

'Democracy is best learned in a democratic setting where participation is encouraged, where views can be expressed openly and discussed, where there is freedom of expression for pupils and teachers, and where there is fairness and justice' (Council of Europe, 1985).

Thus school councils would appear to have the capacity to contribute to citizenship in a range of ways. They can:

- contribute to good relations and discipline and promote social inclusion
- give expression to children's rights
- provide a democratic experience and promote democratic skills.

These purposes are not necessarily mutually exclusive; whilst the impetus for the setting up of a school council may reflect one particular purpose, the reality of school councils is that they will, often rightly, simultaneously serve a number of purposes for pupils and for schools.

However, as many teachers, children and young people know too well, school councils often fail to realise their potential. The literature would suggest that the reasons for their failure lie in a number of areas. On the surface it would seem that school councils frequently prove ineffective for what might appear on the surface to be structural or technical reasons. These include issues to do with size, administrative support, budgets, and involvement of teachers, reporting mechanisms, training for pupils and the scope and power of councils. The Ashworth survey (1995) revealed evidence that schools with school councils were more likely to involve students in management issues but these were often to do with a limited number of issues such

as the physical environment, playground, uniform, behaviour and bullying. They found little evidence of consultation on areas such as, for example, the curriculum and school development plans. Pupils rarely exercised any control over budgets, though it was common for them to be involved in raising funds. The same survey also found that although many of the school councils had some kind of reporting procedures for council proposals and decisions, these systems tended to be underdeveloped. They found that relatively few of the councils had effective and systematic methods for reporting outcomes, particularly to staff. The majority of councils had a staff presence, but none had representatives from support staff or site management. Few of the councils had access to the governing body on a regular basis.

What might at first sight appear to be technical weaknesses of school councils would seem to symbolise wider problems to do with the school ethos and climate. The literature indicates that issues to do with reporting and the scope and power of school councils often reflects and symbolise wider issues in the school to do with the level of participation and involvement of pupils. Ruddock, for example, has argued that councils are only effective if they are an explicit component of whole school democratic practice (Ruddock et al, 1996). Others have pointed to the tokenism of councils where the scope of issues debated is limited to areas such as the toilets or the school uniform (Hart, 1992). Research by Baginsky and Hannam for the NSPCC underlines the importance of school councils as part of the journey to democratise schools (Baginsky and Hannam, 1999). Rowe's research for the Citizenship Foundation stressed the need for school councils to be accompanied by other methods of communication and consultation between staff and pupils, including systematic use of pupil interviews and questionnaires. His work emphasised the importance of widening the scope of councils in relation to areas of real decision making and enhancing the quality of the dialogue between the members of the school community (Rowe, 1996). Davies' research concludes with the remark that:

'What has become clear is that for a school council or other system of representation to work it must be embedded in a total ethos of democracy, equity and concern for pupil and staff welfare and performance' (Davies, 1998).

A similar position is taken by Ashworth:

'Whether the school regards student involvement in decision-making as a success will depend on its motivations. School councils which are tokens will become liabilities. School councils, student consultation and student involvement in planning and monitoring work all need to be part of a wider school ethos' (Ashworth, 1995).

School councils and democratic schools

Our review of the literature on school councils would suggest that whilst school councils have the capacity to make important contributions to citizenship, this capacity

is often not realised in schools. The reasons for this are partly to do with weaknesses in the structure, form and scope of councils but these are often symbolic of wider whole school weaknesses in relation to pupil participation and engagement. We now look more closely at the literature on whole school approaches to pupil participation, in particular at the literature on democratic schools.

Our review of the national and international literature on school democracy would suggest that the effectiveness of school councils in relation to citizenship education is heavily influenced by the particular character of the wider school structures and practices within which they operate. School councils seem to be most effective where they are set within a particular school context; one in which the ethos, structures and practices are all democratic. Similarly, 'democratic schools' require either a school council or some other mechanism for students voices to be heard and listened to and for them to participate in decision making.

'Any school that attempts to democratise must inevitably develop some kind of council or assembly in order that the students', – and possibly the teachers' and other staffs', views can be voiced and discussed, unless the school is so small that every member can be involved in meetings' (Trafford 1997).

Democratic schools require school structures in which pupils are consulted and given opportunities to experience responsibility. In theory then, school councils would seem to be an essential feature of a school that promotes active citizenship. School councils have the capacity to send powerful messages to all pupils about the possibilities of their participation and about their value and worth within the institution and beyond. Moreover school councils at their best will raise fundamental questions for those who control and manage a school as to the nature of the institution they wish to promote.

Some defining characteristics of a democratic school

The literature suggests that democratic schools are essentially defined in terms of the ways that they strive to engage the active participation of all members of the school community, including young people, in the decision making processes (Apple and Beane, 1999).

'In school settings democracy is characterised by a willingness to allow and encourage young people to become involved in matters of decision-making and choice within the community of the school, thus fostering a clearer understanding of the influences which shape their lives and of their own responsibilities in shaping the future' (UNESCO, 1993).

The Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum makes a similar point when it states:

'In school settings democracy is characterised by a willingness to allow and encourage young people to become involved in matters of decision making and

choice within the community of the school. Through these experiences they come to see themselves as people who can effect the community in its widest sense in which they and others live and work. Like democracy itself democratic schools do not come about by chance. They result in explicit attempts by schools to put into place arrangements and opportunities that will bring democracy to life' (SCCC 1995).

'In a democratic school it is true that all of those directly involved in the school, including young people, have the right to participate in the process of decision making... committees, councils and other school wide decision-making groups include not only professional educators, but also young people, their parents, and other members of the school community. In classrooms, young people and teachers engage in collaborative planning, reaching decisions that respond to the concerns, aspirations and interests of both. This is a genuine attempt to honour the right of people to participate in making decisions that affect their lives' (Apple and Beane, 1995).

For some writers, democratic schools involve more than the rights of young people to be heard and consulted but also a change in the balance of power towards young people.

'Any such school must involve a shift of power and authority away from staff to students, both in terms of decisions about how the institution as a whole is run, and in terms of what is learned in the classroom and how' (Harber, 1995).

So what might be the indicators of democratic practice within a school? A commitment to the active participation of pupils will be in evidence across key areas of the school. Thus in a democratic school we would expect to find particular defining characteristics within its:

- values, ethos and climate
- relationships
- leadership and management
- curriculum and pedagogy.

What might these defining characteristics look like?

- *Values, ethos and climate*

Democratic schools are characterised by particular core values. These values include co-operation, mutual respect, autonomy, justice, and commitment to diversity and equity (White, 1991; Fielding, 1997; Davies, 2000; Apple and Beane, 1999). Interestingly, these core values are not dissimilar to the central educational values identified in the rationale for the revised national curriculum (2000).

In a democratic school such core values will be reflected in and sustained through the ethos and climate of the school (Eisner, 1994). As the QCA Guidance for citizenship

states, *'The school ethos embodies the values held by a school's communities and creates the climate and atmosphere for life in and beyond school itself'* (QCA, 2000).

However, it is difficult to define and capture ethos, it can only be done through a range of qualitative indicators, a point recognised by Ofsted in its guidance to inspectors (Ofsted 1999).

A democratic school will have an ethos and climate that sends positive messages to adults and young people about their worth and value and their right to be heard and consulted. The Scottish Consultative Council for the Curriculum describes the importance of a participatory climate when they say:

'Through the climate in which they operate, young people learn powerful lessons about justice, power, dignity and self-worth. It is important to ensure that these are positive messages. The school as a community needs to develop a climate and ethos consistent with ideals of co-operation and understanding, and based on democratic principles'.

Relationships

'The way that adults behave and communicate with each other, with other students and with parents sends important and telling messages' (SCCC, 1995).

The nature of the relationships between adults and between adults and students is a critical indicator of a democratic school. The quality of the relationships between teachers and students is central and involves establishing and sustaining mutual trust and respect and the creation of conditions in which young people are enabled to feel good about themselves.

'I think a lot of it has got to do with what the Americans call the manner of the teacher. Which is to say that everything you do is actually conveying some message to young people about the kind of relationship you want to have with them. And that that is something you indicate and give off so that the person gets a feeling of being included because they are valued for whatever they bring to the conversation' (interview with Mc Ghie, 1999).*

Hay Mc Ber's research on effective teaching for the DfEE endorses this view of the centrality of trust and respect in effective relationships between pupils and teachers (Mc Ber 2000).

Leadership and management

Democratic schools are characterised by particular forms of leadership and management. In democratic schools power is devolved or divested (Griffith 1998; Apple and Beane 1995) through participative and consultative structures and practices

31 *Margaret Mc Ghie is the former Assistant Director of the SCCC, now Principal Curriculum Officer, Learning and Teaching in Scotland (formed from a merger of the SCCC and SCET in 2000).

that enable others to have ownership over decisions. Collaborative practice is an essential feature of democratic management. Fullan has described this kind of leadership as a style that '*empowers others below you*' (Fullan,1993). The think tank set up by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) argues that effective school leadership involves what the report describes as 'distributed' leadership in which all members of the school community are empowered to take part in the decision-making processes within the school (NCSL, 2001).

Teaching and learning and the democratic curriculum

In a democratic school, pupils are enabled to make and evaluate choices in relation to their own learning and are helped to take responsibility for the decisions they make. In an ideal world pupils are also enabled to become, in Apple and Bean's phrase, 'critical readers ' of their society, recognising that all knowledge is socially constructed and challenging the 'taken for granted'. However, a range of externally imposed constraints, including the national curriculum puts boundaries on such development since much curriculum content and some learning styles are prescribed. Despite these constraints, democratic schools will take all opportunities to promote teaching and learning styles in which pupils are given opportunities to actively participate and develop a range of 'democratic' skills (Clough and Holden,1998; Griffith,1998; Apple and Beane,1999; Inman and Stiasny,1987).

In conclusion, the literature suggests that schools councils have the capacity to provide an important contribution to citizenship education in schools. Their significance has been recognised both in national curriculum guidance and research. The literature would also suggest that there is a dynamic interplay between effective school councils and democratic schools. School councils flourish most effectively in the context of a wider democratic ethos and structure but they also play a significant role in promoting and sustaining that democracy.

SECTION THREE: THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Introduction

The literature review revealed significant if tentative areas of research investigation. However, we wanted to test and clarify these before finalising our research questions. The methodology we used to do this was to conduct a number of 'expert interviews'. The process involved identifying experts working in different arenas of school policy and practice. The interviewees comprised:

- a national advisor on curriculum development
- an LEA inspector
- three secondary school teachers from a variety of disciplines (art, English and science)
- two primary school teachers (one from Key Stage 1 and one from Key Stage 2).

We conducted semi-structured interviews using a number of broad headings that had emerged from the literature review. These were:

- conceptions of citizenship education
- conceptions of democratic schools
- the role of school councils in education for citizenship
- the forms of leadership that can facilitate democratic forms of education
- the role and nature of relationships which can facilitate democratic education within the school
- the forms of pedagogy which can facilitate democratic education
- the characteristics of teachers who are able to develop democratic forms of education (including any possible connection with subject specialism).

Findings

The expert interviews enabled us to clarify a number of issues before embarking on the fieldwork. The interviews confirmed some of the emerging themes and directions, but also suggested where we were either going up 'blind alleys' or ignoring potentially important areas. The findings from the interviews are grouped together under a number of headings.

The role of school councils in education for citizenship

Interviewees did not place huge significance on school councils. Whilst all our interviewees talked at length about the importance of the participation of pupils in decision making, a number had seen school councils being run ineffectually and therefore did not necessarily see them as of great significance in the participatory process. Having said that, interviewees were clear that the relationship between school councils and democratic schools was vital. Interviewees reaffirmed two

important messages: firstly that for schools councils to make an effective contribution to citizenship education they need to be part of a school ethos that reflects democratic principles; secondly, that successful and effective school councils contribute to developing and sustaining democratic schools and can have a significant impact on pupils' experience of democracy. All those interviewed argued that a school council existing in an undemocratic setting could have little impact or significance and would be seen as tokenistic and viewed with cynicism by pupils and staff.

'There needs to be room for kids to get a chance to talk about good and bad teaching. A good school is one which is reflective using the teachers' and kids' perceptions. The school council should feed into the school development plan. The pupils' voice needs to be woven through the school.' Secondary teacher

'I know of one school where there are pupils on almost every committee in the school. There are pupils, there are parents, there are teachers. The leadership of this school is fantastic in that it recognises that leadership is something that anyone and everyone can come to. So from that point of view this is a fantastic and democratic place.' National Adviser

Understanding of citizenship education and of democratic schools

There were some strong common strands to the interviewees' understanding of the aims and purpose of citizenship education. Interviewees recognised inherent conflicts in conceptions of citizenship, particularly in relation to notions of the 'good citizen' and to national identity. Interviewees were also very clear about the need for citizenship education to be set within a particular school climate for it to have real impact on the lives of pupils. The people we interviewed saw citizenship education as central to the purpose of education, impacting directly upon a pupil's ability to realise their potential as a member of society. All interviewees were clear that citizenship education should not be about producing conformity and were critical of notions of the 'good citizen' as one who merely followed expected norms. In particular, the teachers we interviewed were wary that national curriculum guidelines might produce such a version of citizenship. Generally, the interviewees identified the need to create a balance between enabling pupils to be critical and questioning and helping them to develop an understanding of when it may be more appropriate to conform, to fit in and to be seen as 'respectable'. This balance was not regarded by interviewees as straightforward, but all said that the key to success would be sharing the 'hidden agenda' with pupils. Some interviewees drew parallels with long-standing debates in the teaching of English around the need to value dialect and at the same time identify when Standard English might be more appropriate.

The other area regarded as potentially contentious by our interviewees was what citizenship might mean in terms of belonging to a particular country. One area of concern related to what it might mean to be a British citizen in the context of increasing devolution for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In addition,

interviewees raised the need to consider wider notions of international citizenship, particularly within multicultural classrooms, ensuring that our concepts of citizenship are flexible enough to encompass what pupils bring to the classroom. Interviewees raised the need for inclusivity of citizenship both in relation to differences of culture and ethnicity and to those of social class.

'What we are trying to do is help young people to make the best lives that they can and to develop all the talent and abilities and part of that is about respecting others, working with others, collaboratively doing things.' Primary teacher

'Having their own sense of justice, knowing their individual place in the universe, and feeling part of a group. But also creating a debate with pupils as to what they see citizenship as.' Secondary teacher

'I accept that teaching children to be questioning is part of it but as a black person I want to also teach pupils to conform, I think this is really important so they can be accepted as a decent citizen by the police, education etc. So you teach them to question society but also to move forward. I don't want to create black children who hate the police, that would be pointless. I want them to know how to behave to get out of trouble, to smile and be charming.' Secondary teacher

The forms of leadership which can facilitate democratic education

Interviewees regarded leadership style as central to a democratic school. There was a high degree of consensus amongst interviewees as to the characteristics required of leaders and/or the leadership of democratic schools. Each of the interviewees stressed the following characteristics:

- the ability to take risks, to be able to live with uncertainty*
- the ability to facilitate others to take leadership and power
- visionary
- has a commitment to the good of children
- values staff as well as children
- is outward looking, involving the school community in the wider communities and welcoming external projects into the school
- is able to admit to mistakes, is self reflective and analytical
- is inclusive.

In the interviews the notion of charisma in relation to leadership was a problematic area. The interviewees were unhappy with the notion of charisma in a context of democratic practice. However, all admitted that effective leaders of democratic schools are often people who display personal characteristics that are often linked to notions of charisma. For example, they have a strong presence and are 'meaning

makers' for others. In the event we were unable to resolve this issue and some of the tensions between democratic and 'strong' leaders emerge through the case studies.

'The Headteacher in this school is about facilitating and encouraging leadership qualities in anybody and everybody and that includes the pupils and anybody that is connected with the community of people all working together. Many headteachers keep the power like this to themselves. This teacher however, has groups of people who decide all kinds of things. The whole idea in the school is of co-operative leaning and it happens in the classroom with the children but it also happens in the running of the school. The school is run by everybody in it. Everyone is part of the decision-making progress.' National Adviser describing a school that promotes democratic practice

'Another Headteacher said "What I am doing here is trying to encourage my teachers to do things that they never even imagined they would do. Not just the things they come and tell me they want to do, but I want to take them to somewhere they have never been. I want them to suddenly have an idea that they never even thought they could do. But to take you to a place that you won't forget".' National Adviser

'Strong, passionate, visionary, charismatic, someone who can bring the staff and kids with them.' Primary teacher

'I don't know if charisma is the right word. I think its more people who have a rather more all encompassing understanding of what education is about. And what their purpose is. And I think they are also people who are relatively secure in themselves. And that giving away power doesn't seem to be a big deal. But they are not sure of the end of it – I know we are talking about schools and democratic institutions – there is a sense in which they can't be absolutely right.' LEA Adviser

'You need a headteacher who will listen to teachers, make clear signals that they don't know it all, that wants your views. Education should be about ideas beyond the classroom, looking outside the school. The more schools look inward, the less effective they become. The best ideas need to be expressed and not let run around your head.' Secondary teacher

'They understand how hurtful injustice can be and have gone through a lot of self-reflection, even as a child. They have a commitment to children, perhaps to the child within them.' Primary teacher

The forms of pedagogy, the role and nature of relationships within the school and the characteristics of teachers that can facilitate democratic education

This broad area was the one in which we received the richest data in terms of the 'lived experience' of schools. Our interviewees gave vivid descriptions of the

significance of these three inter-related areas. When asked about pedagogy, interviewees described themselves as aiming to create learning environments that were collaborative and non-competitive. They all argued for environments in which children could feel safe to explore ideas in a context that was open-ended. They described the importance of teachers recognising the value of what each individual brings to the classroom and for the need for each child to have a space to voice their ideas. We had thought initially that a democratic pedagogy might link to specific subjects. This turned out not to be the case, the forms of pedagogy were not seen to be linked to any specific subjects but rather to a shared set of values.

The relationships between pupils and teachers began to emerge as a strong element in the facilitation of democratic education. Interviewees identified key characteristics of democratic relationships between teachers and pupils.

The teacher being able to 'give of themselves'

The interviewees stressed the importance of teachers being able to share themselves with pupils. Their willingness to reveal details of their own lives was seen as central to the building of reciprocal relationships in which the children will want to share their lives with the teacher. However, the interviewees also described themselves as feeling that this sharing was something 'they shouldn't be doing'. One interviewee suggested that this conflict had emerged from working in a climate in which teachers had been denigrated and had consequently lost faith in themselves as 'discerning professionals'.

Treating pupils with respect

A strong strand in the discussions about treating pupils with respect was the need for children to know that their teachers liked them. One interviewee talked about teachers needing to have the 'unconditional love' for children that we associate with parenting. However, this same interviewee acknowledged the huge effort required to do this consistently with children.

We had thought that there might be something common in the biographies of those teachers that are committed to developing democratic relationships with pupils. This was not a view shared by interviewees. They argued that the biographies of those engaged in this work could often be very different. Interviewees suggested that 'democratic' teachers had the following characteristics in common:

- reflection on personal experiences and a belief in the transforming qualities of education
- a sense of personal security
- an awareness of themselves as learners.

Nevertheless, a number of the interviewees described how their own experiences as young people featured heavily in their motivation to become a teacher.

'Pupils must have a voice, you mustn't set up competition, it must be about collaborative learning, small groups with clear tasks, not chatting. The group finds a way of resolving the task and coming up with something. People have responsibilities within the group. That is the key that they have a voice and don't feel negative about themselves or other people. You need to give lots of praise, set up situations where kids overcome their own shyness and vulnerabilities. Equality of opportunity is central to this.' Secondary teacher

'In art teaching you can be a facilitator of space and create an environment where debate goes on, and out of that debate images grow, more raw and honest than you see in the contemporary art world. It's passing power to kids to create images and relate them to someone else's.' Secondary teacher

'It's about giving children the facility to say what they have to say through giving them a platform, through this comes success as they're learning they have rights. We work from individual themes such as identity, so acknowledging their own background. We try to formally recognise the pupil within schemes of work and themes.' Secondary teacher

'Everything you do – every time you give an exercise or talk, it is actually conveying some message to them [the pupils] about the kind of relationship you want to have. Look at the kinds of conversations you have with children, at the end of the day, the radical ideas, the content of the conversation does not matter all that much. What is important is that you, the teacher, have at your heart the good of the person you are talking to. That is something you indicate and give off so that the person gets a feeling of being included because they are valued for whatever they bring to the conversation.' National Adviser

'Teaching needs to be based on trust, you need to build it by opening yourself to the kids. It isn't a safe way to teach, it's about letting them get to know you, making them feel comfortable. This shows trust to the kids that you are including them in your life and you can then ask them to include you in their life.' Secondary teacher

'It's about ...having a good laugh, being human, talking about things like music. A fun person who talks about things you maybe shouldn't talk about. There's so much fear in education that you can't be yourself with kids.' Secondary teacher

'It's about having respect for the children, letting them know that you like them and care about them, saying hello as you walk down the corridor, knowing their names, treating them with respect, having high expectations not thinking that they can't achieve anything, that they're stupid. Teachers can often offend pupils because they feel disliked. It's important that an adult likes you and thinks you're important, serious and there's something valuable about you. I think our kids are lovely, really nice, soft, decent children.' Secondary teacher

'I was different from classmates growing up, I was tolerated. I'd like to be part of something that can change people's lives and bring a better world. I wanted to be the teacher from Kes. The brutality of my education - I want to be the opposite. The idea of tapping into something that the isolated little boy cared about, I wanted to be that teacher. I still think I can but I'm not so romantic. I still think I can make a difference and be caring after twenty years.' Secondary teacher

Conclusion

The interviews proved extremely useful in formulating the focus for the case studies. Talking with 'experts' from a range of contexts helped us to identify and sharpen what we needed to look at in the schools and what we needed to ask teachers and pupils about in interviews. Together with the literature review, they affirmed that our central concern with **'the nature and form of effective school councils and their relationship to other democratic structures and practices'** was appropriate. The interviews confirmed the usefulness of our working hypothesis that **'it is particular kinds of school councils within particular institutional settings that can contribute most effectively to citizenship education'**. Talking with a range of experts in the field helped us to further clarify which aspects of institutional settings we needed to focus on in the fieldwork. Finally, the interviews confirmed the appropriateness of the **qualitative approach** that we were to take to the fieldwork in schools.

SECTION FOUR: THE CASE STUDIES

We have argued throughout this report that citizenship education in the maximalist sense is best achieved in the context of a democratic school. The contribution to citizenship education made by school councils therefore is best understood in relation to school democracy.

The case studies provide portraits of two schools that are attempting to promote democratic practice. Both schools have established school councils as part of a wider commitment to democratisation. The case studies are largely descriptive though we have categorised the data. The structure of each case study is the same. We look first at the school council and then at the wider democratic structures and practices within the school.

Our intention is to give the reader a sense of the lived reality in these schools as seen and understood by us. In a sense we are providing our own stories of the two schools but we are also trying to let the staff and pupils speak for themselves. We deliberately do not provide conclusions at the end of each case study but try to draw out some common conclusions in Section Five. However, the reader may well draw different and additional lessons.

Case Study One: Ravensgreen School

'Ravensgreen School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-18. There are 1275 pupils on the roll, including 235 in the Sixth Form, making it larger than other comprehensive schools. There are 100 more boys than girls in the school. The school receives funding by virtue of its status as a technology college and participates in the Excellence in Cities initiative. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is average overall. The school serves a diverse community with a high proportion of its pupils coming from ethnic minority groups. There are 612 pupils with English as an additional language, including 124 refugee children. There are 440 pupils with special educational needs and 50 pupils have statements of special educational needs, both figures being above average. An above average proportion of the pupils is entitled to free school meals'. Ofsted Inspection Report

The School Council

Beginnings

In Ravensgreen School the school council dates from the arrival of the present Headteacher. The governors were keen to establish a school council and this desire clearly fitted the incoming Headteacher's vision of a more democratic school. However, the students initiated the actual formation of the council.

'I was very much appointed on the sort of 'progressive' ticket...and so it was expected that I would want a democratic school. I was told I have to have a school council... I said, I am totally in favour of school councils, but if I set one up and tell the children that they are going to join a school council, it will be disastrous.

It [the school] was also, when I came, a place full of litter, graffiti, very ugly, cold, nothing on the walls anywhere. They [the students] damaged everything, they graffitied everything, and the litter was dreadful but they actually loved things that are beautiful, and I knew I could probably change things. I knew I could not ask the teachers so I send for two representatives from each tutor group and my agenda was to talk about 'How to make the school look more beautiful'. But they had a different agenda. They all came up into the library, and some of the older ones said: "Is this the school council?" I said: "Well, it can be, would you like it to be?" "Yes. We've got to do something about school meals". I didn't have my agenda discussed...we talked about the school meals. And I tell you, we did do something about the school meals.

The first thing was, it was set up by the children themselves, and they had a victory with it. That's how it was set up. And so actually, I was able to go to the governors and say it actually happened. It's not because I dictated it, it's because the children dictated it. So it came into being because the young people themselves wanted it and that was the most invaluable lesson. It was a very powerful way of doing it, because then they felt they had ownership'. Headteacher

The form and organisation of the school council

The documentation, interviews with students and staff and our observations of meetings reveal a number of characteristics of the form and organisation of the school council at Ravensgreen School:

- the council has a formal constitution
- meetings are held once a month during lesson time
- meetings have pre-set agendas
- the senior administrator takes the minutes of meetings
- minutes of meetings are published
- the Headteacher takes direct responsibility for the running of the council and attends all meetings
- the meetings are run according to a formal structure in which minutes of the previous meeting are approved, matters arising are discussed and formal agenda items are taken
- there is always an agenda item where students raise issues on behalf of their tutor group
- the council is consulted on major policy decisions
- the council reports formally to the Governing Body.

Experiencing democracy

Our observations of school council meetings and our interviews with staff and students indicated that the council is a significant part of school life. The council has high status for many members of the school community. The reasons for the success of the council lie partly in its structure and form. It has explicit and effective mechanisms for conducting elections, running meetings, reporting, and is able to deal

with serious issues. However, the particular structure and form of the council emanates from the Headteacher's commitment to a practical realisation of democracy. We will try to give a portrait to show the lived reality of the school council in practice, using our own observations and the voices of staff and students.

Elections

All the students we talked with understood the election procedures for the school council. Their descriptions indicated that the council was a real presence in the students' experience of school life.

'There is actually a vote from the class. The class votes two representatives of who should be the school-councillor, for the year. It changes every year. One boy, one girl.' Year 8 pupil.

Meetings

In our observations of school council meetings we saw students given structured opportunities to participate in, and sometimes chair, democratic meetings, to debate issues of importance, listen to each other, make decisions and take responsibility for those decisions. In essence they have opportunities to develop 'democratic' skills. We witnessed students of all ages initiating and sustaining debate about a range of issues, representing the views of their peers, and taking on responsibility. From our observations of meetings two things stood out in relation to the potential of this school council to contribute to citizenship education. The first relates to the deliberate use of both the conventions and symbols used in a range of 'democratic' organisations.

'The students arrive with a serious sense of purpose; they seem to come in as 'representatives', expecting to discuss important issues. The atmosphere reminds us of the start of the best kind of adult meetings – expectant, serious but with some gossip and chatter before things get underway. The Headteacher then distributes the agenda and the senior administrator gets ready to take minutes. The students and adults are sitting in a circle. The meeting follows the familiar structure of adult meetings; minutes of the previous meeting, matters arising and main agenda items. The chair sits at a table covered in green baize, and uses a gavel to call order during the meeting. Students go through the minutes of the previous meeting, and at times challenge the accuracy of the minutes, when this happens the minutes are amended accordingly.' Observation notes of council meeting

This use of conventions and symbols gives the meetings a particular identity and high status in the school. It also provides opportunities for students to develop a range of knowledge and skills that will make them more confident and effective participants in any democratic process. These students will be more able to move into adult political and civil arenas both knowing and being able to operate the rules and conventions.

The second thing is to do with control of the school council meetings. On the one hand we saw evidence that would suggest that the Headteacher is very much in

control of the meetings. The rotating chair is adopted on the grounds of equal opportunities, so in that more students have the opportunity to develop chairing skills. But as the chair is decided at the beginning of each meeting there is little opportunity for students themselves to learn how to prepare for meetings, follow up decisions, and to develop the skills and confidence to chair meetings effectively. At times it was unclear who in reality was chairing the meeting. In the meetings we observed the chair was very much under the direction of the Headteacher. Much of the agenda was set by the Headteacher, who then by default effectively chaired much of the meeting. However, there were other indicators during the meetings that despite this control by the Headteacher, the students retained considerable power over the direction of the meeting. There were numerous occasions where students challenged the Headteacher's interpretations rejected her suggestions and offered alternative views and strategies. The Headteacher openly encouraged this and we sensed that her openness to their voice was part of her commitment to empowering the students. Whilst we see problems in the control by the Headteacher, none of the students we interviewed shared our concerns, rather they saw the council as 'theirs' and talked positively about the meetings.

'I think they're quite good. You have to fill in the forms sometimes, to write your ideas, and then tick the boxes, 'good', and 'bad'. Having the school council, that's good. Really makes you feel more important... helps you to know what's going on.'

'Yeah. Last year we were chairing as well. Who hasn't chaired a meeting before, who ever puts their hands up really.'

'I wanted to have another go [at chairing], a re-run, because I didn't know anything, and really shy, you didn't know anyone there ... but it got so much easier in the second run.'

Year 8 students

Representation and reporting

The interviews with students and observations of meetings provided strong evidence that representatives and other students had a very clear understanding of the nature and importance of representation. In our observations of meetings we heard students of all ages say *'I've been asked to raise this', 'my class thinks...', 'I don't agree with this but I have to represent their views'*. During one meeting, a Year 10 student reprimanded the other students by saying *'Can you keep quiet please, I'm trying to represent my class'*.

'A couple of weeks before a school council meeting, we'll talk about complaints that we have, every person will have a chance to say what complaint they have about the school. We will do one or two complaints. I mean if everyone is on about food, we will just make one about food.'

'A lot of people might have lots of complaints. We try to talk to the whole class, which complaint is the most important one.'

'I don't agree, they complained about football. How the teacher is never there. I didn't really care about it. But I think a complaint has to be said, if it's more than one person saying.'

Year 8 pupils

We were impressed by the scope of the representation and reporting. The documentation provided evidence that the school council reported to each governors' meeting, were involved in governors' sub-committees, were consulted on school policy development and other whole school initiatives. The documentation revealed that the school council was formally built into the whole school consultative process, including those for initiating or reviewing policies and the school development plan for 1998/2001.

The council also has formal channels of reporting to the rest of the student body. This wide ranging representation and reporting was confirmed through the interviews with staff, students and governors.

'The governors have two meetings a term, one each half term. The students, at the school council that precedes that meeting, elect two students to represent the school council at the governors' meeting. The minutes of that meeting go to the governors. So the governors take the minutes of the meetings. The two students prepare a written report to the governors. They also have an opportunity to speak to that report at the meeting. They represent their report and the governors ask some questions, and whether things have been acted on, or not.' Administrator

'The students go regularly to governors' meetings and give reports. I think it's brilliant because we are trying to get different students to go each time because it's an experience and it is very valuable. I am always a bit nervous about it [the report] I have to admit, I have engineered one thing, I said, "do write something nice! Say a few nice things first! If you want to get your way or want something, always say something nice first!" So, actually they all do say very nice things, but they will then come in with a huge punch. They are absolutely clear what the issues are.'
Headteacher

These claims were substantiated in our interviews with students and the minutes of the meetings of the governing body.

'Soon after every school-council meeting, there is a governors' meeting. And two people from any year, every tutor group get to go to the governors' meeting. And they report back to the school council.' Year 8 students

'They enjoy coming to governors' meetings. They often push the thing, and it's not just an exercise for the students... They feel very confident in their school council, of what they see is being acted on.' Teacher

The scope and structured nature of the representation and reporting are significant; they add status to the school council but more importantly they enhance the quality of the citizenship education being promoted through the school council. School councillors are gaining experience of democratic practices. It enables all students to have access to complex decision making processes around matters of importance. It also signals to students that their voices matter and are taken seriously by those who control the institution.

Scope

The school council at Ravensgreen School discusses and makes decisions around many of the familiar themes in school council meetings. In the meetings we observed we witnessed familiar discussions of the state of the toilets, student lockers, the tuck shop, and year base rooms. However, the council also routinely engages in issues of pedagogy, curriculum, budgets and selection of staff. In the meetings we observed there was discussion of the use of school budgets and major building works.

'I think the school council meetings actually help a lot, to actually have a say. Our class when we came in Year 7, there wasn't much healthy food in the canteen. And our class complained about it. And now they've started serving salad.'

'The Year 7 is always arguing that the swimming pool is cold in the morning. When I started in Year 9 with the school council I thought, I was a bit like "ah it's just a thing we're doing for the school" but it's not. The more you go the more you see, that there are actually changes, because before we didn't have a budget, but the school council has now.'

'We can bring up really anything, that we want. We need better facilities, better class rooms...The thing is we know how much money the school gets a year and have some control over how it is spent.'

Year 11 students

'At the last meeting we discussed the issue of road safety: that issue was popping up at the school council – on numerous occasions it has been there. It was nice to see, that at this meeting the students wanted a firmer hand with the authority, and the Headteacher taking this on board and agreeing...So there is serious business, that comes up.' Administrator

One of the indicators of the power of the school council and the seriousness given to student voices was the involvement of the council in the selection of teachers.

'One of the things the kids are most proud of, is that they select the staff, who come here. Well they don't totally, but they have a very significant input, and they are very rarely wrong. They actually feel that they are able to make a contribution, and that they have chosen the staff, because they do the evaluation. In fact, for the deputy post I had a group of school council students, who organised their own questions, organised their own chair. We had a series of small interviews and the students did that.' Headteacher

'Other serious business was the importance with the staff appointment, which the school council, really feel they have quite a part to play and they find it positive, they get something out of it, and the school gets something out of it and it's a learning process for them as well. So they do take part in serious issues within school.'
Teacher

The involvement of students in the selection of teachers was confirmed through our interviews with students.

'I had to interview – I have been asking questions to the deputy head. There is like five or six questions we had to prepare. We made the questions up ourselves. So we had to be in the office and some of the teachers would come in, we have the questions that we were going to ask them. We were giving marks out of 10. Like how would you run the school. We had double meaning type of questions.' Year 11 student

'Then the teachers would come in and give us half an hour or a 25-minute lesson. And then we say, how we liked their teaching.' Year 8 student

Effectiveness

The students see the council as providing an important arena in which they can express their views in matters that concern them. They were clear that involvement in the council had 'empowered' them both as a body and as individuals. In this sense the school council makes a significant contribution to citizenship education in that it facilitates the development of young citizens' awareness of their rights, their ability to act upon them and their power to change their own lives and the lives of others. In interviews students talked about how their voices and views were heard and taken seriously by adults, including the governing body. They described how involvement in the council had, for example, helped them to develop confidence in arguing their case and given them a feeling of control. It provided an experience of both the benefits and complexities of representing others, of taking decisions and of the responsibility associated with those decisions. Our observations of council meetings confirmed the students' perceptions. In interviews students gave specific examples of what they had achieved as a council and how that makes them feel.

'If you are actually in control of something, and then you know if you say this, you may be able to change it really big. It really makes you feel more easy...if you don't

really have a chance to do that. You may actually think, "Oh, I might as well not try to do anything different and change anything, cause it's not going to work".'

'When our year got like different lunches I thought like wow! This is what we did!'

'We just have a say.'

Year 8 - 13 students

Teachers recognised the benefits for students.

'It is in many ways a forum of students, where they have the opportunity to articulate issues that are of direct concern to them. The very open benefits of that are, I'd say, let's say they're not happy with school dinners, they can put that forward. We encourage them to get a petition together, or to write letters towards the catering company. That is a very obvious benefit of it. I can see how that works. In a way, it is direct action I would say. But that also leads on to more, I suppose, more informal, or hidden aspects of what it is about, which is the notion of taking responsibility and making change and how is change possible in society.' Teacher

'I think it's empowerment, basically. If you feel empowered, then you feel you are compelled to participate. You feel very much that you have an ownership. It has to be for real. If it's tokenistic, and there are a lot of schools possibly with school councils that are tokenistic, then it will not do any good at all. It's not having it; it's what it does, how it operates, that's more important. But it is terribly important that young people think that their school is good. That they are somewhere, where they can be proud. And if they are participating in a good school, which they're proud of, then it makes them feel that they are citizens of somewhere... important. Then they have standards, they can actually stand up for what they believe in and that there are fundamental underlying principles. Those things it seems to me, are what bring real citizenship: it's empowerment, it's a sense of worth, and it's a sense of actually being able to do things.' Headteacher

Democratic structures and practices

We have taken the view that school councils are most effective in providing for citizenship education when they are located in schools that have structures and practices that promote student participation and genuine involvement, ie. democratic schools. This section begins to evaluate the degree to which whole school structures and process in Ravensgreen School provide such a democratic climate structures and practices. Our findings are grouped under the following headings:

1. school ethos and climate
2. leadership and management of the school
3. relationships
4. pedagogy.

School ethos and climate

'If you are empowered, have a sense worth, and if you then have the knowledge and the organisational skills, and are given the responsibility to affect change then there is no limit to what you can achieve.' Headteacher

The data from interviews and observations would suggest that the school has developed an ethos and climate that promotes student participation and fosters the development of 'democratic' skills and attitudes. The absence of uniform, pips or bells, the fact that from Year 8 students can go off site at lunchtimes, the low level intervention strategies used by adults and the lack of locked doors seem to be symbolic of a climate of openness and trust. The Ofsted inspection report comments on the special ethos of the school.

'The value placed on the contributions of all pupils helps to create a harmonious community in which all can give of their best.' Ofsted Inspection Report

In our time in the school we were struck by the openness and warmth that we were routinely shown by staff and students. Visitors were clearly not a threat to adults or students. The staff room was striking – noisy and vibrant, with much talk and laughter. There was a confidence in the atmosphere that was impossible not to feel, though difficult to describe. One of the teachers described the ethos to us in the following way.

'I came into Ravensgreen and they were offering a four-day-a-week job. As soon as I walked into the gate, I had the sense of a place where the atmosphere was vibrant. I remember when I handed in the application, I was greeted by the deputy head. I remember vividly there was a smile. There was a sense of a community, of collective energy. I was offered another job in a sixth form college, lovely A-Level groups, history and politics and sociology, five days a week, and the money was better too, but I said, "No".' Teacher

Another teacher described the importance of the staff's relationships:

'Generally we have a good time, and I think students see that. That's very hard to rebel against, a place where the teachers are having a good time!' Teacher

One of the administrators we interviewed talked about the participatory ethos:

'The school has a very positive ethos. Relaxed, where children don't see that teachers cannot be questioned. It's important to make them into independent adults, before they go into the wider world. That's my own perception of it. I am also a parent and have two children here as well.' Administrator and parent

The students confirmed the reality of this ethos for them:

'It's not like a prison.'

'I think they give you independence.'

'You're heard.'

'They give you freedom.'

'They care about you.'

'I think why the school is so good is because the students are so friendly to each other. They really are.'

Year 11 students

From the observations and interviews we discerned an underlying culture of respect and equality between members of the school community. We observed a politeness and respect in the manner that staff talked to students. We saw staff opening doors for students and vice versa as a matter of routine practice. The corridors were largely free of stress and tension but rather were spaces where people engaged in communication.

'It is about the climate, the ethos. It's very much how the people relate to one another. Children naturally help, they are naturally helpful. When people say to me, "Well they didn't open the door for me!" I often wonder, if anyone opens the doors to anyone else, I want the door to be opened for the children...' Headteacher

'I also like the equality of the school. Where all are treated the same, no matter where you come from, the colour or anything and I think that is very important for the development of the world, and the equality in the world.' Administrator and parent

'What I also like is they give you your personal respect. Not like only if you're top of the class...' Year 9 student

Most of the staff interviewed described feeling valued by the leadership. They described how their achievements are celebrated, their opinions taken account of, and how the senior management cares for the well-being of staff.

'A considerable emphasis is placed on developing the expertise of staff. Autonomy seems to be a key feature of the ethos of the school.' Ofsted Inspection Report

Interviews with staff and students and the observations provided evidence of autonomy in the running of curriculum areas and year groups and in student working practice.

'The other thing is Ravensgreen is very, very democratic. It strikes me the feeling you are given to develop and explore ideas. There is a danger that it becomes too individualised, which I think is worth talking about. But you are given enough freedom, which is fantastic.' Teacher

'The school isn't systems-led, it is led by teaching and learning. Everything must fit into the learning ethos of the school. The vision comes from the Headteacher but everyone has autonomy. She might say "I don't like that in relation to this school, find another way".' Teacher

The school describes itself as a learning community:

'We believe that the high proportion of teachers who are studying and learning shows how committed we are to establish a community of learners.'

School prospectus

Our experience in the school supports this claim. Teachers we spoke with talked with huge enthusiasm about the opportunities for their continued learning, this included staff undertaking Masters degrees both within the school and externally. It also included discussion groups organised by the staff themselves.

'We organised this thing, for staff it was called 'dialogues'. Getting staff around after school, for discussion groups. You have some areas of expertise in the school, mine is political theory. The head of drama for example has a great knowledge of Plato. We all got guest speakers in, to appear in the Learning Centre, with food and a glass of wine and have a discussion, which is also great for us. It is not everyone's cup of tea, but it is once again cross departmental in terms of the individuals who come along. It is about the question of the ethos of the school, and the values of collective identity.' Teacher

Equally strikingly was the degree to which we saw teachers learning alongside students, sharing ideas and engaging in genuine dialogue in and out of lessons. For example, the debating society meeting that we observed was very well attended by staff as well as students, the school web-site includes the work of staff, as well as that of students. The extra curricular and enrichment activities are explicitly described in handbooks and on the web-site as learning opportunities for teachers as well as students.

Leadership and management

The Headteacher sees the students as unequivocally the most important people in the institution.

'You've got to have that core passionate belief in young people.' Headteacher

She has aimed to create a particular version of a child-centred community, one in which young people are autonomous, critical and empowered citizens. This means

that the Headteacher has an explicit commitment to student participation and democracy. The fostering of a maximalist citizenship is a central thread of her vision of high-quality education for all students.

'I am more interested in the whole person, and therefore the examination results and the sort of external markers are not everything. I am keen that young people come out empowered. If they are participating in a good school, which they're proud of, then it makes them feel that they are citizens of somewhere important. Then they have standards, they can actually stand up for what they believe in and that there are fundamental underlying principles. Those things it seems to me, are what bring real citizenship. It's empowerment, it's a sense of worth, and it's a sense of actually being able to do things.' Headteacher

Our interviews with staff and students and our observations substantiate the reality of this commitment. The data suggests that the Headteacher plays a critical role in fostering student participation.

'We can always talk to her, she listens to us and takes our views seriously.' Year 11 student

'She is friendly and listens to what we say.' Year 7 student

We witnessed many examples of the Headteacher's practical commitment to student participation. Students of all ages approached her in the corridor with ease and confidence, the fact that her office door was usually open, and she was available for students, was clearly known by them. During our time in the school we routinely witnessed students coming in to the room with suggestions or asking to talk to her about something. This was clearly standard practice.

We have said earlier that democratic schools require particular kinds of leaders, ones who are risk-taking, are open to change, are consultative, have the capacity to enable others to have ownership and autonomy; and have an ability to enable others to realise their potential. The Headteacher defines herself as having some of these characteristics.

'I am certainly a risk taker – too much of a risk taker. If you know where you are going you can take risks. You have also got to be a boundary-keeper – you hold the school and you also protect the school. That's very important, because people feel protected. So that they still feel empowered to do their thing, in the way that we feel is right. We are certainly open to change and the leader is important in that. This is where I think the notion of charismatic leader who knows everything is absolutely wrong: it sort of implies the leader – actually there is no way that one person can run the school. It has to be a collective. Because it only works, if everybody agrees, to the principles, to the fundamental rules and the basic core philosophy.' Headteacher

Much of the documentation reflects an open and consultative management style. For example, the written procedures for consultation make explicit the need for all to participate in policy making and major decisions.

'Leadership must ensure that all those involved – the stakeholders – have some share in the decision making...participation is essential...no staff should be by-passed.'
Staff Handbook 1999

Interviews with teachers largely confirmed the openness of the Headteacher to staff views and voices. When we were in the school we witnessed many occasions where staff approached the Headteacher with suggestions and ideas. The confidence with which suggestions were made and the listening response suggested that the management was open to ideas and change.

However, there are some potential contradictions in the leadership style within Ravensgreen School. Students have an unquestionable right to participate and to have their voices heard. However, the same is not true for teachers. Whilst the Headteacher's vision of the school is one in which all staff have ownership and autonomy within a fully democratic ethos, the reality is more complex. Staff who share the commitment to student participation and rights feel valued and are given considerable autonomy and power.

'If you have good people, you can give them something, and they can go off with it, and do it.' Headteacher

However, those staff who do not 'buy in' to the democratic ethos of the school are described as isolated, unhappy and likely to leave.

'If you have a very clear philosophy, and if people don't buy into that, they will normally go. Or if they won't normally go, they will have to be dealt with, so they do go. What I wasn't going to have was people who couldn't teach. What I desperately wanted was teams of people who really love teaching, who are really passionately keen on their own subject and who communicate something greater, than just the normal content.' Headteacher

'The Headteacher might say "No, that will never work here and nor would I want it to".'
Teacher

'Experienced teachers who routinely have discipline problems have got their expectations wrong and will move because they can't handle the lack of systems and can't lock into the ethos....the staff are very happy, very few are out of step and therefore unhappy.' Teacher

The qualified nature of the democracy for staff raises a significant dilemma for

democratic leadership. It would be easy to say that Ravensgreen is not a democratic school in that it doesn't allow staff to debate outside of the boundaries of the clearly stated ethos. However, for students to consistently experience their voices being heard and valued they need to work with teachers who subscribe to this ethos. The Headteacher may need to act as a gatekeeper of democracy. We return to this dilemma later.

Relationships within the school

Relationships in the school are a critical element in the fostering and sustaining of democratic practice. The official position taken on relationships between staff and students is explicit. The Staff Handbook states that 'students should be treated as adults'. Students, teachers and support staff described the relationship between adults and students as warm, caring and supportive, mutual respect is seen as of central importance.

'As soon as you get into school at Year 7, you're given a certain attitude, that...I mean... they are very fond of us. That makes us feel so relaxed.' Year 8 students

'We, as teachers, give students responsibility to manage their own affairs, to mature at that level, to really act in a very successful way. We get the benefit of that as well. They're doing all of the work. They don't realise that. They are wonderful about responsibility. You've really got the values of the school built into the school culture. So you have a feedback, you have a great relationship between staff and students, and that looks very democratic. It's not hierarchical as such.' Teacher

'The kids are very, very aware of how dedicated the staff are to them. And there are little instances, where you can see that all the time. Whether it is after school-clubs, or it is in terms of support, or emotional support.' Teacher

Our observations largely supported these views. In lessons and around the school we were impressed by the consistency of practice in how teachers related to students. In the interactions that we witnessed there was warmth, valuing and respect between teachers and students. The warmth was often expressed physically through touch. We saw much laughter and fun in and out of lessons, there was often a playfulness in the relationships. Students seemed confident that the majority of teachers enjoyed their company. The openness of the teachers was often striking, we saw teachers giving of themselves, sharing aspects of their lives with the students. Teachers related to each other in front of students in ways that modelled openness and equality, providing role models of positive adult relationships.

Trust permeates the relationships between staff and students, enabling students to exercise responsibility on every day level. Students' achievements are routinely and explicitly celebrated.

The above description may lead the reader to imagine that this is a school of perfect

students. This is by no means the case, what is impressive is the way in which student behaviour is managed positively through dialogue and negotiation rather than through recourse to formal sanctions. During the time of the fieldwork we heard no mention of formal sanctions, respect for the student was always maintained, as was the sense that even the most challenging students retained the right to participate. This is symbolic of the inclusive nature of the school community.

In many ways the relationships within Ravensgreen School model the kinds of relationships we would want in a democratic society.

Pedagogy

The national curriculum limits the degree of negotiation with students over what they learn. At Ravensgreen we saw little negotiation of curriculum content. However, much of the pedagogy practised within the school attempts to foster the skills of participation, collaboration and autonomous learning.

'We accepted the students perception of the teaching. They [the students] are very proud of that. They have virtually everywhere, really good teachers, good staff ... somebody who is able to relate to them. Somebody who is able to help young people to get on with their lives. What is that, but a democratic process?' Headteacher

'I got the response from our students, which was fantastic, it's brilliant... a real sense of empowerment at the end and confidence. You must actually see them. They are a little bit bigger, the chest a little bit more out, the head is slightly up. That was absolutely incredible to do that.' Teacher (talking about Israeli project)

Our classroom observations substantiated many of these claims. We observed teachers across a range of curriculum areas and age ranges using a variety of strategies aimed at developing critical, autonomous and independent learners. We witnessed classrooms in which student participation and negotiation were clearly standard practice. We observed students working collaboratively and engaged in enquiry-based learning that validated their own experience and enabled students to acquire ownership of knowledge. We saw teachers asking students to engage in genuine reflection and critical evaluation of both curriculum content and learning processes.

Case Study Two: Westham Primary School

'The school was opened in September 1996 as a result of the closure of the First and Middle Schools. There are 270 pupils on roll and about 10 percent of the children are entitled to free meals, a figure, which is broadly average in relation to national figures. There are three pupils of ethnic minority family origins. Sixty-nine pupils are on the register of special educational needs with five having specific statements. The school serves a small market town in central England.' Ofsted Inspection Report

The School Council

Beginnings

The Headteacher describes the forming of the school council as one expression of her wish to involve the children more in decision making, to extend the opportunities for the children's voices to be heard and valued. In interviews, the Headteacher also described the school council as a way of demonstrating to staff the values she attached to the children and encouraging other staff to engage in democratic practices.

'I wanted more involvement from the children. And I wanted as well the staff to understand that I value the children very highly. Circle-time was one way, and I was very insistent, that we have circle-time on the timetable, right the way through the school. And that happened to various degrees, I wanted some sort of reporting back, at a child-level as well without doing it in a hall. I wanted to understand how the children felt about school.' Headteacher

The form and organisation of the school council

The school council involves children from the reception class through to Year 6. There is one representative and a deputy from each class. Representatives are decided through formal election procedures, though there is some evidence that some of the very youngest pupils have sometimes been chosen by teachers. The meetings are scheduled to take place once a week during the school day. There are formal agendas for meetings. The agenda comprises a mixture of items brought by the Headteacher, standing items from previous meetings and items brought through class discussions. The agenda is structured so as to support the pupils' understanding and engagement in meetings. This same structure is used to record discussion and decisions and to help pupils to report to their peers. The Headteacher, who has direct oversight of the school council, chairs meetings.

Experiencing democracy

The structure and form of the school council seemed to us to indicate that it has the potential to be an effective element of democratic practice in the school. However, we were keen to get beyond these surface indicators and to get at the lived reality of the school council for pupils and teachers. In our interviews and observations we tried to

uncover the degree which the school council has real meaning and provides a genuine experience of democracy for pupils.

Elections

We began by discussing with the pupils how they choose their representatives. The children on the school council talked to us with commitment, ease and confidence about the voting procedures. The knowledge and understanding of the voting procedures, even amongst the very youngest pupils, was impressive.

'You have to vote and everyone close their eyes and they put their hands up who wanted to be school-councillor.'

'In my class we did a secret ballot.'

'In our class a teacher asked who wanted to be a school-councillor. They put a name on the board, and we had to go back on our seats and he gave us a paper and we just voted.'

School-councillors from reception to Year 6

One of the issues about school councils is how far they can provide for citizenship education for those pupils who are not representatives. In Westham School we explored this through interviews with children not directly involved with the council. We found them equally confident and knowledgeable about how voting was organised and on what basis they should choose representatives, even if they didn't always meet their own criteria.

'Last class we did a vote. The first was the councillor and the second most was the deputy. We all wrote down whom we thought like to be the school councillor. We all put it in a bucket and then Mr O went to his desk, and he sorted them out who got the most.'

'Anybody who wants to volunteer to be on the council you have to put your hands up and then write their names on the blackboard. And then we have to write down whom we like to have to be the school-councillor and then we put them in the bucket. And then Mr O just counts the votes. The person who has the most was the councillor, and the one with the second most was the deputy.'

We asked the pupils what qualities they looked for in a councillor. Their answers revealed an understanding of representation that many adults lack.

'We were thinking about, who was kind and who would be fair, and would not say like, stuff like that's not right.'

'I don't know. A good talker, and who would come back and he has strong voice, be a good reporter.'

'Someone who wouldn't be shy and just come back and wouldn't say anything. They had to explain everything. So they have to explain what is going on.'

'Somebody who would be able to tell us what had happened at the meeting.'

Year 5 & Year 6 pupils

Meetings

Meetings are run formally with the agendas set by the headteacher beforehand. The agenda draws on items raised in previous meetings and items from teachers. There is space on each agenda for pupils to bring items from their class discussions.

'Well we started off with a blank list, it's got sort of like details, and stuff like that. And what we think about school and like, 'cause new banks had just been laid, and everyone is running down them, and so we got to say like grass-banks keep off. Some of the food that is going on in the in the hall is not very nice. So we got to change all that, and write how it can improve. Everything that is said in the meeting gets written down on the list. And the next week we have to see if it has improved.'

(interviewer): *'What happens when the class is worried about something that isn't on the Headteacher's list?'*

'When it is the next council meeting you tell Miss and she will put it on the list and then the next meeting she will sort it out and write it down again and see if it has improved.'

(interviewer): *'Can you give me an example of something that went on the list?'*

'The two main things that came up is the toilets and the food in the dinner hall. It's because it's my class that has been moaning about it.'

School-councillors

The meetings we observed conformed to this pattern. Pupils arrived with a sense of seriousness, clear about the purpose of the meeting and their responsibility as representatives. Throughout the meetings that we observed representation was continually checked by the Headteacher. At each stage pupils were asked whether and how they had consulted with their class.

Scope

Our observations and interview data suggested that many of the meetings at Westham School cover familiar ground for school councils: behaviour, the quality of food, the conditions of toilets, and the availability of equipment.

'They discuss stuff about school. Having new play equipment.'

'They discuss about going on the banks and swearing.'

Year 4 pupils

'You could say "we should to do something improve this or that". Miss always lets us say what we want to say. If we want to improve this and if we don't want to bring this back, and stuff like that.' Year 5 & 6 pupils

'They came up with what is happening in the playground. Over and over again. And it is so hard to really get a handle on that.' Headteacher

Meetings also deal with the planning of whole school initiatives. In one of the meetings we observed the council were engaged in a long running discussion about what pupils across the school wanted to put in a millennium time capsule.

(Headteacher): *'Do you remember what the time capsule is?'*

'Our time capsule is something we are going to put into the church, so that in say 500 years' time people who find it can see what we were up to in our time.'

'We were going to put television in but we weren't allowed 'cause we haven't got the space!'

(Headteacher): *'Now look what I want to do, is to go through what we said, and you begin to tell me what we are going to do. Photographs – has anybody decided?'*

'Do you know that Year 5 and 6 are going to the Millennium Dome, they thought we can take one of the Millennium Dome, and the London Eye.'

(Headteacher): *'Are you saying that Miss L.'s class are going to be responsible for putting in the photographs?'*

'Yeah!'

(Headteacher): *'So we have done that one, and then we are going to do the drawings of the school.'*

'Some of us have started drawing pictures of the school in our class.'

'I can do quite good drawings, so I like to do one.'

(Headteacher): *'So we are going to have Wolf's class to be responsible for putting the drawings in?'*

'Yes.'

(Headteacher): *'Have you discussed it with your class?'*

'They think it's a good idea! What we could do in our time, 'cause they might just have computers...And we could put in an example of a pencil and a pen.'

(Headteacher): *'OK. so you are going to put in a pencil. But did you discuss it with your class that that is what you are going to do?'*

'Well we haven't discussed it about the pencil, but they think pictures. They think it's a good idea to put our own pictures in it.'

(Headteacher): *'You wanted to put in a picture of the willow sculpture, our courtyard, and class rooms. Now am I right Peter, your class is going to do that? And Stewart your class are going to do the drawings?'*

'Yeah.'

(Headteacher): *'Now then, I am coming down to pictures from the Argos catalogue.'*

'We started doing that! 'Cause Steven said about it in our class!'

(Headteacher): *'Have you discussed that with your class? And are you going to be responsible for that?'*

'Yes!'

(Headteacher): *'Right so I can put that into the minutes. Pictures from the Argos catalogue. How about the school end? Who is going to be responsible for that?'*

We have quoted this extract at length as it demonstrates how consultation is achieved with even the youngest pupils. It also demonstrates how representation is sought at each stage and the willingness of pupils to take on responsibility.

However, whilst the issues were the standard themes for school councils what was interesting was the ways in which the pupils were given responsibility for resolving issues.

'When we started the thing [school council], when we were buying things, I showed them [the school-councillors] the school budget, that we got so much in this budget here, and we can buy this, and we decided a notice board was important. So the notice board is up in the top area [of the school]. The children actually chose it. They chose it from the catalogue and ordered it. I said it will cost so much and it will come out of this budget. So they knew all about that. And that is their board that they put notices on as well. So I felt that was important as well, keep them informed.'

Headteacher

'The toilets – the property services manager was coming in to see me. So I brought some of the older girls in to talk to him about it, and then they said when is it going to happen? I said you have to write to him, so they wrote and they phoned him last Friday, but he was not there. When I got in touch with him there was no news. And I said the next step is with Tony Blair and David Blunkett, do you think you should write to them, and I just left it with them, because I don't want to get them into political things. They are beginning to see what I am up against as well.' Headteacher

'Our toilets are not very good. So we had to write to a man from the council and tell him what's wrong with our toilets. It [the toilet] overflows. Sometimes people put toilet tissues down the toilet and it over-floods, and some people can't get in our toilet because they are too small and so we had to write a letter. We try to call him every Friday, but he is never there. And when Miss gets through it's usually me who has to talk because Barry [other pupil] definitely doesn't want it.' School council member

In summary, the school council deals mostly with what one might call standard issues, though the use of the budget was clearly an area that pupils were knowledgeable about and had been consulted on at times. There was no evidence that pupils were directly consulted on the curriculum, pedagogy or in the selection of teachers. However, in observations and interviews with pupils we sensed an 'openness' in terms of the issues that could be raised for discussion. Pupils and staff we interviewed were clear that if other issues were raised they would be treated seriously and not 'taken away' from the pupils for resolution.

Representation and reporting

The school council is providing a means by which pupils develop an understanding and experience of the nature of representative democracy. Many of the school councillors, particularly the older ones were articulate about what it meant to represent others' opinions and concerns, They described in detail how they went about finding out others' views, how they brought these issues up at meetings and how they recorded the discussion and decisions.

'You have to bring other peoples' opinions to the council, rather than just your own. Say if somebody says something and you don't agree with it, you still have to mention it.'

(Interviewer): *'Is that the true with everybody?'*

'Yeah.'

(interviewer): *'What about the younger ones?'*

'We have to listen to what's given, because, if we don't hear, we don't know what to do.'

(interviewer): *'And do you go and find out what other children think before you come to a meeting?'*

'Yes.'

(interviewer): *'When you go to a meeting does everybody talk, or is it mostly the old ones?'*

'Everybody talks, if they want to 'cause first we talk and then we go back around the circle and the little ones they mostly talk about things on the playground, but if they don't have anything to say, they don't have to.' School councillors

'You need to listen carefully, so you can tell your class. When you have to go and say something, you have to not make any noises, just listen and get interested.'

'On a Friday we go back and tell the class what's going on. And what we do in our class is I get a paper and write down what they think.' Years 4, 5 & 6

In the meetings we observed pupils were conscious of their representative positions. They usually prefaced comment by saying *'in my class'* or *'we decided'*. When this didn't happen they were always asked for evidence of the representative nature of the view.

The reporting procedures to the rest of the pupils are consistent across the classes. Time is regularly made for reporting to classes and the pupil body as a whole is well aware of what happens at school council meetings. However, no formal reporting procedures for staff have been established and nor does the school council directly report to the governors, although the Headteacher does include school council issues in her reports.

Effectiveness

Interviews with school counsellors suggest that the pupils have an emerging (and in some cases very well developed) sense of consultation and collective responsibility towards others. They also understand that they have a responsibility to model 'good citizenship' within the school community.

(Interviewer): *'Why do you like being a councillor?'*

'I don't really enjoy it, but the thing I like is that you can stop people from fighting and stop them from being hurt....'

'You get to talk you can say things, like if people are getting hurt, you can tell Miss and the problem gets sorted out.'

(Interviewer): *'Why do you think you have the badges?'*

'The year before last year, none had them and people were getting confused who to tell who was the school-councillor. So we had them since last year just to tell who has been a school-councillor and that. So that means that people know you are, so then they can come up to you in the playground and say something has happened can you raise it for me? Like someone is having a fight, can you help me talk to someone.'

(Interviewer): *'Can you tell me what you have got from it personally? Things you have learned by being a school-councillor?'*

'You are not allowed to do bad things if you are a councillor.'

Emerging through their voices is a sense in which the pupils are learning to deal with difficulties themselves rather than always feeling that they need to go directly to adults, a sense in which pupils themselves can begin to mediate and sometimes resolve conflicts.

'The thing about school councils is, you would be quite irritated if there wasn't one cause you'd have all these problems and you wouldn't want to keep going to Miss all the time. So you're just telling someone in your class and that way some of the problems get sorted out.' School-councillor

The councillors reported that being on the council has helped them to develop their confidence in speaking in public and also developed their understanding of some of the difficulties in speaking for others.

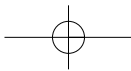
'Some people don't listen to you. And when it comes to asking for things that they want you to bring up for the next meeting there is so many things to say.'

'The thing I like in the class is because they all listen, they don't really mind what is said in the councillors' meeting they just say, whatever you think is good....'

'Sometimes adults will listen to you, but sometimes they don't. You learn that not everybody else has the same opinion as you.'

One younger school councillor's words had perhaps the greatest impact on us. He had a sense of himself as being powerful in changing not just practical things in the school but also changing the attitudes of adults:

'You can change as well the way grown ups are, not only grown ups changing you.... The grown ups are trying to change what you are doing, but you can change what they want you to do. They aren't just telling you.'



Democratic structures and practices

This section will follow the same pattern as the first case study in evaluating the degree to which whole school structures and processes in Westham School provide for a democratic climate.

Our findings are grouped under the following headings:

1. school ethos and climate
2. leadership and management of the school
3. relationships
4. pedagogy.

School ethos and climate

'The whole school is very good in making the children feel good about themselves. And lots of praise and lots of interest in them, and making them happy.' Teacher

The interests of the children would seem to be at the heart of the school. During our observations we witnessed the adults in the school treat children with respect and value them.

Displays are one of the ways in which this ethos is carried around the school. A number of displays send a powerful message to the pupils that the teachers are interested in their lives outside of school. We saw photographs of special places and special days, families, baby pictures. All of these included staff and pupils sharing their lives with each other. Other displays explicitly engaged the children in considering what made for a happy school environment:

'A good play time means

Speaking nicely to adults

Playing with my friends

Being kind to everybody

Doing what I am told

A bad play time means

Fighting

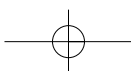
Getting into trouble

Being unkind to anybody

Getting hurt.'

Classroom display

All those interviewed said that caring for each other is central to the ethos of the school.



'I think personally, it is really important to have a good relationship with the children, to actually show that you care a lot. And to listen to them. Give them time to listen.'

Teacher

One of the ways in which this caring climate is demonstrated and sustained is through recognition and celebration of children's achievement in the widest sense. During our observations we witnessed countless occasions in which adults praised and congratulated in private and in public. In an assembly we saw a teacher use an imaginary flea called Freddie who lived in a matchbox and was an observer in the school. She used the voice of Freddie to congratulate everyone in the hall for what 'he' described as 'wonderful, kind, happy children taking responsibility for each other'. In classrooms we heard teachers consistently and constantly make children feel good about themselves.

'Can you be really sensible and share, you can, I know you can.'

'Well done, work with that, that's your method.'

'Can you all do this? Brilliant.'

'A big thank you to you all, you've found out things I didn't know about Roman children, brilliant ideas.'

This building of self-esteem was there in situations where children got things 'wrong'.

'You're not far off, let Alice help you.'

'Don't worry, you have to think about it.'

'This is hard. We'll do some more classes on this.'

The ethos was manifestly outward looking as evidenced by the range of community based and other external projects that the school was involved in. The Headteacher and other teachers described these initiatives as providing a breadth of experience for all children; experience, which they believe to be an essential ingredient of what a school should offer.

'I don't see education as stopping at the school gate. That it's got to be very rich. So I look at academic richness, emotional richness and spiritual richness. So if I do that for myself personally, then there must be layers that are beginning to peel away for the children as well. What I am trying to say is, it is not just one bit. I don't want you to go away and think this school thinks relationships are the most important things in the world. If you haven't got them right, it will show, but I want them to succeed. I really want them to succeed in every area.' Headteacher

The ethos of Westham School has many democratic features. The pupils' voices are given status and value. The fostering of high self-esteem for each pupil is seen as central to the work of the school. Learning experiences are defined broadly to encompass a range of community and other external projects. Teachers clearly feel it is possible to operate in a 'democratic' way in how they relate to children.

'You can still be democratic. You can't be democratic in the curriculum, but you can be in the way you treat people, listen to the children and try to put some of their ideas into practice, the practical ones, you maybe channel them a bit. But I don't see any reason why you can't have children being responsible for things and being responsible for their own work, and their own action. Having self-esteem, all those sort of things. You can't have a school council if the rest of the time you ignore them and don't listen to them.' Teacher

Leadership and management of the school

'I value all people, not because of the jobs they have. So I don't behave in a different way to the director of education than I do to teaching staff. I see people as all being very important in their own right. I am trying to treat people with respect. I listen to them. We have meetings for everybody.'

'I wanted as well the staff to understand that I value the children very highly.'

'I want to go back to this notion of risk taking. If you can look at some of this literacy stuff, you can really, really go with it. There is wonderful stuff coming through. One of the girls here, and we were doing the national gallery work, she based all her literacy work on a picture...It was just fantastic...It is just having imagination and having guts to do it.' Headteacher

It is clear that the Headteacher believes that pupils and adults need to feel valued and to have their voices taken seriously. Teachers and other adults talked with us about their understanding of her intention to involve all members of the school community in shaping the school.

'We make a big effort, talking about ways of making them [the children] more important and listening. She [the Headteacher] is very keen on it. And the way she talks to children is important. She will take time to do that. So it is coming from there.' Teacher

The Headteacher and staff are successful in creating an ethos in which pupils are valued and their voices taken seriously. However, we sensed a complex picture in terms of the degree to which all staff were fully involved in shaping the school. The interviews with teachers and the Headteacher revealed two strands to this complexity. The first strand is related to the external constraints on the school, particularly in relation to pressures on the curriculum and the narrowing conceptions of achievement

as demonstrated through, for example, SATS. The Headteacher talked about her concern that the pupils' experiences should not be and need not be, narrowed by the pressures of the current curriculum requirements. This broadness of experience is a key factor in her vision of a democratic school. However, interviews with teachers suggest a tension within the Headteacher in relation to retaining a broad cultural experience for children.

'I always feel like she [the Headteacher] is really pulled in two directions. One thing, working so hard on the SATS, the tests, and the targets, and she really has to do that. But what she wants to do is all the arts and creative things, so we often like have an artist in residence, and they go to the ballet. But the next day it's all about tests. I think there is a real dilemma there.'

'And she often speaks to me about it. She says I don't know which thing to do, which way to go. They need a lot of creative things, especially for the children. They don't go anywhere; some of them just stay inside. I mean, how can we give them all these visits and trips and yet keep all the other demands? That is definitely inconsistency. But forced inconsistency. It is an awful dilemma.' Teacher

The second strand to this complexity in a 'democratic' leadership style is the extent to which the headteacher involves all staff, no matter what their educational philosophy. What emerged, as it had at Ravensgreen School, was a pattern whereby some staff feel highly valued. These staff undoubtedly feel that their voices are taken seriously and that they are given a high degree of professional autonomy. They talked about being empowered. These are staff who share the Headteacher's vision. However, these same teachers were aware that other teachers had different experiences.

'There are some people, certain characters that the Headteacher finds very difficult to let them go and let them do their own thing autonomously. She keeps some people on a bit of short reign and she lets other people go. Trust, I suppose. People that she perceives to be on the same wave-length like her, you can try whatever you want actually and take risks.' Teacher

'I think she really wants to do that [being democratic], but she finds it very hard sometimes. She is quite a strong person herself. She knows how she wants things done.' Teacher

The Headteacher's behaviour illustrates some of the inherent tensions in simultaneously promoting pupil and staff democracy. The tension becomes visible when the Headteacher is faced with adults who don't buy into the democratic vision. How far should a headteacher value and listen to adults who treat pupils and other adults in ways that undermine the ethos? This would seem to be a key issue for leaders of democratic schools. It may also be the case that this issue takes on greater

significance in primary schools where size may make it more difficult to accommodate a minority of dissenting staff.

Relationships

School councils only have real meaning in a school context where relationships might be broadly described as based on democratic principles of trust, respect and care. We have already described the school as having an ethos based on such principles. Relationships are one of the key ways in which democratic principles live. During the fieldwork we observed a number of situations where relationships between teachers and pupils reflected and sustained these democratic principles. Three of these are described below; the descriptions are taken directly from our observation notes.

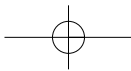
Circle time

We witnessed a circle time for Year 2 children at the beginning of the day. The children talked openly and with ease and confidence about their lives with a certainty that the teacher and other children would listen to them and take an interest in what they had been doing. This was clearly routinely done in that we saw children's stories being told in instalments with the teacher reminding other children about what had happened so far. The intimate connection between the teacher and pupils was striking; there was a strong sense of everyone sharing each other's lives. In this class all members share events and news from babies being born, one child's long struggle to persuade his mum to let him have a goldfish, two girls' ongoing story of their sleepovers, children talking about going on holiday, the winning of the football game the night before by West Ham, the giving out of party invitations. The teacher responds to all this news with genuine interest, laughter, reciprocity, sharing bits of herself and her family with them. She knows them intimately. Within this context democratic skills are being learned and sustained – children largely wait, listen, show respect, value others' news and when they forget the teacher gently reminds them.

The toga lesson or learning to write instructions (Year 3/4)

The lesson is using the putting on of a toga to show how to write instructions. The atmosphere is one of mutual learning and collaboration between pupils and pupils and the teacher. As they all struggle to put the toga on one child there is much laughter, mistakes are made, belts and brooches are borrowed from other adults in the room, different children take over at times when no headway is being made, the teacher is a learner who makes mistakes. *'Isn't this hard James, we've made a right mess of this.'*

Politeness and courtesy dominate the discourse and praise is given genuinely and without patronisation. The putting on of the toga goes wrong and getting it right takes forever but there is no sense of hurrying the process as if there is a real recognition that it is the importance of eventually getting it right together that matters. Citizenship is being learned at every stage of the process.



The end of the day

This is a circle time at the end of the day. The seven and eight-year-old children sit on the carpet with the teacher who has her arms round children. They talk about the day and the teacher praises them for their work and behaviour. They sing together, ending with 'We are L.O.V.E.D', they are showing physical affection for each other and for the teacher. The children want to carry on working even though it is time to go home.

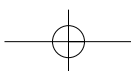
There is a feeling of genuine love and affection in the room. We sit there as researchers feeling visibly moved. One of us because it brings back strong memories of the importance of unconditional love in the lives of children and the other because it makes her reflect powerfully on herself as a teacher.

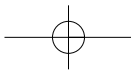
Pedagogy

Democratic schools require a form of teaching and learning that enables pupils to participate, work collaboratively and take some ownership and control over their own learning so that they learn to become autonomous learners. Such schools also promote opportunities for pupils to be engaged in dialogue about what they learn. It is important to acknowledge that the primary curriculum is less open to negotiation than it has been in the past. The national curriculum and Government initiatives on literacy and numeracy have restricted the degree to which teachers, never mind pupils, have the autonomy to make judgements about appropriate curriculum content. Thus it is not surprising that at Westham School we saw little negotiation of curriculum content. However, we did observe a democratic pedagogy at work in many of the classrooms. We saw children being given, and taking responsibility for their own learning individually and in groups, we saw children of all ages being taken seriously as learners, being consulted as to how best to proceed with tasks and so forth. We saw a range of independent and group learning across the school. Pupil participation was a central feature of all the teaching we witnessed. Children worked in a range of spaces and indicated how they were working through the use of flags which said 'we are working by ourselves' or 'we are working with an adult'. The art projects in the school exemplified the pedagogical approach. The projects, which were whole school and done in collaboration with artists in residence, included the construction of a rain forest sculpture, and a textile project.

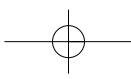
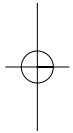
'Well we have always been sort of keen to involve the community. To get children wider experiences and that's why we try to get involved with the artist in residence... And because we wanted the community involvement, we got as many parents as we could. Because it was quite physical work – it was working with card. They had to be in mixed age groups, groups of five to six working, through to Year 6. So the Year 6 were able to do the real physical cutting. The whole school got in on that. It was over a week.'

'The children learn to co-operate. They get to meet an expert in their field. I think it is nice to work with somebody from outside who is coming in. I think if they're working





with mixed ages, that's great, because the big ones are listening to the little ones, take on board what they're saying. Everybody has a chance.' Teacher



SECTION FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The case studies illustrate the central theme of this research – that **'it is particular kinds of school councils within particular institutional settings that can contribute most effectively to citizenship education'**. What conclusions then can we draw from the case studies? In particular, what can we learn from these schools about effective school councils and the wider school settings in which such councils can flourish?

School councils and citizenship education

In both schools the school council plays an effective role in promoting a maximalist model of citizenship. The reasons for the effectiveness lie both in the structure and form of the council in the schools and in the wider school contexts in which they operate. In both schools we were convinced that through the school council all pupils, not just councillors, are learning the knowledge, skills and attitudes associated with democratic practice. The councils model citizenship for all pupils, and in doing so, promote it. In both schools the council acts as a vehicle of pupil empowerment – providing them with the right to be heard and consulted, the power to make decisions and giving them the responsibilities associated with these rights. In both schools the pupils are not involved in 'tokenistic' activity, but rather are engaged in a serious purpose. They were aware that the council makes decisions that affects their lives, that it can change things in a real way. They have confidence in its power to do things.

The two schools in the case studies had set up school councils to enable pupils to exercise their rights to have a voice and to provide an 'apprenticeship in democracy'. However, the school council in both schools also contributes to the promotion of social inclusion and helps to combat disaffection. Thus the councils serve a number of inter-related purposes which are closely related to those identified earlier in Section Two of this report. In our view the school councils in these schools provide significant experiences of citizenship.

Wider school structures and practices

In both schools the school council is set within a wider democratic climate and structures. This gives it a reality and power as the structures and ethos provide other ways in which pupils are listened to, consulted, asked to take responsibility, treated with respect and valued. In this way the seriousness of the council's role and power is affirmed and supported. The case studies provided confirmation that the nature of the institution is a critical factor in developing and sustaining effective school councils. School councils can only be effective in institutions where there is a genuine and consistent commitment to pupil participation and where this commitment is realised through whole school structures and practices. In the case study schools we were convinced that the 'lived reality' for pupils was one in which they felt valued, listened to and empowered. In these schools it would have felt strange not to have a school council as one component of a school committed to pupil democracy and citizenship.

However, the case studies illustrate some tensions around the leadership and management of democratic schools. The tensions revolve around the participation and empowerment of adults in a democratic school. There would seem to be a dilemma for leaders of democratic schools in relation to adults. The dilemma centres on the rights of those adults who don't 'buy in' to an ethos and practice of pupil empowerment. In both schools there were unresolved tensions about whether such adults should have the right to dissent. It is our view that these tensions may be inherent in any school where there is a strong commitment to pupil democracy and participation. It may be that if the leader has to act as a gatekeeper to pupil democracy then s/he may sometimes be almost forced into a position where the rights of some staff have to be put at risk in order for pupils' rights to be maintained.

Characteristics of effective school councils

In the case study schools, the school councils shared some common characteristics:

- meetings are timetabled into lesson times
- the council is whole-school rather than being class or year-based
- there are explicit representation and reporting mechanisms
- meetings run formally with agendas and minutes
- the council has a formal constitution
- the council is formally consulted about major policy decisions
- the scope of the agenda can be determined by pupils as well as staff
- the council is under the direct oversight of the Headteacher.

These characteristics are significant in that together they enable the school council to work effectively. They give the school council a formal status and power within the wider school structures. It was significant to us that the characteristics we identified in the case studies are similar to those outlined by Davies as being the indicators of effective school councils (Davies, 1998).

However, whilst the school councils in the case studies have many of the characteristics of effective school councils there were issues in both schools around staff involvement and the training of pupils.

Staff involvement in the council

In both schools, no staff other than the Headteacher played a significant role in the running of the school council. Whilst all the staff we interviewed were positive about the council and clear about the benefits to pupils, they remained marginal to its work. In neither school did the council systematically report to staff or did they have any direct input into agendas or meetings. Whilst we believe that the direct oversight of the council by the Headteacher is important, there is a strong case for finding strategies that engage staff in its work.

Training for pupils

In both the schools the quality of the meetings of the school council would be further enhanced through systematic training for councillors. The skills required to effectively chair and participate in such meetings are complex and need to be developed in a systematic fashion from an early age.

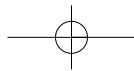
Recommendations

In this final part we outline some recommendations to teachers, senior managers, and policy makers. The recommendations are concerned with the nature of effective school councils and the kinds of whole schools settings in which they best operate.

We began this research with the view that 'it is particular kinds of school councils within particular institutional settings that can contribute most effectively to citizenship education'. The research has provided further confirmation of the appropriateness of this position. The literature review, preliminary interviews and case studies have affirmed the view that for school councils to make an effective contribution to citizenship they need to have certain characteristics but they need also to operate within democratic structures and climates. The case studies would suggest that the two are interdependent in that school councils seem more likely to have the necessary characteristics for effectiveness when they are set within wider climates and structures that are in themselves democratic.

1. If schools are to develop and sustain school councils that are effective in promoting citizenship then they need to ensure that the form and structure of the council fulfil a number of **criteria**. These include:

- whole school membership and representation
- frequent and regular meetings planned for the year and held during lesson time
- a written constitution
- chaired meetings with formal agendas, minutes and agreed procedures for discussion and decision making
- explicit and effective reporting mechanisms in relation to pupils, staff, governors and parents
- a formal consultative role in major policies and decisions, including the selection of new staff
- the scope and power to debate major issues within the school
- a budget for the council and consultation over the uses of the school budget
- direct involvement of senior management
- formally structured involvement of other staff.



2. Systematic training for all pupils and staff

Some schools do provide school council training for their pupils. However, in our view there is a need to implement a more systematic training programme in line with those provided in many other European countries. The training should be part of the PSHE/citizenship curriculum in primary and secondary schools and should form part of an entitlement curriculum for all pupils. LEAs could play a useful role in co-ordinating local training programmes for staff.

3. National Guidance for schools

We welcome the emerging guidance from the QCA around pupil participation. We would want to see this further developed so that all schools receive guidance on developing and sustaining effective school councils. We would recommend that further guidance be given to schools on how they might best provide coherence across a range of emerging initiatives to do with citizenship and pupil participation. For example, further work needs to be undertaken to help schools make more explicit and coherent links between the PSHE/citizenship curriculum, school councils and other whole school initiatives such as conflict resolution and peer support and mentoring.

4. Statutory requirement

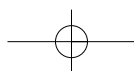
We would recommend that school councils become a statutory requirement for all schools as they are in some European countries and in some of the emerging Southern democracies such as South Africa. We are aware that this idea was discussed and eventually rejected by the members of the working party on citizenship (Crick Report, 1998) but remain convinced that such a requirement would do much to underline the importance that the government gives to citizenship in schools. The White Paper *'Schools: Achieving Success'* states:

'We will encourage students' active participation in the decisions that affect them, about their learning and more widely. School councils can be an important way of doing so.....' (DfES 2001)

If the Government is serious in realising this desire then it should thoughtfully reconsider giving school councils a statutory role within schools.

5. Whole school democratic practice

Schools should be helped to continue to review their structures and practices in relation to whole school democratic practice. The emerging QCA guidance on pupil participation is a helpful step in this direction. Schools need to regularly review the range of opportunities that they provide for pupils to have their voices heard, be consulted on major issues, take decisions, and exercise their rights and responsibilities. Schools need to monitor the effectiveness of these opportunities, including the effectiveness of the school council. In the words of the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum they need to ensure that there are real



opportunities to '*bring democracy to life*' within the school. Schools also need to regularly review their core values, ethos and climate to ensure that they are providing a climate in which all members of the school community feel valued and of equal worth.

6. Initial teacher training (ITT) and continuing professional development of teachers

We have already touched on staff training in relation to school councils. We would also recommend that the knowledge, understanding, skills and values associated with democratic practice be given more priority in the training of new teachers and in continuing professional development. The revised Standards for ITT from September 2002 (Teacher Training Agency 2002) may begin to move us in the right direction with a welcome emphasis on the values and dispositions required of new teachers and the incorporation of social inclusion and diversity into the Standards. The requirements that trainee teachers have an understanding of the programme of study for citizenship and the national curriculum framework for PSHE (and citizenship for Key Stages 1 and 2) are a move in the right direction. In addition the new Standards encourage ITT providers to offer PSHE/citizenship as an area of primary specialism. The continuing professional development funding for citizenship could also make a contribution to further development. However, there is a long way to go in this area and there is always the danger that such work is 'put on the back burner' in the face of other competing initiatives.

We have already discussed some of the tensions around the management and leadership of democratic schools in relation to staff engagement and empowerment. During the writing of this report the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) has drawn up a proposed 'Leadership Development Framework'. This framework is based partly on the recommendations of the Think Tank set up by the NCSL. The recommendations include a set of 10 school leadership propositions, of which one is particularly pertinent to the leadership of democratic schools. This proposition states that '*School leadership is a function that needs to be distributed throughout the school community.*' It goes on to describe such leadership as involving '*building an evolving consensus around values that will unite and excite members of the school community*' (2001 NCSL).

We would endorse this view of effective leadership. However, we would want any Leadership Development Framework to provide opportunities for leaders and emerging leaders to grapple with the complexities involved in achieving 'distributed' leadership. In particular, opportunities to explore strategies that may enable leaders to better combine pupil democracy with the empowerment of staff.

7. Further research

In the process of undertaking this research we became aware of the need for further research on school councils and democratic schools. In particular we would recommend that further research be undertaken to explore the following areas.

- The relationship between school councils and the range of other initiatives with respect to citizenship in the broadest sense. Useful work could be done in documenting ways in which schools attempt to provide consistency and coherence across these initiatives and in how they maintain priority for such work in the face of competing and sometimes conflicting demands.
- The tensions in leading and managing a school committed to democratic practice for pupils and staff and the effectiveness of the strategies that leaders adopt to overcome such tensions.
- The voices of children and young people in schools – much useful work could be done in further documenting the views and experiences of pupils as emerging citizens. In particular, we can learn much from their understandings of what a school that genuinely strives to engage their active participation might look like.

Finally, we must remain mindful that some of our recommendations may prove problematic for schools and teachers. Some aspects of the current educational climate do not sit easily with school democracy, indeed many current practices would seem to militate against such a development. For example, the pressures associated with selective schooling, testing and setting, and league tables would all seem to make genuine democratic practice more difficult for many schools. On the other hand much of the work around social inclusion is compatible with what we have been recommending and there is abundant evidence that pupil participation and empowerment plays a vital role in achievement at all levels. So for teachers and schools there are contradictions in the external educational environment. Too often schools and teachers have been left to try to make sense of these contradictions, with varying results.

The Government has committed itself to a curriculum rationale in which citizenship is central (the 2002 revised national curriculum). The White Paper '*Schools: Achieving Success*' reiterates the importance of pupil participation and citizenship. The Government therefore now has a duty to ensure that overall policy and practice consistently enables schools to develop structures and practices that promote active citizenship. School councils set within wider democratic structures are an essential element of process.

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APPENDIX : INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

1. Interview with Headteacher and Senior Managers

The project is investigating the contribution of school councils to citizenship education. In the work so far we have become convinced that school councils are a vital component of a whole range of structures, policies, systems and relationships which enable young people to participate in their own education.

Our central aim is to identify:

1. the characteristics of schools that enable real pupil participation.
2. the internal and external factors that restrict or support a school in developing those characteristics.

The purpose of these interviews is to help get a better understanding of how the characteristics of a participatory school manifest themselves or 'live' within an institution.

The interview schedule has a number of sections. Within each section we are trying to get at your understanding and perceptions of how this school promotes pupil participation but we are also interested in your understanding of how schools, more generally might go about developing a participatory ethos.

School Council

To what degree does the school council promote and reflect a participatory school?

To what degree does the school council provide for citizenship education?

1. Structure and form
 - Who is on it?
 - How is this decided?
 - The nature of the constitution and election system?
 - Preparation for council meetings
 - The way in which meetings are run
 - Minuting and reporting procedures
 - Implementing proposals and decisions
2. What is the scope of the school council here?
 - Day to day issues (lunch, toilets, uniform)
 - Curriculum
 - Teaching and learning
 - Recruitment of staff
 - School development planning
 - Finance
 - Behaviour
 - Community involvement
3. What power does the school council have?
 - Track decisions made
 - Scope of issues discussed
 - Adult involvement

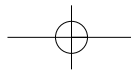
Ethos / Climate

- What are the values of this school?
- How have they come about? (Pupil involvement All staff involvement including support?)
- How do they live in the school? (indicators)

Leadership and Management

What do you think are the forms of leadership which enable participation of staff and pupils? Some possible characteristics are:

1. Features of leaders
 - Charisma?
 - Vision?
 - A willingness and ability to take risks?
 - An inner certainty
 - The willingness and ability to reflect?
 - The ability to enable others to take leadership?
2. Leadership and management styles relating to staff and students
 - Collaboration
 - Facilitating
 - Openness and responsiveness (inset budgets?)
 - Connection between pastoral and curriculum (democracy in both?)



Curriculum and Pedagogy

How can the curriculum and pedagogy promote and reflect pupil participation?

- Explicit provision for citizenship education
- Collaboration in planning curriculum provision
- Pupil choice and ownership
- Opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility (mixed age work?)
- Celebration of achievement
- Teaching and learning strategies
- Pupil groupings (ability)

Relationships

What sort of relationships promote and reflect pupil participation?

1. Treatment of pupils
 - Warmth
 - Respect
 - Valuing
 - Discourse
 - Sense of equality between pupils and all (including support)staff and between pupils
 - Opportunities for responsibility (e.g. pupils mentoring each other)
2. Teacher qualities
 - A willingness to share of themselves
 - Openness
 - Risk taking
3. Respectful relationships between all staff

2. Interview with Teachers

The project is investigating the contribution of school councils to citizenship education. In the work so far we have become convinced that school councils are a vital component of a whole range of structures, policies, systems and relationships which enable young people to participate in their own education.

Our central aim is to identify :

1. the characteristics of schools that enable real pupil participation.
2. the internal and external factors that restrict or support a school in developing those characteristics.

The purpose of these interviews is to help get a better understanding of how the characteristics of a participatory school manifest themselves or 'live' within an institution.

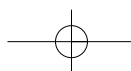
The interview schedule has a number of sections. Within each section we are trying to get at your understanding and perceptions of how this school promotes pupil participation but we are also interested in your understanding of how schools, more generally might go about developing a participatory ethos.

School Council

To what degree does the school council promote and reflect a participatory school?

To what degree does the school council provide for citizenship education?

1. Structure and form
 - Who is on it?
 - How is this decided?
 - The nature of the constitution and election system?
 - Preparation for council meetings
 - The way in which meetings are run
 - Minuting and reporting procedures
 - Implementing proposals and decisions
2. What is the scope of the school council here?
 - Day to day issues (lunch, toilets, uniform)
 - Curriculum
 - Teaching and learning
 - Recruitment of staff
 - School development planning
 - Finance
 - Behaviour
 - Community involvement



3. What power does the school council have?

- Track decisions made
- Scope of issues discussed
- Adult involvement

Ethos / Climate

- What are the values of this school?
- How have they come about? (Pupil involvement?)
- How do they live in the school? (indicators)

Leadership and Management

What do you think are the forms of leadership which enable participation of staff and pupils? Some possible characteristics are:

1. Features of leaders
 - Charisma?
 - Vision?
 - A willingness and ability to take risks?
 - An inner certainty
 - The willingness and ability to reflect?
 - The ability to enable others to take leadership?
2. Leadership and management styles relating to staff and students
 - Collaboration
 - Facilitating
 - Openness and responsiveness (inset budgets?)
 - Connection between pastoral and curriculum (democracy in both?)

Curriculum and Pedagogy

How can the curriculum and pedagogy promote and reflect pupil participation?

- Explicit provision for citizenship education
- Collaboration in planning curriculum provision
- Pupil choice and ownership
- Opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility (mixed age work?)
- Celebration of achievement
- Teaching and learning strategies
- Pupil groupings (ability)

Relationships

What sort of relationships promote and reflect participation?

1. Treatment of pupils
 - Warmth
 - Respect
 - Valuing
 - Discourse
 - Sense of equality between pupils and all staff and between pupils
 - Opportunities for responsibility (e.g. pupils mentoring each other)
2. Teacher qualities
 - A willingness to share of themselves
 - Openness
 - Risk taking
3. Respectful relationships between all staff?

3. Interview with Support Staff

The project is investigating the contribution of school councils to citizenship education. In the work so far we have become convinced that school councils are a vital component of a whole range of structures, policies, systems and relationships which enable young people to participate in their own education.

Our central aim is to identify :

1. the characteristics of schools that enable real pupil participation.
2. the internal and external factors that restrict or support a school in developing those characteristics.

The purpose of these interviews is to help get a better understanding of how the characteristics of a participatory

school manifest themselves or 'live' within an institution.

The interview schedule has a number of sections. Within each section we are trying to get at your understanding and perceptions of how this school promotes pupil participation but we are also interested in your understanding of how schools, more generally might go about developing a participatory ethos.

School Council

To what degree does the school council promote and reflect a participatory school?

To what degree does the school council provide for citizenship education?

1. Structure and form
 - Who is on it?
 - How is this decided?
 - The nature of the constitution and election system?
 - Preparation for council meetings
 - The way in which meetings are run
 - Minuting and reporting procedures
 - Implementing proposals and decisions
2. What is the scope of the school council here?
 - Day to day issues (lunch, toilets, uniform)
 - Curriculum
 - Teaching and learning
 - Recruitment of staff
 - School development planning
 - Finance
 - Behaviour
 - Community involvement
3. What power does the school council have?
 - Track decisions made
 - Scope of issues discussed
 - Adult involvement

Ethos / Climate

- What are the values of this school?
- How have they come about? (Pupil involvement? All staff involvement?)
- How do they live in the school? (indicators, specifically in relation to support staff)

Leadership and Management

What do you think are the forms of leadership which enable participation of all staff and pupils? Some possible characteristics are:

1. Features of leaders
 - Charisma?
 - Vision?
 - A willingness and ability to take risks?
 - An inner certainty
 - The willingness and ability to reflect?
 - The ability to enable others to take leadership?
2. Leadership and management styles relating to staff and students
 - Collaboration
 - Facilitating
 - Openness and responsiveness (inset budgets?)
 - Connection between pastoral and curriculum (democracy in both?)

Relationships

What sort of relationships promote and reflect participation?

1. Treatment of pupils
 - Warmth
 - Respect
 - Valuing
 - Discourse
 - Sense of equality between pupils and all staff and between pupils
 - Opportunities for responsibility (e.g. pupils mentoring each other)

2. Teacher qualities
 - A willingness to share of themselves
 - Openness
 - Risk taking
3. Respectful relationships between all staff?

4. Interview with Secondary Pupils (adapted for primary pupils)

The project is looking at how school councils can teach pupils about citizenship. In the work so far we think that that school councils are only one way that schools can involve young people in making decisions about their education., so we are also looking at a whole range of structures, policies, systems and relationships which enable young people to have a say in their own education.

The purpose of these interviews is to get your views of the school, particularly to see if you feel the school gives you a voice and involves you in making decisions.

Interviewer should have a constant focus on drawing out concrete examples.

School Council

To what degree does the school council promote and reflect a participatory school?
To what degree does the school council provide for citizenship education?

1. Structure and form
 - Who is on it?
 - How is this decided?
 - The nature of the constitution and election system?
 - Preparation for council meetings
 - The way in which meetings are run
 - Minuting and reporting procedures
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2. What is the scope of the school council here?
 - Day to day issues (lunch, toilets, uniform)
 - Curriculum
 - Teaching and learning
 - Recruitment of staff
 - School development planning
 - Finance
 - Behaviour
 - Community involvement
3. What power does the school council have?
 - Track decisions made
 - Scope of issues discussed
 - Adult involvement

Ethos

- What is this school like?
- What does it stand for?

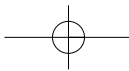
Leadership and Management

1. What do you think the head and deputies are like?
2. What is it about them which makes you feel that you do or don't have a say in how the school is run?

Curriculum and Pedagogy

Do you get taught about citizenship? (e.g. PSE/Pastoral/history)
What are different lessons like?

- Collaboration in planning curriculum provision
- Teaching and learning strategies
- Pupil choice and ownership
- Pupil groupings (ability)
- Opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility (mixed age work?)
- Celebration of achievement



Relationships

What sorts of relationships do teachers and pupils have?

1. Treatment of pupils

- Respect
- Valuing
- Warmth (Do you think they like you?)
- Discourse (How do teachers talk to and about pupils?)
- Sense of equality between pupils and staff and between pupils (Do all pupils get treated equally?)
- Opportunities for responsibility (e.g. pupils mentoring each other)

2. What are the teachers like? (Teacher qualities)

- A willingness to share of themselves (Do they tell you anything about themselves? Should they?)
- Openness (How do they respond to your ideas?)
- Risk taking (Do you think teachers ever take a chance on trying new things?)

3. What sort of relationships do support staff and pupils have?

4. What are the relationships between adults like in the school?

