



# Ashfield Girls' High School



**“Each different. Each talented. All valued.”**

## Pupil Voice Policy

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## Executive Summary

At Ashfield Girls' High School, the ethos "*Each Different, Each Talented, All Valued*" underpins our commitment to fostering a culture where pupils actively contribute to their education and school life. The Pupil Voice Policy is designed to ensure that students' views and opinions are sought, valued, and acted upon, empowering them to be participants in decision-making and contributors to the school's continuous improvement.

Grounded in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the policy ensures that pupils' perspectives are integral to decision-making. Aligned with the school's mission, "Challenging young people today, creating women of value for the future," the Pupil Voice Policy aims to develop pupils' confidence and interpersonal skills. It also encourages pupils to articulate their thoughts and take action on issues that impact them. This in turn will enhance pupils' employability and environmental awareness through active participation.

School aims to provide multiple avenues for engagement, including:

- Influencing School Development Planning
- Contributing to and reviewing policies
- Providing feedback on their learning activities, educational visits and other experiences within school.
- Pastoral Care: Participation in pastoral initiatives, transitions, and SEN reviews.
- Student Leadership Roles: Opportunities in the Student Council, Addressing Bullying Type Behaviour Ambassadors, Digital Leaders, Eco-School Committee, House Representatives, and Peer Mentoring programs.

Pupil voice is embedded across all areas of school life, with responsibilities shared among senior leadership, teachers, support staff, and the pupils themselves. Various methods are used to provide opportunities for pupil voice including surveys, focus groups, and formal discussions which help to ensure comprehensive representation of pupil views.



## **Section A (Aims of the Policy)**

The Pupil Voice Policy at Ashfield Girls' High School is designed to achieve the following aims:

### Promote Inclusivity and Value Diversity

Foster an ethos where every pupil feels valued and respected, ensuring their individual, group, and collective voices are heard and acted upon.

### **Encourage Active Participation**

Provide pupils with opportunities to actively engage in decision-making processes that affect their education and school life, cultivating a sense of ownership and responsibility.

### **Develop Confidence and Communication Skills**

Enable pupils to build self-confidence, interpersonal skills, and the ability to articulate their opinions constructively in a supportive environment.

### **Support School Improvement**

Involve pupils in school development planning, policy review, and feedback mechanisms to ensure continuous improvement in learning, pastoral care, and school operations.

### **Enhance Leadership and Citizenship Skills**

Equip pupils with leadership opportunities, including roles in the Student Council, peer mentoring, and Student Leadership Team positions, fostering their growth as contributors to society and future leaders.

### **Embed Rights-Based Principles**

Uphold the principles of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ensuring that pupils' opinions are integral to decisions that impact them.

### **Promote Self-Reflection and Evaluation**

Encourage pupils to engage in reflective practices, enabling them to evaluate their experiences and contribute ideas for improvement in school policies and practices.

### **Strengthen Community Collaboration**

Facilitate collaboration between pupils, staff, parents, and governors to create a cohesive school community where all stakeholders contribute to shared goals.

These aims ensure the Pupil Voice Policy supports the holistic development of pupils and enhances the overall school environment.



## Section B (Legislative Context and Linked Policies)

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016  
The Education and Libraries Order (Northern Ireland) 2003  
The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010  
The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995  
The Human Rights Act 1998  
The Health and Safety at Work Order (Northern Ireland) 1978  
The Relationships and Sexuality Education (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 2023  
Equality Act 1995  
Children's Services Co-operation Act (2015)  
Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (2005)  
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (1998)

DENI Circular 2014/14 – Pupil Participation  
DENI: Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour (2011)  
DENI: Every School a Good School (2009)  
DENI: Every Child (2023)  
ETI: Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework (2017)  
Children and Young Peoples' Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework (2021)  
Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030  
Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools (Updated September 2024).  
DENI Circular 2024/14 – Guidance for Schools on Pupils' Personal Use of Pupil Voices and other Similar Devices During the School Days  
DENI Circular 1998/25 – Promoting and Sustaining Good Behaviour in Schools: Summary of New Legislative Provisions  
DENI Circular 2024/1 - Guidance on Amendments to The Relationships And Sexuality Education (RSE) Curriculum Content  
DENI Circular 2015/22 - Relationship and Sexuality Education Guidance

CCEA Digital for Life and Work <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/digital-life-and-work>

### Linked Policies

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy  
Behaviour for Learning and Positive Behaviour Policy  
Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy  
Special Educational Needs Policy  
Health and Safety Policy  
Educational Visits Policy  
Pupil Wellbeing Policy



## Section C (Policy and Procedures)

Pupils need to be active participants in their own education and feel that their opinions are heard. We seek ways to listen to the views of our pupils, including them in decision making processes with the belief that they will make a positive contribution to the school.

Pupil Voice provides opportunities for young people to have their individual, group and collective voice heard. Pupil Voice includes consultation on the School Development Planning, feedback on relevant policies, input into learning, reviewing pastoral care, undertaking pupil leadership roles, and participating in Extra-Curricular activities.

Pupil Voice also seeks out pupils' ideas for improvement by encouraging evaluation and self-reflection. It is important that young people are encouraged to articulate their opinions and feel that their thoughts and ideas are listened to. Being listened to and the hope that your thoughts and feelings will be considered is a fundamental need of all humans and it builds both self-confidence in the young person and confidence that the community they are part of will meet their needs.

Participation plays a fundamental role in the development of a strong Pupil Voice.

It involves: -

- Participation in the decision-making process that affects young people.
- Participation in discussions so that young peoples' thoughts and ideas are listened to and acted upon.

This links closely to the school mission statement 'challenging young people today, creating women of value for the future'.

- Develop pupils as individuals, by giving young people opportunities to build confidence and inter-personal skills required to articulate their voice.
- Develop pupils as contributors to society, by giving young people opportunities to share their thoughts and take action on issues that impact them.
- Develop pupils as contributors to the economy and environment, by giving young people opportunities to develop their employability skills.

### Opportunities for Pupil Voice Participation

There are many opportunities for Pupil Voice participation at Ashfield Girls' High School. The table below provides a range of opportunities within the academic year for the development of effective pupil voice participation. The opportunities are linked to school development planning, policies, learning, pastoral care, leadership opportunities, extra-curricular activities, issues or 'hot topics' and the generation of ideas for improvement.

Participation can take many forms including oral and written dialogue focused on reflection and improvement in learning, informal discussions, pupil evaluations, suggestion boxes, pupil surveys, focus groups and Student Council forums. Pupils participation should be embedded into all aspects of school life including learning, pastoral care, the strategic and operational leadership of Ashfield Girls' High School.



# Pupil Voice Policy

Area	Opportunity
School Development Planning	<p>Pupils identifying issues to be included on the School Development Plan.            Pupils invitation to and attendance at Senior Leadership Team meetings.            Pupils involved in the review of the School Development Plan.            Pupil to participate in focus groups.</p>
School Policies	<p>Pupils involved in the creation and review of the Pupil Voice Policy.            Pupils involved in the review of key policies e.g. Behaviour for Learning and Positive Behaviour Policy, Addressing Bullying in School Policy, Relationships and Sexuality Policy, Attendance Policy, Teaching and Learning Policy, Special Educational Needs (SEN) Policy.</p>
Learning	<p>Marking for Improvement opportunities within the classroom (oral and written) will allow pupils to engage in dialogue with their teacher on how best to move their learning forward.            Mid / End of topic feedback sheets (with teacher or HOD).            Mid / End of topic focus groups (with teacher of HOD).            Year 10 Option Choice Discussions / Feedback.            Year 12 Target Setting Discussions / Feedback.            Year 13 Options Choice Discussions / Feedback.            Feedback from events / fieldtrips.            Work Experience Visit Feedback.            Parental Consultation (accompanied by young person).            Whole school surveys.</p>
Wellbeing	<p>Pastoral Care Team – discussions with pupils regarding individual concerns / issues.            P7 Visits to Primary Schools and discussions with pupils – Transition.            6<sup>th</sup> Form Discussions / Interviews – Transition.            SEN – Annual Reviews to include pupil’s views.            SEN – Personal Learning Plans are created with pupils and have opportunities for pupil comments.            Investors in Pupils – annual review of progress.            Rights Respecting Class Charters are created by pupils in Learning for Life and Work Classes.            Review of Preventative Curriculum involves pupils.            Issues raised in form time.</p>
Student Council	<p>Student Council Representatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voting for Student Council representatives.</li> <li>• Participate in the creation and review of the Pupil Voice Policy.</li> <li>• Seek the views of the young people in their year group through the Student Council and feedback activities.</li> <li>• Represent the views and opinions of their year group at Student Council meetings.</li> <li>• Take action to make appropriate improvements for the school community.</li> </ul>
Addressing Bullying Type Behaviour Ambassadors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in the review of the Addressing Bullying Type Behaviour Policy.</li> <li>• Review and agree actions to promote the role of the Anti-Bullying Ambassadors.</li> <li>• Attend workshops / events related to bullying type behaviour.</li> <li>• Work to reduce the number of bullying type behaviour incidents.</li> <li>• Work in partnership with the Student Council.</li> </ul>



Digital Leaders	<p>Digital leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in the review of the Online Learning Policy.</li> <li>• Review and agree actions to promote the role of the Digital Leaders.</li> <li>• Work to highlight safe practices online.</li> <li>• Assist in events such as Ada Lovelace Day and Safer Internet Day.</li> </ul>
Eco-School Committee	<p>Eco-School Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in the activities to promote a more environmentally friendly school environment.</li> <li>• Work in partnership with the Student Council.</li> </ul>
House Representatives	<p>House Representatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree a programme of events / competitions to achieve house points</li> <li>• Assist in arranging events such as Sports Day / House Quiz</li> </ul>
Charities Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree a programme of events for fundraising.</li> <li>• Pupils can nominate charities (all pupils).</li> <li>• Agree charities.</li> </ul>
Peer Mentors	<p>Peer Mentors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support younger pupils in form time to help the transition into Year 8.</li> </ul>
Reading Partnership	<p>Reading Partnership Buddies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support younger pupils to help improve literacy and confidence in reading.</li> </ul>
Maths Mates	<p>Maths Mates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support younger pupils to help improve numeracy.</li> </ul>
Leadership Opportunities	<p>Prefect Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head Girls and her deputies are involved in school events and initiatives.</li> <li>• Work in partnership with the Student Council.</li> </ul> <p>Student Council Chair and Vice Chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As voted for by the Student Council.</li> </ul>
School Librarians	<p>School Librarians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work independently to manage the library at lunchtimes for other pupils.</li> </ul>



## Section D (Roles and Responsibilities)

### Board of Governors:

- Have a written Pupil Voice Policy in place.
- Ensure that the expected processes outlined in the Pupil Voice Policy are upheld.
- Ratify the policy and ensure that it is reviewed every two years, or when guidance changes.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the policy.
- Assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at pupil voice.

### Principal:

- Has operational responsibility for the policy and its implementation.
- Ensure that staff are aware of the policy and its procedures.
- Ensure that the policy follows the appropriate DENI guidance.
- Provide professional learning opportunities.
- Ensure that the application of the policy is consistent and fair.

### Vice-Principals:

- Ensure that the procedures outlined in this policy are followed – fairly and consistently.
- Ensure that Preventative Curriculum is being delivered which promotes pupil voice, to ensure pupils are equipped to respond to challenges they may face.
- Support staff to gain pupil voice
- Monitor and evaluate the policy's effectiveness and ensure that it is being followed.

### Staff:

- Staff have a responsibility to provide opportunities for young people to articulate how they feel about their learning and their experiences in school as part of the self-evaluation process.
- Are aware of this policy, linked policies, and their application.
- To be fair and consistent.
- To respond promptly to any concern raised by pupils or parents.

### Parents:

- Should be aware of the contents of this policy (and linked policies) and support it.
- Encourage their child to raise ideas and concerns.
- Should report any concerns they may have regarding the misuse of a Pupil Voice of their child, promptly, especially about potential bullying behaviour.
- Should report any concerns they may have regarding the misuse of Pupil Voice.

### Pupils:

- Pupils have a responsibility to reflect on issues that affect them and share these reflections in forums focused on school self-improvement.
- Should report any concerns about the misuse of Pupil Voice.
- Treat others with respect and value all members of the school community.



## **Section E (Consultation, Communication, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Policy)**

This policy has been developed in consultation with governors, staff, pupils and parents.

The policy will be monitored via a range of methods. It is based on addressing presenting issues, established by a range of methods including following Department of Education Northern Ireland guidance, pupil surveys, pupil discussions, those raised at Student Council meetings and parent discussions.

The Pupil Voice Policy will be reviewed by all stakeholders and, if required, updated:

- following any incident which highlights the need for such a review.
- when directed to by the Department of Education Northern Ireland and considering new guidance.
- Every two-years (as identified on the front cover of this policy).

To appropriately monitor the effectiveness of the policy, the Board of Governors shall:

- be updated regularly on any regulation changes, respective of pupil voice.
- identify current issues, trends and priorities for action.
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at ensuring that pupils' voices are heard.

# Challenging girls today; creating women of value in the future



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