

Early Years Child's Voice Guidance

Practical suggestions for interactive Child Voice 1:1 meeting



It's not easy asking children/pupils of any age to reflect on their feelings or actions, particularly in a 1:1 situation. As we know all children are unique in their preferred approach to sharing their thoughts and feelings and it is up to us as adults who know these children and can tune into them to find the best way to enable them to be open and reflective, and so that this information can then be used to support their next steps in their learning environment.

Already we have referred the four main principles of our Early Years framework, that together make early education successful.

Unique child, positive relationships, enabling environments and learning and development.

The intention of a **child voice meeting** is to create a situation where it is seen as a child centred review, a creative approach that can change as the child moves up through the year groups or can give the child the choice of the approach to suit their needs or mind-set towards learning at the time. Teachers need to compose this meeting so that it is a valued use of time for the child and to listen to responses, to ideas and opinions and even to aspirations.

Make it visual and practical, fun and meaningful each time!

Make it all about the child.

Remember that we are trying to gather how the child feels at this point in time and for very young children that is quite a hard skill for them because they might simply not yet have the words to describe how they feel, which is why they communicate their feelings in other ways, such as through facial expressions, through their body, their behaviour and play. Even as adults we experience complex feelings and we find explaining the way we feel difficult, finding the right word or saying something in a way the listener will understand.

We must try not to 'put words into the child's mouth'

Children might feel: -

frustrated, **excited**, afraid, nervous, sad, **jealous**, mad, frightened, worried, **angry**, shy, happy, calm, **moody**, pleased, unhappy, grumpy, **confident**,

Making sure we allocate time to the child voice meeting is so important because children who can express and cope with their feelings are more likely to: -

- 😊 be considerate and kind to others
- 😊 develop more positive and meaningful friendships
- 😊 have good mental health and wellbeing
- 😊 develop a positive self-image
- 😊 display less challenging behaviours
- 😊 develop coping skills
- 😊 feel more confident

Don't forget.....we can help children learn about and express their feelings:

- **Be a role model** - children learn about feelings and how to express them appropriately by watching others. If as adults we show our feelings about different situations and how we deal with those feelings, they will learn from you.
- **Encourage with praise** - Praise the child when they talk about their feelings or express them in an appropriate way. Not only does it show that feelings are normal and it's ok to talk about them, it reinforces the behaviour so they are likely to repeat it.
- **Listen to the child's feelings** - Stay present and listen to what the child is saying. Support the child to identify and express their feelings so they are heard. When feelings are minimised or dismissed, they will often be expressed in unhealthy ways.

You can approach the child voice meeting in any way that suits your teaching style and your child's learning approach. You know the child you will be spending this time with, because over time, you will have been building a relationship with them and this will be crucial to them and for you in giving personalised feedback in an appropriate way, about their views, because this time each term, really is all about them.



One of the most powerful ways of collecting, recording and sharing the child's views will be to include any quotes from the child- how they have responded to any questions or in conversations and the actual words they use.

This is a great opportunity to be able to *capture and record the child's responses and views that reflect their current feelings* and be able to share them with other adults.

Remembering that this might be a strange experience for this child – they may feel uncomfortable with a 1:1 situation so try not to use too many questions that sound more like an interrogation!

The Talking Bricks below indicate some of the useful information that you will hopefully have gathered by the end of the child voice meeting. You might start by asking them where their favourite place is to play each day, and then share where yours would be and why.



Here are some creative interactive ways which you might consider using to organise your child voice meeting for Early Years, First and Primary aged children. You may of course have a collection of your own tried and tested ideas that capture the child's attention, or something personal to that child that will hook them into a meaningful and reflective conversation.

Marvellous me box – (normally a shoe box is used)

The aim of the marvellous me box is to encourage children to think about who or what is special to them. If you ask the child to bring in a box with 3 or 4 items that they feel are special to them and you do the same, then you have something visual and special/personal to them to hook your conversation on and gather information from the Talking Bricks. It could be a photograph of a family member, the dogs lead, a special toy.



Talking tube

This is the same way of working as the Marvellous Me box, but instead, you each decorate a tall Pringles tube together in school and invite the child to add some special items from home.



Teddy Talk

It's not you or the child talking, it's the teddies! Each of you choose a teddy which you can name unless they already have names of course and then your teddy can start a conversation and eventually ask the other teddy some questions after yours has shared some of his thoughts. "I really like playing with the new farm animals. Have you played with them yet?" etc.

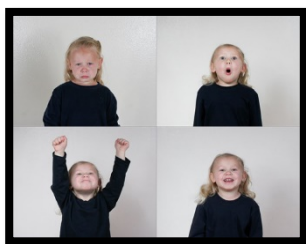


Puppets

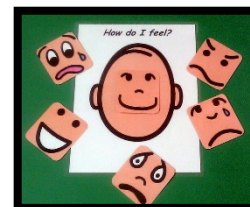
Glove, sock or finger puppets are a great fun way to enable young children to engage in interactions as they can imagine they are the puppet character rather than themselves if they want to. Equally, the adult can be speaking as the puppet as well. You can both add different voices and sounds and make up stories as you go along. You could have both made your own sock puppet for the meeting as well, to make it even more personal to the child.



Emotion self-registration board



Many of our young people will have access to a self-registration board. Why not create one which is focused around emotions? Split a registration board into 4 boxes in which the young child can place their photographs and/or names upon. Each box would then represent a different emotion enabling the children to tell us how they are feeling.



Role-play

Still the same idea as using puppets where the child can express their thoughts and feelings through another means. Some children love to role-play (adults usually hate it!). You can either choose to dress up as a character they know from a story or other media or use face masks or hats.



Post-it note blizzard

Possibly as the children get older or a younger child who prefers to work without a creative stimulus, they may still like a visual focus such as a post-it note blizzard. There are some interesting shaped and coloured post it notes around that could be used and you could perhaps use different colours for the types of responses you get from the child, so perhaps all positive responses go on a heart shaped post it and worries go on a leaf shaped post it and ideas for next steps or



requests go on an arrow shaped post it, so you can see a picture building up. You could just write a word or phrase (I'm happy outside) or draw a notes safe for the next meeting, perhaps in an A3 style scrap book, stuck in as a blizzard of course, you can revisit them with the child and see if things have changed, are there any new feelings/words to add?

Feelings inside me!



You just need a body of a person/child to draw around. It could be the child you are meeting with or they could draw around their friend or the adult. Use a roll of old wallpaper or go outside with some chalk. When you're then having a discussion with the child, ask them where they think they could write something on the body or draw a picture (butterflies or volcanoes) to help describe their feelings and experiences - around the heart because it's good, on the hands because it's helping them, on the head, because it's about thinking, on the feet, because it's their next step. - Remember to take a photograph of the finished body afterwards.



"I wonder" bingo bag



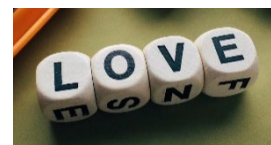
The child would have a bingo grid with the same number of squares according to the number of statements in the bag. The bag could contain bingo cards containing photographs/pictures which you have made previously to suit the need. E.g. you might have a selection of pictures of the learning environment laid out for the child to choose from – sand, water, creative, reading, small world, construction etc as well as some blank cards and pens to hand, in case the child wishes to make their own at any point or chooses an answer that isn't in picture form and the adult can write it for them. Then out of the bag you pull an "I wonder" statement. "I wonder where **** likes to play. The child finds that picture and places it somewhere on the grid and the adult takes that opportunity to talk to them about why they like it. I wonder who you will go to if you are worried.....what you don't like doing at school.....what you think you need help with. You could also have some speech bubble post-it notes at hand and if the child says something interesting you could write it down and put the post-it note in the bingo square as well.



Roll the dice



There are lots of ways you can use dice as an interactive and fun tool to engage young children. The best dice would be the large foam ones with clear see through pockets on each side where you can place words, pictures or questions. Depending on the child's age and ability, they



could talk to you about their thoughts or they could make a one-word answer using letter dice. "How do you feel when you come to school?" might be the question on the dice, and the child creates the word – happy, with some letter dice or magnetic letters.

It could be a 'What makes you...' dice. The large dice has emotions words on each side and the child thinks about the word it lands on and gives a response, which the adult can then explore with the child.

Banner

Have you ever been involved with Write Dance? Write Dance programme which uses music and movement to introduce handwriting to children.

The movements are designed to help children feel happy and comfortable with their bodies, as well as increase self-confidence and self-esteem.

One of the activities is to sit with a large piece or roll of paper in front of you and coloured wax crayons, or chinks in both hands. You listen to the music playing and using both



hands at the same time your mark making reflects the mood of the music. For a non-verbal child or reluctant speaker, you could use the same principle and they could respond with marks – e.g. smooth, circular patterns for happy and calm, jagged straight lines for sad or stabbing dots for angry. Probably a lot like when and why we doodle as adults!

Wordle

Wordle is a tool for generating “word clouds” from language/text that the child can provide you with during the meeting. This would be a great way to involve the older child in a creative and inclusive way. The clouds give greater prominence to words that are used more frequently as you discuss the term with the child.



The child can work alongside the adult and can tweak the clouds with different fonts, layouts, and colour schemes.

For more information please go to this website through this link

<https://www.makeandtakes.com/all-about-me-wordle-for-kids>

Emotional Snowmen

You will need some marshmallows, cocktail sticks and some edible cake pens. The child makes one snowman body with 2 marshmallows and you have another one and then each of you can make a set of different heads to change, displaying different emotions. Then off you go. I wonder how your snowman is feeling today. Mine is happy because..... My snowman was unhappy at dinnertime yesterday because all the pasta had gone 😞. How did your snowman feel in the lunch hall?

The best bit about using the emotional snowmen is that when the meeting is finished you can eat him!!

