

Aberdeenshire Accessibility Strategy

Responses from Pupils May 2005

As part of Aberdeenshire Council's Accessibility Strategy 2003-2005, a representative sample of Aberdeenshire's schools was chosen to assess the current educational provision for pupils with additional support needs.

Six secondary schools and fourteen primary schools were chosen according to the following criteria:

- Size
- Location
- Whether or not there was a SFL base (primary only)

All four special schools were audited.

ABERDEENSHIRE ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY 2003-2005

Responses from Pupil Councils

Representation

(making sure everyone has the opportunity to become involved)

- All school councils were made up of class representatives elected by their classmates
- Everyone agreed that it was important to represent all pupils, but few saw the benefit of a representative specifically for pupils with additional support needs: it was up to the class representative to make sure that everyone in the class was involved
- Some secondary schools had more than one pupil council (e.g. S1- S3, S4-S6, Executive Council) in an attempt to make sure that everyone is represented
- Secondary schools had the opportunity to link with Aberdeenshire Pupil Forum. Could something similar be introduced for primary schools, perhaps on an area basis?

Accessibility

(making sure everyone can get the information)

- In all schools it was up to the class rep to tell the class what was going to be discussed and to give feedback after the meeting during registration and/or PSE (secondary schools)
- Pupil council business was also discussed at assembly (primary schools)
- Some schools had web pages on school website
- All schools had a noticeboard for agenda & minutes, and photos of class reps
- Some schools had comments boxes
- One council suggested that, if a topic was on the agenda, there should be an open invitation to anyone interested to attend, or to give written comment before the meeting

Effectiveness

- All councils had a secretary who took and distributed minutes
- Sometimes a pupil chaired meeting, but usually a teacher
- Some councils were highly structured with a constitution
- Councils that considered themselves to be effective had a budget
- Training would be welcomed

Responses from Individual Pupils

This information is gathered from questionnaires, interviews, informal chats and classroom observation.

In the classroom

- Pupils enjoyed a range of subjects across the curriculum
- Some pupils would like to try subjects which are not traditionally on the school curriculum e.g. driving, outward bound activities
- Pupil generally appreciated the support they were given but, on occasion, they might have concerns which suggests that support should be carefully monitored
- Pupils enjoyed variety in the way they learned, but a large number preferred to work in groups and with computers
- Pupils recognised that homework was useful, as long as they got feedback from the teacher within a reasonable time

Out of class

- Pupils enjoyed a range of options at break and lunchtime: clubs, quiet areas, library activities ...
- Pupils felt that there was adult support available, if required
- Most pupils reported good experiences of school trips, though a few pupils had been unable to attend because the school was unable to offer the necessary support in terms of extra adult support or providing transport

Making decisions

- Review meetings - pupils did not always have the choice of whether or not to attend review meetings, especially in primary schools.
A few pupils did not always understand who was there and why.
A few pupils would like the option of having someone to speak for them.
Pupils did not always get feedback.
- Pupils were happy with the way their pupil council was set up and how reps were elected

Generally, pupils knew someone on the school staff who they were able to communicate with, and who would listen to them.

