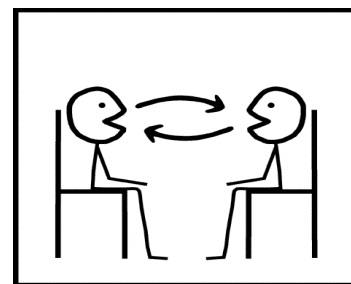


SEEKING PUPILS' VIEWS

Questions for pupils about good and bad things at school



Description

These questions are designed for schools to find out about pupils' awareness or perception of difficulties by building up a picture of the supports and barriers to their participation in school activities.

They form the basis for an interview carried out by an adult with one or two pupils. Alternatively, they could be used as a circle time activity.

The role of the interviewer

The interviewer needs to establish a relaxed atmosphere and make it clear that this is not an assessment but that pupils' views are genuinely being sought. The interviewer should therefore preferably not be someone that the children may wish to please by providing the 'correct answers'.

Before you carry out the activity

Collect

- some photographs of different parts of the school, different lessons/times of the day and different events to use as prompts. These could be displayed on a computer if not available in printed form, or you could use symbols or objects, if the child is already familiar with these
- any symbols which might help children respond - such as a pile of counters with smiley/sad faces

Alternatively, you could arrange for the children themselves to take photographs of things they like or don't like. It might be appropriate for some pupils to go on a tour of the school to prompt them to recall what they like or don't like.

Some pupils might benefit from preceding sessions to accustom them to making judgements about likes and dislikes, perhaps about something 'neutral' like food

Decide

- who will carry out the activity. This should be an adult who is familiar to the pupil, but not necessarily their own teacher.
- whether to record the pupils' names alongside their comments, or whether their responses will be anonymous.
- whether to use an ordinary notepad or the response form provided.
- on a time when the pupils are relaxed and there is plenty of time to talk. Avoid withdrawing them from favoured activities.

Explaining the activity to pupils

- Make sure the pupils know who the information will be shared with, whether their names will be included and why people want to know about what they think.
- Explain that you are going to write down the pupils' answers so that you can remember what they said.
- Emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers; you just want to find out what they think about different things that happen at school

Carrying out the activity

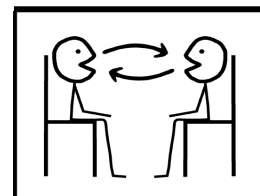
- If appropriate, ask the pupils to write their names for you on the response form/sheet of paper that you'll be using to record their responses.
- Prompt pupils if they seem unsure but be careful not to influence their responses by making too many suggestions
- If any child seems upset by a question, or can't think of a response, move on to the next one.
If the pupils seem comfortable, ask for more details around Questions 5. Use photographs here to support your questions.
- Use Questions 6, 7 and 8 to ensure the session ends on a positive note – encourage pupils to talk freely. It is not necessary to record these responses fully. Treat discussions about home life sensitively, especially in a group, where there might be different kinds of family structures.
- Make sure you also leave time for pupils to express their feelings about what has been discussed, e.g. 'Have you felt upset about/ how do you feel about anything we have talked about - would you like to talk some more to someone about your feelings?'

Some examples of how schools used the interview questions

Mrs Tugwood and Mrs Steel, two teaching assistants at **Parkgate Primary School**, decided to work together to carry out the interviews with year 3 pupils. One of them asked the questions, taking care to establish that this was not a test. This was particularly important, as these staff members had recently been involved in assessing many of the pupils interviewed. She gained pupils' consent before starting the questions and used her knowledge of the pupils to prompt gently. For example, she reminded a boy with a visual impairment about a school trip, which prompted him to recall his difficulty with the steep steps to climb into coach. The other staff member acted as scribe and explained that she was going to write the pupil's responses down. From time to time she stopped and checked with the pupil that she had written it down correctly. The pupils were relaxed and enjoyed the sessions, to the extent that one boy asked for more questions at the end.

Jane Crosby at the same school interviewed pupils from the reception class. Some of the pupils were rather shy and some had communication difficulties. She had collected some photographs of different parts of the school and made a pile of counters with smiley or sad faces on them. When pupils were finding it difficult to respond verbally, she offered them the tokens to place on photographs to show whether they liked or didn't like different areas of the school. She then followed this up with questions to probe why they did or didn't like a particular place. Although pupils often found it hard to say why they liked places, they could often say why they did not like places. For example, one boy with speech and language difficulties put a sad face on the photograph of some steps inside the building and when asked why he didn't like them, he said it was because it was where his friend had fallen down. Another boy (with cerebral palsy) put a sad face on a photograph of the outside area, because he found the walk round the outside of the buildings to the school gate tiring at the end of the day. All pupils found the counters easy to use and it offered staff the opportunity to find out problem areas and issues.

Seeking Pupils' Views – Interview Schedule and Response Sheet



Suggested introduction:

We want to make [name of school] a really good place to be. So today we want to find about things that you like about being in school and things you're not so keen on. There are no right or wrong answers; we just want to find out what you think.

Name/code

date

1. What do you like doing at / what is your favourite thing about [name of school]?

2. What do you think you are really good at doing?

3. What do you find hard to do? / What do you find a bit tricky?
Can you think of anything that would help you with this?

4. Can you think of something that used to be really hard but is now much easier?
Is that because you found something that makes it easier?

*If a difficulty is identified in any of the questions below, follow up with
What might make it easier to ?*

5:1 Is there anything you don't like doing at school?

5:2 Is there anything about **the rooms** that makes things more difficult?

5:3 Is there anything about **the playground** that makes things difficult for you?

5:4 Is there anything about **the toilets** that you don't like?

5:5 Is there anything about **where things are kept** (books, pencils, coats etc?) that makes things more difficult?

5:6 Is there anything about **lesson time** any particular lessons that makes things more difficult?

5:7 Is there anything about ... **playtime, lunch time, assembly**.....that makes things more difficult?

*If a difficulty is identified in any of the questions below, follow up with
What might make it easier to ?*

5:8 Is there anything about **when things happen** (therapy/support sessions? toilet breaks?) that makes things more difficult?

5:9 Do you find it a problem to **move around** the classroom/get from one classroom to another?

5:10 Is there anything about**getting to school**/getting home again that makes things more difficult?

5:11 Is there anything about ... **the way people talk** that you don't like?

5:12 Is there anything about **what people say**/what other children say.....that makes things more difficult?

5:13 What about **Special Days** – like trips, or concerts, or Charity days - what do you like about things that happen then? Is there anything about Special Days that you don't like? What might make these days easier?

6. What sorts of things do you like doing with your friends at school? Is there anything would make these things easier/more fun for you?

7. What sorts of things do you like doing at home/after school/at weekends? What is about it that makes it good?

8. Have you got any favourite toys/books/games/DVDs/songs?
(It is not necessary to ask about all these categories, or to record this question fully. The aim is to end the interview with the pupils talking about something they like.)

9. How did you feel about answering these questions?
Which bits were good/not so good?
Would you like to talk some more to someone about anything we've talked about?
Are there any other questions you think we could ask to find out about things you like doing and things you don't like?

Thank the pupil(s) for their help and distribute stickers if appropriate.