



*Citizenship Foundation*



# **I WAS A TEENAGE GOVERNOR**

**Project report phase 1:**

**Pupil Governorship: initial thoughts and possibilities**

**Joe Hallgarten  
Tony Breslin  
Derry Hannam**

**March 2004**



## CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. The political context
3. Pupil voice: here to grow?
4. Governing bodies: an uncertain future?
5. Pupils as governors
6. Are schools ready?
7. The *I was a Teenage Governor* project

## References

## Appendix 1

## Appendix 2



*'From an early age, pupils provide interesting insights into how their school is working for them, as recognised in OFSTED's Inspecting Schools: Framework for Inspecting Schools. Governing bodies, in discussion with the headteacher, staff and parents, could seek pupils' views and engage them in strategic decision-making. For example, they could invite pupils to meetings and committees as observers (excluding confidential items) giving them the opportunity to see how a governing body works and what kinds of issues are discussed. **From 1 September 2003 the governing body may also appoint pupils as 'associate members' allowing them to attend full governing body meetings and become members of governing body committees.'** (DfES 2003)*

Joe Hallgarten  
Tony Breslin  
Derry Hannam

March 2004



## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank all the representatives of the schools and LEAs that participated in the first Development Day in October 2003. A list is included in the appendix. We would also like to acknowledge the support of the DfES /Innovation Unit who funded the Development Stage, and of the BBC 21CC Learning Centre, who hosted the Development Day. The second stage of the project will be funded by Carnegie UK Trust and Creative Partnerships. Responsibility for this report, however, rests with the authors alone.

Joe Hallgarten, ippr (now Creative Partnerships)

Tony Breslin, Citizenship Foundation

Derry Hannam, Specialist Consultant in Pupil Participation

(Project Director, The Phoenix Education Trust until February 2004)

### *The Institute for Public Policy Research*

IPPR is Britain's leading progressive think tank. Its objective is to develop new routes to social justice through research and action that influences policy and practice. It works across a diversity of public policy areas but has a particular expertise and reputation in education policy. IPPR initiated the project, is its fund holder and brought the research partners together.

### *The Citizenship Foundation*

The Citizenship Foundation is an independent charity, which aims to empower individuals to engage in the wider community through education about the law, democracy and society. The breadth of experience it will bring to this project includes research into the effectiveness of School Councils, development work on the Learners' Voice forum for London Central LSC, broader support for young people's participation through its *Youth Act!* programme and a long-standing role in establishing Citizenship in the National Curriculum.

### *The Phoenix Education Trust*

The Phoenix Education Trust (PET) is a small national charitable organisation that aims to explore and support education in which children are trusted and respected and their participation in decision-making enabled and encouraged. Founded in 2001 by Lord Young of Dartington, the Trust works to highlight the importance of young people's active participation in decision-making that affects their everyday lives.



## 1. Introduction

This paper is the report of the first stage in the 'I was a teenage governor' project, organised by the Institute for Public Policy Research in partnership with the Citizenship Foundation and Derry Hannam - Specialist Consultant in Pupil Participation, and Project Director at the Phoenix Education Trust until February 2004. It is intended to be used as a practical tool for any school considering the appointment of its pupils as Associate Members of Governing Bodies. The aim is not to be evangelical or prescriptive about the possibilities of pupil governors. Our organisations believe that pupil associate members have potential as agents of change in the education system, but that, until the idea is rigorously tested, it is impossible to assert the merits of pupils governors with any confidence. As this report points out, appointing pupils as associate members of governing bodies without some deeper thought and actions relating to pupil democracy throughout the school could have a worse than tokenistic impact. In this sense, we support the Government's voluntarist approach: at this stage, schools should be free to decide whether Pupil Associate Members are appropriate for their needs.

Thirteen schools from eight LEAs have signed up to the pilot project, and these schools' pupils will serve as associate members on school governing bodies from September 2004. Between January and August 2004, the precise research, development and evaluation models will be created in partnership with the participating schools and LEAs

We also hope that the project can become a locus for all ideas and activities relating to pupil associate members. If you have strong views about these issues, if you are a school which is trialling associate governors, or if just would like to be kept informed about the progress of the project, please get in touch. A feedback form is provided in the appendix.

## 2 The political context

The emergence of both Citizenship in the National Curriculum and the concept of pupil governorship relate to a broader political context that has a number of elements. These may be summarised in terms of:

1. **A growing concern about the public's (and especially young people's) lack of engagement in the political process.** At the 2001 general election the percentage of those casting a vote across all ages was 59%, while the figure for 18-25's was only 35%. Local election turnouts are even lower for both groups. But this is not only about voting turnout rates, worrying in their decline as they are. It also relates to deeper concerns about the 'democratic deficit', that is a general concern about political participation in representative and parliamentary democracy. Thus, while we may have a growing interest (especially among the young) in single-issue politics, participation in this form of activity only emphasises the apparent crisis in traditional politics.
2. **A broader concern about social exclusion and all its manifestations.** Here, whether the issue is the exclusion of black and minority ethnic groups, a rise in the fear of crime, the regeneration of the inner city or rural poverty, the promotion of civic engagement and the renewal and of active and effective citizenship are evident strands across the policy agenda.
3. **A renewed discourse about decentralisation and calls for a 'new localism'.** This is not only the age-old argument about power shifts between national and local government. It also reflects an aspiration to follow the principles of subsidiarity – that power and decision-making should move to the smallest, most local level as possible. Schools through their governing bodies have, to some extent, adhered to this principle for years, and others are following, for example the proposed involvement of local stakeholders on the boards of foundation hospitals, the re-emergence of regional government and the emergence of learners' voice forums at college and LSC level.
4. **An emerging aspiration to see the public as active citizens in the 'co-production' of public services.** Co-production is a horrible word, but is a choice, not a fact. Co-production refers to the shift towards involving consumers in the delivery of their own public services, where those with a stake in a service (not only users) are intimately involved in defining, monitoring and shaping the outcomes of those services. Research is clear that this kind of active citizenship can bring a number of benefits to citizens. However, research on the impact of such participation on the quality of services is more ambiguous than policymakers might assume. The rise of Citizens Charters, aspects of PFI, the rise of 'consultation' and the involvement of consumer representatives on public bodies are all aspects of co-production. The question as to whether school pupils are part of a 'public' that is capable of 'co-producing' their schooling is central to this project. As 'active citizens' are they worthy of consideration as 'stakeholders' and 'users' of schools or is schooling still to be predominantly prescribed by constituent adults: parents,

teachers, governors and education officials? It might be argued that this point has to some extent been answered by the inclusion of pupils as stakeholders in the Education Act 2002 and in the Statutory Guidance for secondary governing bodies as potential associate members. However, pupils were not included in the list of school stakeholders in the original DfES consultation document on secondary school governance 'The Way Ahead' and ministers were to some extent 'nudged' into doing so by lobbyists including one of the co-authors of this report.

At the same time, there have been significant shifts in the ways in which education policy is being considered and formulated.

1. **Calls for reform to be 'bottom-up', initiated, led and spread by schools themselves, rather than government.** It is, in DfES-speak, an era of 'informed professional judgement (see figure 1). the DfES should take on an enabling role, to stimulate innovation, encourage subsidiarity within a framework of collaboration, and intervene only when there is clear evidence of systemic failure.
2. **The encouragement of innovation in the system.** New models of teaching and learning which encourage personalised learning and self-managed or self-directed learning, assessment with an emphasis on assessment-for-learning, risk-taking, pupil participation in decision making and the encouragement of pupil voice generally, and more. Phase 1 of this project is, in one sense, a result of this, part funded as it is by the DfES Innovation Unit.
3. **The encouragement of 'collaboration'.** As the DfES itself states, *'There is no doubt that collaboration is an essential part of the future of education. Now that so many of our schools are improving, specialising and transforming the quality of their leadership, it is necessary to ensure that these benefits are shared with other schools. Collaboration enables schools to share expertise, good practice and ideas for innovation, to provide support and opportunities for developing leadership across a number of schools, as well tackling issues of inclusion, and helping to narrow the achievement gap'* (DfES 2003). School-to school collaboration never disappeared, just as school-to-school competition has always existed: networks not only to share practice but to create it.
4. **Calls for 'Intelligent Accountability'.** This requires that public servants and service users have ownership of the success criteria by which they are judged. The new moves towards schools self evaluation embody this shift in thinking.

All of these issues are worthy of detailed discussion but space does not allow for here and, in any case, we want to move to the focus of this report itself: preparations for an era of student participation on governing bodies.

### 3. Pupil voice: here to grow?

The quest for young people to have a say about issues that affect them has always existed.

In more recent times, schools from Summerhill to William Tyndale have attempted radical experiments to give students control over their own learning and institutions. The centralising reforms of the 1980s and 1990s meant that many of these experiments stalled.

However, the last five years have seen a rapid growth in interest in 'pupil voice', both as a good in itself, and as a lever to raise achievement more generally. Significantly Summerhill was successful in defending its fundamental principles in its legal battle with Ofsted in 1999 and now has more pupils than ever before in its history; a sign of the prescriptive pendulum swinging perhaps. More broadly, the pupils' voice debate as emerged through various strands:

1. **The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.** The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that *'in all actions...the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration; and that the child has the right to express their views in all matters that affect them'*. These principles have only recently been incorporated into education legislation under the Education Act 2002, which requires LEAs and governing bodies to, with effect from September 2002, have regard to any guidance by the Secretary of State on consulting pupils when taking decisions that affect them.
2. **The introduction of Citizenship Education as a Foundation Subject of the National Curriculum at secondary level, and as part of a non-statutory (but already widespread) framework at primary level.** The commissioning of Bernard Crick's landmark report *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools* was one of the first acts of David Blunkett as Secretary of State for Education in 1997 and led to the introduction of Citizenship to the secondary National Curriculum in 2002. Critically, the curriculum is not a repetition of the 'old civics' but a flexible skills focused framework with its origins in three themes (social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy) and built around the need for pupils to develop skills of participation and responsible action.
3. **The growth of Schools' Councils.** A note of caution is required here. The Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (Kerr, et.al. 2003) reported that whilst 95% of heads were satisfied that the whole school was involved in discussion and decision making about school matters only 57% of teachers and 27% of students agreed. Studies through the 1990's that attempted to gauge the proportion of secondary schools in England having student councils (Fogelman 1991, Ashworth 1995, Alderson 1999, Baginsky and Hannam 1999) found the figure to be around 50%, with the number of councils regarded as being 'effective' by the student body to be around 20%. It would appear from the Longitudinal Study that the 'encouragement' or 'spur' of the Citizenship Order and the associated Ofsted Inspection guidelines has certainly had an effect on the number of



secondary head teachers/school leaders claiming to have school councils in their schools. The survey came up with the slightly astonishing figure of 94% in a randomly selected sample of 200 schools, though this is tempered by the fact that only 64 per cent of pupils felt that they had any opportunity to be involved in running their school through a school council, and only a third indicated that they had been involved in electing school council members. In fact the numbers indicating that they had had any degree of participation in decision-making proceedings in the last year are 9% for Year 8 and 11% for Year 10 (the survey does not make clear to what level this participation refers, i.e. whether it be participation in class discussion or representative year or school council meetings.) Our guesstimate would be that the 94% covers the widest possible spectrum from 'utterly tokenistic and constrained and regarded with sceptical and deserved indifference by most pupils, through 'early stages of planning – not yet had first meeting', through 'launched but struggling to fly', to 'well established and seen to be effective by most pupils, with the proportion at the latter end still at about 20-25% of the maximum.

4. **The emergence of “pupils-as-researchers” projects.** The last five years has also seen the emergence of “pupils-as-researchers” projects in a handful of LEA’s such as Bedfordshire. These have been found to be powerful agents for change in some recent studies such as the report for QCA written by Derry Hannam in conjunction with CSV on how school pupils could best express their views of the curriculum to government. (Hannam 2004)
5. **Other forms of pupil participation.** Additionally there are a number of well regarded and highly participatory programmes operating in significant numbers of schools organised by a range of NGO’s (such as the Active Citizens in Schools Programme and the Impetus Award Scheme), some of which are backed by large commercial companies (such as the Barclays New Futures programme which is administered by CSV).
6. **An emerging quest for evidence to demonstrate the link between student participation in decision-making and school achievement.** Evidence shows that participation in school democracy and decision-making and raising standards are, at the very least, compatible aims (Hannam, 2001). Scandinavian countries have long had a culture of pupil participation in education. Finland recently topped worldwide attainment tables in maths, mother tongue and science. It also has very high levels of pupil participation and pupil democracy. The Finnish have a very democratic school system, with 97% of pupils in comprehensive schools and pupils participating actively in the decision making framework of schools and at local, regional and national level through a highly effective, and well-regarded by government, national school pupils’ organisation (SLL – Suomen Lukioalaisten Liitto r.y.). This is the norm in Scandinavian countries where national secondary school pupils’ organisations are systematically and routinely consulted by policy makers.

In England, Derry Hannam’s research for the DfES demonstrated that pupil participation is associated with higher than average achievement supported by better than average

attendance and lower than average exclusions when compared with similar schools.<sup>1</sup> His work showed that schools with high levels of pupil participation, where everyone feels involved and valued, produced better GCSE results across the board when compared to schools in similar situations, especially for the less academic pupils. The associations identified in this study were fully supported by Ofsted's analysis of the numerical data. However, Hannam's study involved only twelve schools and did not attempt to identify causal pathways, though it would not be difficult to hypothesise what these might be. The next round of the NFER Citizenship Longitudinal Study will examine whether Hannam's findings are replicated on a larger scale if funding is available. Current research into the outcomes of more democratic schools and classrooms in the Norwegian Lower Secondary sector is being conducted by researchers at the University of Trondheim where similar associations have been found. These researchers plan to investigate causal pathways between variables such as democratic participation, pupil well-being (trivsel) and learning in mathematics, science and mother tongue. (Imsen, 2002)

This growth in pupil participation has been crystallised by the recent DfES Consultation on their guidance *Working Together: Giving Children and Young People A Say*. This paper, which will be finalised and sent out to schools in 2004 supported by its own website gives recommendations and outlines opportunities for all institutions.

This guidance has broadly been welcomed. Of course, there are calls for the guidance to go further. Should schools councils be statutory? Should pupils be consulted on decisions made at the LEA level? Should our education system have a national school pupils' organisation, similar to virtually every country in Europe? But the guidance, in itself, represents how far the debate has moved in recent years.

There are also, of course, dissenting voices. Some see pupil participation as a distraction from the core business of a school: teaching, learning and gaining qualifications. Others fear that 'pupil power' could serve to undermine teacher authority even further. However, although there is a time lag between the rhetoric demonstrated in the draft guidance and the policies and practices pursued by most schools, there can be little doubt that these are optimistic times for those enthusiastic about giving pupils a real say over what happens in their schools.

#### 4. Governing bodies: an uncertain future?

Although, with the exception of one teacher union, there are few organisations or individuals who have proposed the abolition of school governing bodies, much recent research has highlighted the structural and strategic difficulties of governing bodies, including:

- 1. Recruitment difficulties.** Statistics consistently reveal that recruitment difficulties to governing bodies, prevalent everywhere, are most marked in poorer areas and that those recruited are from a narrower or different social base from that served by the school.
- 2. Lack of power, especially amongst 'lay' governors.** *'...Governing schools has become an important arena for the exercise of citizenship. It is however an imperfect one because whilst there has been a redistribution in the balance from the 'bureau professionals' to the lay governors the latter have not gained power in any real sense let alone helped the communities that they are supposed to represent to gain power'* (Deem, et.al. 1995). *"...Even when lay governors have opinions they wish to express, it seems that they face great difficulty in making their 'voice' heard, let alone in having their views taken seriously'* (Whitty, et.al. 1998).
- 3. Difficulties of creating and maintaining a strategic function – 'steering, not rowing'.** *"...The governing body's 'steering' or strategic role is to agree aims, values and policies for the school and they note how it's about 'setting a course, deciding on a route, looking to the future for the school, thinking about what the school needs to achieve and plotting how to get from where it is now to where you would like it to be in the future'"* (Martin and Holt, 2002). In addition, governing bodies are being urged, in partnership with LEAs and other agencies, to take on more of a community leadership function (Allen and Phillip, 2003).
- 4. Difficulties in assessing and responding to the needs of service users.** Here, the common problem of encouraging greater participation in the annual meeting for parents is symptomatic of other measures of low parental and community engagement, epitomised in low turnout at parents' evenings. The fear is that pupil participation patterns will mirror that associated with parents and fracture along the same lines of class and ethnicity, contributing to (rather than challenging) social exclusion in the process.

Legislation from that leading to the introduction of Local Management of Schools (LMS) onwards has forced governing bodies to concentrate on their managerial role at the expense of genuine governance, the determining of a school's individual ethos. New responsibilities on governing bodies for target setting, performance management, as well as the increased financial delegation to schools, is leading them further to prioritise their allocative role over their authoritative role. The 1998 School Standards and Framework Act (S38.(2)) stated that *'the governing body shall conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of*

*educational achievement at the school'* but, as yet, there is no evidence that governing bodies have been liberated by this legislation. The overriding dilemma is that governing bodies are often least effective where they are most needed.

At the same time, however, research is clear that Governing bodies can and do make a positive contribution to school quality. DfES-commissioned research shows a clear association between effective schools and effective governing bodies (Scanlon, Earley and Evans, 1999).

Earley and Creesey (2003), in a recent report on the impact of school governance on school leadership, ask four questions pertinent to any discussion on governance:

- Is too much governor training currently focusing on the wrong things?
- Does more of it need to be centred on the whole governing body, including the head and other senior staff?
- Should governors lead schools or should they focus their efforts on ensuring they are effectively led?; and,
- Are the current responsibilities and expectations of governors simply unrealistic or too high? Is too much expected from a group of part-time (or, more correctly, occasional time) unpaid volunteers?

The new regulations, introduced through the 2002 Education Act, attempt to address some of these issues, giving governing bodies a more strategic remit and more flexible structure. The aim is to give governing bodies more flexibility over their constitution with a view to becoming more strategic in their approach. The regulations came into force on 1 March 2003. All governing bodies will have to choose and adopt a new model for the size and membership of their governing body by 31 August 2006. Clearly, this is a key opportunity to consider the involvement of pupils as Associate Members.

The changes in the regulations, including the pupil participation dimension, are described in box 1 overleaf.

The future existence of governing bodies does not seem in doubt, but their future remit is more open to question. What will the average governing body look like, discuss, and have genuine power over in ten years time? The answer to this question is dependent on the overall direction of education policy, rather than issues specific to governance but, either way, the involvement or non-involvement of pupils will have a significant impact.

## **Box 1: Pupils as associate members**

### ***The new regulations in outline***

1. The new framework for school governing bodies aims to:
  - Allow a more flexible modern approach to governing body membership, which will make it easier for governing bodies to influence the size and composition their school needs to meet its own individual circumstances;
  - Allow schools that wish to collaborate to have a range of options available;
  - Allow governing bodies to provide additional facilities and services;
  - Free governors from activities that are incidental to their primary strategic role.
2. All Governing Bodies must reconstitute themselves by September 2006. Associate members (including pupils) cannot be included on governing bodies until reconstitution has taken place.
3. Associate Members are seen as a means of adding to the capacity of governing bodies, and in particular committees, by adding specific expertise on certain issues to governing bodies.
4. From 1 September 2003 it has been possible for pupils and others to be appointed as associate members of school governing bodies. Associate members can attend full governing body meetings and be members of governing body committees. There are no plans to make it compulsory for governing bodies to make such appointments. The decision rests with each governing body.
5. Governing bodies can also involve pupils by inviting them to attend full meetings and committee meetings as observers. These new powers increase the scope for pupils to be involved in strategic decision-making, whilst respecting the corporate nature of governing bodies and the weight of legal responsibilities governing bodies have.
6. This is a change from former legislation, when pupils under 18 could not be appointed to governing body committees.
7. A governing body is a body corporate. This means that a governing body has a distinct legal identity, separate from individual governors, who can only exercise their powers by collective decision-making. A governing body can in its own name enter contracts, hire staff and manage the school budget. Persons under 18 are considered to lack the legal capacity required for corporate decision-making.
8. Persons under 18 are not eligible to be governors and cannot be given voting rights because they have not reached the age of majority which applies to corporate decision-making.
9. Associate members aged 18 or over, including pupils, can be given limited voting rights on committees. Associate members may not vote on any decision concerning admissions, pupil discipline, election or appointment of governors, or the budget and financial commitments of the governing body.

*DFES (2003) Statutory Guidance on the School Governance (Procedures) (England) Regulations 2003 London: DFES 0430/2003.*

## 5. Pupils as governors

Attempts to link governing bodies with pupils and pupil councils have a long history. Since the beginning of school governing bodies, a few schools have given pupils observer status at meetings, or provided time at meetings for pupils to raise issues. The 1977 Taylor Report recommended the statutory inclusion of parents and pupils on Governing Bodies. The 1980 Act required each school to have a governing body, with parental but not pupils' representation.

A recent Education Select Committee again recommended the inclusion of pupils. The DfES response was to reject the idea, although it conceded: *"We agree that governing bodies should establish arrangements which enable them to keep in touch with the views of pupils as well as their parents"*.

The new regulations described in section two may seem minor, but are significant. To sum up, from September 2003, pupils of any age can serve as associate members of their own or any other school governing body or committees, although pupils under the age of eighteen will not be given voting rights. In order to do this, a school governing body will need to reconstitute itself, as it is required to do, in any case, by September 2006.

From this point onwards, the trajectory of policy and practice is unpredictable. Schools could rapidly embrace this change, to the point where the inclusion of pupils on governing bodies, possibly with voting rights, will be as universal and welcomed as parent governors are today. Beyond this, it may become compulsory for pupils to be represented on governing bodies. Parent governors emerged in this way, first as a voluntary initiative in a few LEAs before becoming compulsory at a later point, with the numbers increasing with every reform of school governance. The likelihood that pupils will gain voting rights is likely to increase if the voting age is lowered to sixteen.

Alternatively, the initiative could become a damp squib. School governing bodies may go through the motions of reconstitution without considering the opportunities these changes could bring about. Other, more overriding concerns could marginalise pupil voice, and in particular, new, risky initiatives. Lack of time is a constant barrier to any profound change in schools. Or, more benignly, schools could consider the appointment of Pupil Associate Members, but decide that there are other, more effective ways of encouraging pupil participation in decision making, including the creation of less formal links with governing bodies.

The basic rationale for the *I was a Teenage Governor* project is that we will not know what the real potential of pupil associate members unless a group of schools is prepared to work together to trial the idea and share their experiences with as many other schools as possible.

### **The Potential of Pupils as Associate Members**

Without being evangelical about pupil governors, the project aims to test the following



hypotheses:

- That school governing bodies, for all their faults, still retain radical potential as spaces to change policies and practices in schools;
- That the arguments put forward to justify as to why pupils should not be on governing bodies (that they are too complicated, that they offer a demoralising version of democracy in action, that the issues are too sensitive) are the same as those that were advanced against the involvement of parent governors two decades ago and, as such, are false;
- That the involvement of pupils on governing bodies, school councils, pupils-as-researcher projects, community forums and interview panels could have a positive impact on the school's culture and ethos
- That there could be a positive impact on the learning of those individual pupils who become involved as governors or who participate in other ways;
- That the involvement of students at the summit of decision making within the school could both symbolically and practically add weight and status to the structure of pupil democracy in the school (such as school, year, house and class councils) thereby reducing the likelihood of this structure being dismissed as tokenistic by the majority of pupils;
- That the involvement of pupils in school decision-making is a positive way of underpinning the delivery of Citizenship as part of the National Curriculum, whether this be through contributing to Citizenship modules within a PSHE programme, a GCSE Short Course in Citizenship Studies, an ASDAN Youth Award programme or within, following Tomlinson's initial recommendations, a 14-19 Diploma framework;
- That the experience of participation in school governance will encourage pupils to go on to participate in the growing number of 'citizen governor' roles after they leave school thus fulfilling part of the wider and long-term goals of the Citizenship Curriculum. This could of course include becoming adult school governors;
- That the participation of pupils as governors could improve the quality of governing bodies and of school governance itself.

These hypotheses are deliberately ambitious; however, the project cannot and will not attempt to show a direct link between pupil governors and school achievement.

### **The Pitfalls of Associate Membership**

As with any innovation, there are potential pitfalls around initiating pupil governors. A basic 'risk assessment' of the idea reveals a number of concerns:

- Will participation in often-dull governing body meetings put pupils off democracy for life?
- How will confidential matters be dealt with?
- Will the 'usual suspects' (bright, normally middle class pupils) be involved to the (further) exclusion of other pupils?
- Could the Pupils as Associate Members initiative undermine some of the other emerging mechanisms for pupil voice, in particular schools councils?



- What will happen if demands from pupil governors can't or won't be met? In particular if they begin to actively participate in the 'accountability' function of the governing body could this create unmanageable tensions that may have adverse outcomes for the individual students concerned?
- Are established adult school governors ready to change the content and style of governing body reports and meetings to meet the needs of pupil members?
- Will pupil governors have unique training needs that will have to be met, either by the school or by the LEA?

It is the view of the project co-ordinators that the potential benefits outweigh the risks and pitfalls. Certainly, it is worth experimenting with, and thus exploring, the concept of pupil associate members. In this context it is our definite recommendation that *when it is reconstituting every school governing body, at the very least, should consider the options for appointing pupils as associate members.* The questions in Box 2 are designed to help any school towards making that decision.



## **Box 2: Pupils as governors**

### ***One school's experience***

Colne Community School in Essex has pupil participation and democracy as a central part of its ethos. The school council, for instance, has status throughout the school and its own budget. Pupils are involved in the appointment of senior staff and all teaching appointments

Pupils have engaged with the Governing Body for several years. Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils are elected onto governing body sub committees such as the curriculum committee and also have observer status on the full governing body. Pupils normally stay for the full meeting, and receive all relevant paperwork. Feedback goes through the school council and school assemblies. Pupils have had no specific training, but see involvement on the class, year and school councils as an excellent grounding.

Pupils involved in the governing body report that they have gained a sense of responsibility and an enhanced feeling that they are part of the school. Their involvement had given them a positive attitude towards their school and they had become appreciative of the work, time and effort that the teachers put in.

However, the experience does not only benefit the pupils involved but has a positive effect on the whole school. The involvement of pupils in decision-making is both fostered by and encourages a whole school ethos of participation in education and learning.

*'the presence of students on the governing body has made governors aware of the language that they use and highlighted the fact that not all governors may understand the jargon used'.*

The school is now considering formalising the role of pupils on the governing body through the appointment of Pupil Associate Members.

### **Box 3: Preparing pupils for associate membership**

#### ***Questions to consider***

1. What are the likely needs of those pupils who become Associate Members of Governing Bodies?
2. How might we best meet these needs?
3. How might we ensure that Associate Members remain 'connected' to and representative of the wider student body?
4. What are the likely needs of current Full Members of Governing Bodies that involve pupils as Associate Members?
5. How might we best meet these needs?
6. Are there any pitfalls of Associate Membership, for the young people or the wider governing body?
7. How do we respond to, or pre-empt, these pitfalls?
8. Are we content that any pitfalls are more than balanced by advantages for:
  - The Associate Members?
  - The wider Governing Body?
  - The wider pupil body?
  - The school community as a whole?

## 6. Are schools ready?

Schools need to consider how other forms of pupil participation can link in to governing body participation. Schools do not need a perfectly formed model of pupil democracy before they can consider establishing Pupil Associate Members. But at the same time, some foundations need to be in place; otherwise, the appointment of pupil governors is likely to be meaningless and tokenistic. In particular, it is unlikely that any school without a reasonably effective school council would be able to initiate Pupil Associate Members with any confidence that they could have a significant impact on a school's decision making, or could represent the views of their fellow pupils.

There is a clear option for schools to implement other links between its school council and school governing body, thus launching a discussion of alternative ways to link pupils and governors (Bird 2003). Possibilities include (Clay, Gold and Hannam, 2001):

- Assigning one governor to take responsibility for linking the governing body and the school council;
- Regular meetings between the school council and the whole governing body, or one committee;
- 'School council matters' included as a standing item on governing body agendas with a presentation of recent business by pupil councillors as a matter of course;
- 'Governor matters' included as a standing item on school council agendas;
- School council members being given observer status on governing body meetings.

Schools may wish to experiment and learn from these less formal links, before moving to the more formal mechanism of Pupil Associate Members. This may be an especially useful route for those schools whose governing bodies, or other stakeholders, may be sceptical of the concept of pupil governance. As Derry Hannam's study noted:

*The formal links between school councils and governing bodies seemed to be significant for raising the profile of several schools councils though interestingly the headteacher of School L, which had a very dynamic council engaged in a very wide range of school issues, said 'I wouldn't impose it on them!' when asked if they were represented at governors meetings. And it was the students he was protecting not the governors.*

For those who are already considering the appointment of pupil associate members, Boxes 4 and 5 are designed to help you in this decision.

#### **Box 4: Appointing Pupil Associate Members**

##### ***Ten steps to take before you make a decision***

1. Find out if and when your governing body is planning to reconstitute itself. Most LEAs have given schools advice about this. If it has already reconstituted, it will need to do so again before appointing Associate Members.
2. Find out if any other schools in your area are considering appointing Pupil Associate Members too. If so, consider whether you can work collaboratively – this could involve combined training or secondary school students serving on primary school governing bodies.
3. Consult with pupils, parents, and of course Governors about if and how your school should pursue this route.
4. Get a provisional 'permission to proceed' from your governing body – it will have the ultimate decision on whether to appoint associate members.

##### ***Before you start***

5. Consider and decide on the following issues:
  - The number of pupil associate members – there is no minimum or maximum number.
  - Whether associate members will serve on the full governing body, committees or both.
  - How associate members will be (s)elected.
  - How members will link with the school council.
  - The training and/or accreditation of pupil governors.
  - How existing governors will be informed and prepared.
6. Create a basic project plan, and if possible include the project in your school development plan and decide how you will evaluate the impact of what you are doing.
7. Inform your LEA's Governor Services and Citizenship/PHSE teams, who might be able to provide resources and training.
8. Decide whether it is worth finding funding for your activity.
9. Formally reconstitute the governing body, with an agreed allocation of pupil associate members.
10. Tell us!

## Box 5: Opportunities and Challenges

### ***Some quotes and thoughts from the Phase 1 Project Development Day***

As noted earlier a group of early potential project partners took part in a Development Day on 13 October 2003. Participants in the day raised the following observations and questions:

- *The inclusion of pupils may help governing bodies to explain their message and role more clearly, increasing transparency and opportunities for involvement.*
- *Pupils and governors can access the same training opportunities – pupils will not need much bespoke support.*
- *Every pupil governor should have a ‘buddy’ on the governing body.*
- *The ability of pupils to understand detailed issues is often underestimated. In our school pupils are involved in the decision making at all levels, including complex issues such as a PFI bid. They’ve been the only ones able to scare the contractors and provoke a response.*
- *How might Governing Body representation link to other decision-making processes in the school and Authority?*
- *How will students deal with the sometime tedious nature of governor’s meetings?*
- *The (BTEC) accreditation scheme is a good idea. It is a great shame that much of what students put into school goes unrecognised.*
- *New governors have the same problems of learning and training as a pupil governor would. They should be inducted as new governors not as pupil governors.*
- *They should have access to LEA governor services, national governor services and buddying schemes with other governors.*
- *The corporate responsibility of a governing body is a full governing body level not at sub committee level, there is no reason why pupils should not vote at sub committee level.*
- *There needs to be an LEA commitment. The outcomes of the project should influence governor support and training.*
- *The project should build on the responsibilities of specialist schools to collaborate with primary schools.*
- *The ethos of the governing body is as important as the ethos of the school. The invitation of pupils to join the governing body as the proposal for Associate Members has to come from the governing body.*
- *The project needs to make presentations to governors groups and heads. There also needs to be the involvement of LEA governor services and use these to make sure that resources are available for the pupils and for the whole governing body.*
- *The project should link into PSHE and the notion of citizenship and participation in society. It will reduce the rarefied nature and language of governance. It may be possible that these changes will enable the Governing Body to reach out to parents and increase the involvement of parents in the school.*
- *The project should also look at the inclusion of primary school pupils on Governing Bodies. Primary school pupils are much more willing to speak - maybe this is because they have a closer relationship with their teachers or have not yet built up inhibitions. The inclusion of primary pupils has a knock on effect for secondary schools, pupils will start secondary school with an expectation of participation, a greater understanding and willingness to participate.*
- *Students need to become involved in the decision making / planning of the project as soon as possible.*
- *The initial survey of schools should look at where schools are “down the route to pupil participation, so later the different practices can be assessed and best practice can be identified. However, we must be mindful of the fact that there are many routes to pupil participation without definite milestones which all schools need to pass.*
- *The greater the diversity in the approaches to the project the greater the information about the best way to proceed with the project and identify best practice.*
- *The project needs to include an element of evolution. For example the students may identify a different set of needs and challenges than those identified today. The project needs to be able to cope with this.*

## **7. The *I was a Teenage Governor* Project**

Schools will collaborate to involve pupils in governance and assess its impact on the governing body and the wider school community as well as the pupils involved. The aim is to evaluate associate governorship as a pupil participation strategy and notably its effect on school decision making by comparison with other approaches, for instance: membership of school councils or community forums or through involvement in staff interview panels.

The principle of collaboration lies at the heart of the project. All schools can and many schools will appoint associate members unilaterally. But those schools who are participating in this project are committed to sharing resources and experiences. As well as reducing time demands and workload, if managed well, collective responsibility should lead to a collective accountability to making the project work.

The draft development plan for the project is presented below.

### **Draft Project Plan**

#### **1. Development and Planning**

**August - December 2003**

This phase has included the following activities:

- Background research on issues relating to governance and pupil voice in schools;
- A development day on October 13 2003 for interested schools, to begin the creation of a research, development and evaluation model;
- Follow-up contact with interested schools;
- The writing of a full proposal, and fundraising for Phases 3 and 4 of the project.
- The identification of participating schools, who have expressed their commitment in writing; each school governing body has agreed, in principle to appoint pupils as associate members;
- Funding has been secured for Phase 2;
- This report has been written.

#### **2. Preparation and Induction**

**January - August 2004**

Phase 2 will involve the following activities:

- Local research into schools' needs and history of pupil participation;
- Participating schools and LEAs, with support from the project team, will detail their approach to associate pupil governorship in action plans;
- Developing frameworks for choosing pupil governors in each school;
- Planning, design and delivery of training within local LEA clusters for young people interested in become associated governors;



- Pupil governors will be elected (or otherwise selected);
- Planning, design and delivery of induction programme for new pupil governors and existing adult governors within an LEA cluster;
- Development of an independent evaluation framework by an external consultant;
- Writing a short report to disseminate the experiences of Phase 2.

The intended outcomes of Phase 2 are:

- The project will form part of each schools SDP for 2004-2006
- Models for the selection/election of pupil governors;
- Young people in up to 5 LEAs, trained in the procedure and skills of pupil governorship;
- A cohort of pupil governors, (s)elected and inducted to take on their responsibilities from September 2004;
- Evaluation Framework in place;
- Publication of *Getting Ready for Pupil Governorship* on the IPPR and Citizenship Foundation websites.
- Funding secured for Phases 3-4 of the project;

### **3. Research and Support**

**September 2004 - July 2006**

During this Phase, the project will work intensively in each participating school for two years, and be evaluated at national and school levels both through self-evaluation and external evaluation. Participating schools will be given opportunities to network and share practices and to work with each other and with members of the Advisory Group. It is envisaged that a residential weekend in the summer term of 2005 will bring the pupils and adults involved in the project together to share their experiences.

Project findings will be disseminated throughout the course of the two years. An interim project report (*Pupil Governorship: initial experiences and early lessons*) will be web published in August 2005. The final report (*Making pupil governorship work*) will also be web published and, if sufficient additional funding, a commercial publisher or a statutory channel (such as the DfES) can be identified, in book form. This will initiate the final stage of the project in August 2005.

### **4. Evaluation and Dissemination**

**August – December 2006**

The existence of a legal provision for associate governorship demands the need for advice to schools on best practice and a comparative analysis with other modes of pupil participation *and of the extent to which they become successfully integrated with them.*

In this context, the final phase of the project will involve:

- Review by the Advisory Group of ongoing evaluative feedback from the participating



schools;

- An independent evaluation report by the external contractor who undertook the evaluation in schools during Phase 3;
- The web publication of *Making pupil governorship work* and, as noted above, possibly in print;
- A dissemination conference that assesses and shares the experience of the project participants and facilitates comparative analysis with other modes of pupil participation.

## References

Alderson, P. (1999) *Civil Rights in Schools; Briefing Paper 1 of the ESRC Children 5-16 Research Programme*. Hull: The University of Hull

Allen and Phillip, (2003) *Governing Education for Community Regeneration* can be ordered at [network@nlgn.org.uk](mailto:network@nlgn.org.uk) London: NLGN

Baginsky, M., and Hannam, D.H., (1999) *Report on School Councils in England*. London: NSPCC

Bird, S (2003) *Do the Right Thing: How governors can contribute to community cohesion and accountability* London: DfES/The Education Network

Clay, D., Gold, J., and Hannam, D.H. (2001) *Secondary School Councils Toolkit; Students and Teachers Working Together*. London: Schools Councils U.K.

Deem, R., Brehony, K., & Heath S. (1995) *Active Citizenship and the Governing of Schools*. Buckingham: Oxford University Press

DfES (2003) *Federations Guidance* on DfES web site

Earley and Creasey (2003) Leaders or followers? Governing bodies and their role in school leadership in *Educational Management and Administration*, 2003 Vol 31, No 4, pp353-368. October 2003

Hannam, D.H. (2001) *A Pilot Study to Evaluate the Impact of the Student Participation Aspects of the Citizenship Order on Standards of Education in Secondary Schools*. London :CSV - online at [www.csv.org.uk/csv/hannamreport.pdf](http://www.csv.org.uk/csv/hannamreport.pdf)

Hannam, D.H. (2004) *'We could be interviewed by an alien so long as they LISTENED!' Students' Views On How To Express Their Perceptions Of The Curriculum To Government*. QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority): London – online at [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)

Hannam, D.H. (2004) *Student Councils and Education for Democracy in English Secondary Schools*. In *'Beyond The Classroom'* Eds. Linsley, B., and Rayment, E. London: New Politics Network

Imsen, G (2002) 'Some preliminary results about students' participation at school level and classroom level.' *Unpublished paper written privately for Derry Hannam. Based on data collected by the University of Trondheim for the Evaluation of EVA97 in*





*Norwegian Lower Secondary Schools.*

Kerr, D., Cleaver, E., Ireland, E. and Blenkinsop, S. (2003) *Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study: First Cross-Sectional Survey 2001-2002*. London: DfES.

Martin, J and Holt, A (2002:17) *Joined-up Governance: Making sense of the role of the school governor*, Ely: Adamson Books.

Scanlon, Earley, P., and Evans, J. (1999) *Improving the Effectiveness of Governing Bodies*. DfES Research Brief No. 111. London: DfES

Whitty, G, Power, S and Halpin, D (1998) *Active Citizenship and the Governing of Schools. Devolution and Choice in Education: The School, the State and the Market*, Buckingham: OU Press.

Appendix 1: Opinion Article from Times Educational Supplement, September 5, 2003

Platform



There's a revolution taking place unnoticed, write Joe Hallgarten (left) and Tony Breslin

# Power to the pupils



**A**mong the plethora of new initiatives that are currently establishing themselves in classrooms, one has been largely missed by the educational press, local education authorities and schools themselves: the newly announced regulations about the role of pupils on governing bodies.

From this month, governors will be able to appoint under-18-year-olds as associate members. These pupils can attend meetings and be members of governing body committees, although they will not have voting rights.

Some schools already involve pupils as observers at governors' meetings and others allow a more active role. The significance of associate governorship is that, for the first time, this kind of participation is backed by law.

No longer the wacky initiative of a handful of schools (or even a larger number of schools on a handful of occasions), we believe that pupil governorship will rapidly become a feature of the mainstream. By the end of this decade, having pupils as governors (possibly with voting rights) won't just be a common feature, it

will seem strange that they were never at the table in the first place. But why should pupils be interested in this and why should schools embrace such a change?

For those pupils who become governors, it will be an opportunity for applied, active citizenship, which might be accredited through a GCSE short course in citizenship studies, a certificate in community volunteering or a BTec award in school governance.

More importantly, it will enable pupils to increase their influence over the real business of the school. Rather than simply voicing the usual concerns about toilets, tattoos and tuck shops, as is the narrow remit of some school councils, pupil associate governors are as likely to be interested in the other three Ts: tests, targets and tables – representing the genuine voice of the learner and contributing to real debates about the curriculum and education. Moreover, the structures through which these pupils will be selected and through which they will represent and provide feedback to their peers, offer learning opportunities for all pupils.

And this learning translates into achievement. Derry Hannam's research on pupil participation reveals a strong correlation between schools, of whatever

type or circumstance, that encourage pupil participation, and pupil achievement, both in terms of formal examination success and with regard to a range of other factors.

Hannam's "participative" schools recorded not just more A's and A-C grades but also had fewer exclusions and pupils leaving with no or very low levels of examination success. Put simply, a governing body and school that does more to engage its pupils is more likely to meet those pupils' needs. And, in doing so, governing bodies might evolve into livelier places than they have sometimes become.

Of course, some will argue that pupil participation is better encouraged through other channels: through school councils with real teeth (and real budgets); through the development of a national school students' association as is commonplace in Europe; through involving pupils on job interview panels, as is

the case in the Connexions Service, and a small number of schools (all of whom report positively on the experience).

Associate governorship is not the only or even the best mechanism for giving expression to the learners' voice. But it does represent a symbolic shift in how secondary schools are expected to engage with their pupils and their broader community, just as other public and educational bodies are increasingly called to.

The fact that only 3 per cent of people serving on public bodies are under the age of 35 reveals the scale of the task. Perhaps the involvement of pupils can provide an induction into this type of civic engagement, as important an aspect of active citizenship as participating in a community group or voting in elections.

Twenty years from now, the sorts of argument that might be advanced against the participation of pupils on governing bodies (which usually allege a

fatal combination of high boredom and low expertise) will seem as bizarre as the arguments 20 years ago against the introduction of parent governors, now a permanent fixture.

Later this term, the Institute for Public Policy Research and the Citizenship Foundation plan to bring together a set of committed schools that are keen to test out associate governorship.

The big changes often go unnoticed. Cast an eye away from the annual standards panic. Whatever you consider its merits, we think the formal arrival of the pupil governor is one change to watch.

Tony Breslin is chief executive of the Citizenship Foundation [www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk](http://www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk)  
 Joe Hallgarten is a senior education researcher at the Institute of Public Policy Research, [www.ippr.org](http://www.ippr.org)  
 contact: [j.hallgarten@ippr.org](mailto:j.hallgarten@ippr.org)



**Appendix 2: Feedback and Contact**

***I Was a Teenage Governor* Feedback and 'Keep in Touch' form**

**Name:**

<b>Job Title:</b>	<b>Organisation:</b>
-------------------	----------------------

**Address**

<b>Email:</b>	<b>Phone Number:</b>
---------------	----------------------

**My school is interested in appointing pupil associate governors**

**My organisation is interested in supporting schools to appoint pupil Associate Members**

**Please keep me updated the project's progress**   
*(NB Your details will not be passed on to any other organisation)*

Please use the space below to tell us:

- What you think of the idea of pupil associate members of governing bodies
- What you think of the project and this report
- What you think the key issues are for the project
- Whether your school or organisation is doing anything the project should know about? For instance, are you already creating links between pupils and governors? Are you involved in other activities to give children and young people a say?


Please continue on a separate page if you wish

Please return to [z.khor@ippr.org.uk](mailto:z.khor@ippr.org.uk) tel. 020 7470 6111

or send to Zoe Khor, I Was a Teenage Governor Project, IPPR, 30-32 Southampton Street,



London WC2E 7RA