

‘Becoming a Peace School’

Learners as Young Peacemakers

The importance of Consulting with and Involving Learners
& Ideas for running a Consultation Session

April, 2021



You now have a good idea of what it means to be a Peace School. You have designed and run a baseline questionnaire so that you can assess where your school is at the moment in terms of ethos, learning and promoting and embedding knowledge and understanding about peace, as well as important skills, attitudes and behaviours. You have run a training session with staff, so that they too are aware of what it means to be a peace school and what it involves. Before proceeding any further, it's vital that learners themselves are consulted and involved in what your scheme will look like, how it will work and what it aims to achieve.

Why involve learners?

There are several reasons why it's important to consult with and involve learners in developing your Peace Schools Scheme. Some of these are listed below:

- **It is learners themselves who are most directly affected by how your school community is day by day on the ground.** Learners will know, for instance, whether the school feels a friendly place, whether certain people or groups are excluded, and if and where bullying happens. Consulting with groups of learners is therefore important in building up your baseline picture of how your school is now. Learners may also have ideas as to what knowledge and skills they would like to gain through peace education.
- **It's important for learners to understand what you're aiming to do by setting up your scheme, and to be able to feed into it.** This means understanding what it would really mean for them for their school to be a peace school – and how it would impact on their lives in terms of the school environment, people's behaviours and attitudes and what they learn and do in school. How might the playground feel different, for instance? How might people behave differently towards one another in the classroom? Might there be opportunities to learn about inspiring people and to be part of projects that make a difference for others?
- **Learners may have ideas of what a Peace School would look like that adults haven't even thought about.** It's important to integrate learners' ideas and priorities into your scheme, whilst also being clear that not all ideas may be possible (e.g. because of cost or practicalities)
- **If learners are consulted and involved in your scheme, they will act as essential allies in moving it forward and be catalysts to inspire and involve their fellow learners** – e.g. by developing projects that support others and make a difference.



- **The right for children to be listened to and to have their views taken into account is enshrined in international law** in Article 12 of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)¹. Indeed, Participation in terms of children and young people being active contributors to society as citizens in the here and now rather than just passive receivers, is one of the [3 core principles of the Convention](#)². Some countries (including Wales) have enshrined the UNCRC into domestic legislation and appointed Children's Commissioners to ensure that the needs of young people are taken into account and that they are actively informed, consulted and involved in policy-making and implementation. In Wales we also have [Participation Standards](#)³, setting out good practice around how to inform and involve children and young people when making decisions. These standards are:

1. **Information** – children and young people need to be able to understand what it is they are being consulted about and how it can make a difference to their lives
2. **It's your choice** – young people should have a choice whether or not they want to be involved in a consultation exercise
3. **No discrimination** – all young people should be able to give their views, irrespective of their background or any disabilities
4. **Respect** – young people need to be confident that they will be listened to and their opinions taken seriously
5. **You get something out of it** – young people will get something out of being consulted – e.g. it'll be an enjoyable experience and they may gain new skills and opportunities
6. **Feedback** – it's important that young people get to know how their opinion has made a difference – e.g. what ideas were adopted as a result? How has it made a difference?
7. **Working better for you** – young people feel that the service / project / community is working better for them as a result of their views being taken on board.

Some examples of outcomes achieved by consulting and involving learners in the development and implementation of peace schools can be found on the WCIA website [here](#) (Ysgol Dyffryn Aman, Ammanford) and [here](#) (Cyfarthfa High School, Merthyr).

¹ See UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in child-friendly language – UNICEF: [uncrcchildfriendlylanguage-page-001-1.jpg \(2206x3536\) \(crcasia.org\)](#)

² Introduction to the UNCRC in child-friendly language, including the principles on which it is based: [1 UNCRC Rights En \(1\).pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

³ National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales: [Bilingual-Participation-Standards-poster2016.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

Initial Consultation with Learners:

It's important to consult with learners on your scheme before it's too far developed – ideally before any real activity has started. Doing so will enable you to incorporate into your scheme young people's vision and ideas for what a peace school could look like, and how it can work in practice.

An initial consultation could involve a representative group of learners – e.g. from your school council – but it should include learners from different ages and stages. You may wish to undertake a wider consultation - for instance with different year groups. A plan for a possible initial consultation session is given below, and accompanying resources are included at the end of this pack.

Consulting on your Peace Schools Scheme – Session Plan

Title	Description	Time needed	Resources
'Hot seating' - introducing the scheme	A member of staff introduces the idea of becoming a Peace School and learners ask questions so that they understand the concept.	5 mins	None – though the member of staff could sit in a 'hot seat'
Visualising – what will your Scheme look like?	Learners are asked to draw what they think a peace school would look like: e.g. how would the playground be different? How would people relate to one another and what would they learn?	15 mins	Flipchart and pens
Exploring what elements are important to learners	Learners are divided into 3 groups, with one looking at ethos, one looking at learning and one looking at projects and opportunities. They are given a set of cards and prioritise these according to importance.	15 mins	Diamond Ranking cards
How can we make it happen? (project planning)	In groups learners think what being a peace school could help to achieve. Two models are given to support this process – the Tree model and Balloon planning .	15 mins	Tree or Balloon planning templates
How would you like to be involved and what will happen next?	Finish with a Brainstorm where learners contribute their ideas as to how they would like to be involved. Remember to let them know what will happen next and how their views will be taken into account.	10mins	Flipchart and pens

Involving Learners – longer-term:

The initial consultation is really important so that young people understand what being a peace school means and how it will impact on their lives and learning. It also ensures that learners' experiences and ideas are incorporated into your scheme.

Following on from the consultation it's important to ensure that learners:

- Know that their views have been taken into account and what will happen as a result.
- Continue to have opportunities to be informed and involved – e.g. through school assemblies, class discussions, class and school councils, or by the formation of a 'Young Peacemakers / Peace Ambassadors' group
- Can learn about people and issues that are important to them in fun and interactive ways – e.g. through researching issues, making films and animations, through discussions and debates on controversial questions and events....
- Have opportunities, through the scheme, to be involved in a variety of activities – e.g. supporting one another and people in the community, peer learning, organising campaigns, creative projects (art, music, technology), making international connections....
- Are able to give feedback as to how things have gone and give their ideas about how things can be further developed – on an ongoing basis.

Some examples:

- ❖ Year 9 pupils in Ysgol Dyffryn Aman created a '**Kindness Project**' where they ran a range of activities to support people in their community. In history they looked at **the conflict in Syria** and discussed whether the bombing campaign by some Western countries was likely to make the situation worse or better.
- ❖ In Ysgol Acrefair in North Wales, Year 6 pupils wanted to learn more about **Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)**. They learnt how people survived on rations in WWII, then looked at how children in the Yemen are starving today and raised awareness of that. They went to their local Food Bank and learnt about poverty in their own community.
- ❖ Pupils from Cyfarthfa High School in Merthyr, South Wales, became really involved in **local and national democracy**, including their local Youth Council. They learnt about women in their area who campaigned for women's rights, about **Conscientious Objectors** and how they have suffered, and about how Wales has welcomed **refugees**.



Suggested Exercises for running a Consultation Session

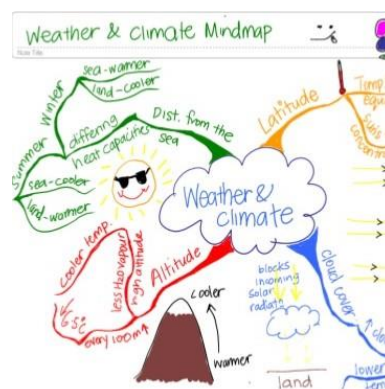
'Hot Seating'

This is a technique that's often used in drama, but it can also be used as a fun way of supporting learners in asking questions about a particular topic. The object of this exercise is for pupils to 'quiz' a teacher about what the peace schools' scheme is and how it will work? The teacher sits at the front in the 'hot seat' and learners take turns to ask questions they'd like to know the answer to. These could include:

1. What does it mean to be a peace school?
2. Who will be involved?
3. How will it work in practice?
4. How will it affect me / us?
5. Will it affect what we learn in lessons? etc.....

Visualisation or 'Rich Picture'

This is a way of supporting learners to get down their thoughts and ideas about a particular topic on a large piece of paper (e.g. flipchart paper) in pictures, symbols and words. This can be a simple process, involving just paper and pens / crayons, but you could also involve collage materials and printed matter to make a more artistic representation. The result is a "rich picture" (or "mind map") of a given situation or topic which can be shared just in the group – or wider, to support the planning process.



The aim in this instance is to encourage learners to imagine how their school would be different if it were a peace school. Split learners into groups of 5 – 6, and give each group a large sheet of paper and pens, art materials, etc. Ask them to imagine that their school is a peace school. What would it look like? e.g.

1. How might the outside of the school look different (e.g. would it be better cared for? Might there be flowers, a peace garden, etc)?
2. How might relationships during playtime / recreation look different? How will pupils / teachers be acting towards one another / talking to one another?
3. What are 'problem areas' in the school now? How might those be different?
4. How might lessons be different – e.g. in terms of sharing ideas, working together and what you might learn?
5. What projects / opportunities might learners be involved in – e.g. in their local community or on national or global issues of importance?

You could also ask half the class to portray the school as it is now, and half as it might be if it were a peace school. This may also help to flag up areas which learners see as problematic currently (e.g. bullying, areas of the school they don't feel safe in, ways of learning they don't find helpful....)

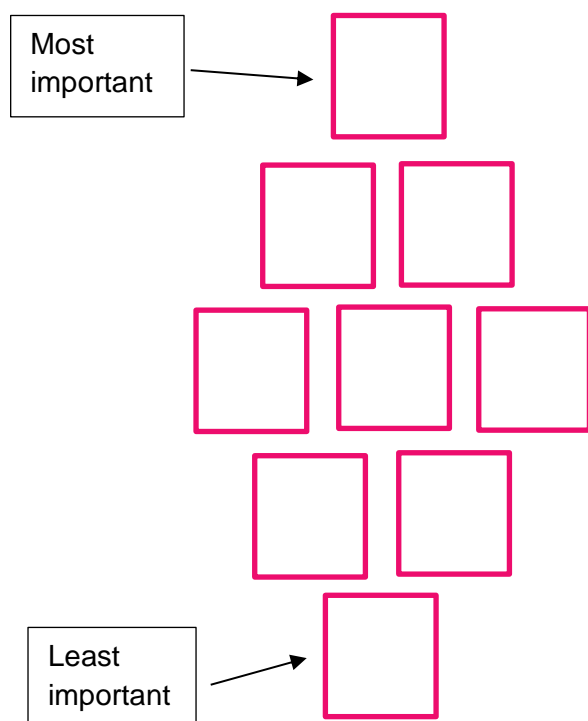
Ask the groups to present their rich pictures to one another, describing the key elements of a peace school for them and how things might be different. It may also be useful for the group planning your Peace School initiative to use these rich pictures as a source of information and ideas for what needs to be focused on in the scheme.

Diamond Ranking.

This exercise is a way of finding out what issues are important to people, and how they would prioritise them. Start off by saying to your group of learners that, as you see things at the moment, the Peace Schools' Scheme will focus on 3 main elements:

- ❖ **Ethos** – how the school community feels for those who are part of it; how people treat one another and relate to one another
- ❖ **Learning** – what is taught in school in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes and how things are taught
- ❖ **Learner Voice** – how learners are consulted and involved in decision-making and opportunities for learners to develop ideas and projects.

Are there other headings that need to be discussed, or can everything be fitted under these three headings? (You may want to have a blank set of Diamond Ranking cards, just in case!)



Now divide the group into 3, each with one of the above headings (or 4, if the pupils have suggested an extra one!)

Give each a group a set of cards with suggestions as to what could be included under that heading in your scheme, and some blank cards. (See examples on next page).

Their task is to discuss in their group and to come to a group agreement as to which element is the most important, what comes next, etc – down to elements that are less important. Stress the importance of everyone being involved in this discussion and that all points of view be taken into account before the group decides where to place a given card. The exercise should also be a method to encourage cooperative decision-making.

Once the groups have finished their prioritising, you could ask them to present the results to one another, including some of the points they discussed, and why they placed the cards where they did – including any extra ones they added in.

Ethos – Suggested Cards for Ranking:



Develop a school peace emblem and motto	Effective anti-bullying policy in place	Decide on rules for peaceful behaviours	Celebrate key peace / human rights dates in calendar	Hold regular peace assemblies	Develop a peer buddy or support scheme
Develop a peer mediation scheme	Develop restorative approaches when things to wrong	Play music in the corridors	Make the school more attractive		

Learning - Suggested Cards for Ranking:



Learn about 'peace heroes' – past and present	Learn about current conflict situations	Learn about global issues such as climate change	Learn how to think critically and see things from different perspectives	Learn skills for problem solving	Learn skills for relationship-building and conflict resolution
Understand prejudice and stereotypes and how to overcome them	Learn about links between peace, justice and sustainability	Develop practical projects about current issues	Creative learning – using art, film and technology		

Pupil Voice – Suggested Cards for Ranking:



Learn about The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	Learners consulted and involved in decision-making	There is a range of groups that learners can get involved in	Set up a Young Peacemakers or Peace Ambassadors group	Learners choose whether or not they want to be involved	Learners involved in pupil-led projects
Opportunities to talk to decision-makers – e.g. politicians	Peer buddy or peer support scheme	Peer mediation service	Learners involved in public events, conferences, etc		

What do we need to create a Peace School and How do we make it Happen?

Two activities are suggested below which address the above questions – the **Tree Model** and **Hot Air Balloon Planning**.

The Tree Model:

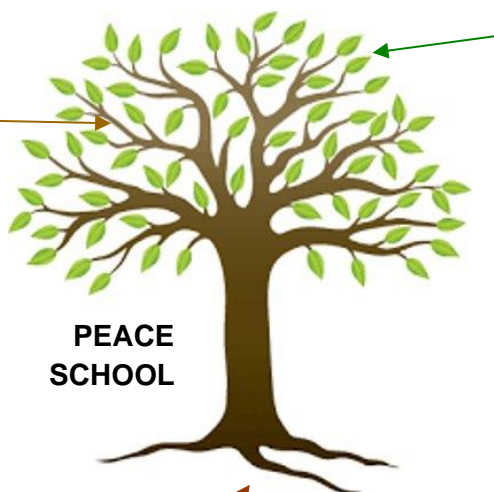
This is a way of supporting learners in thinking what's needed:

- At the **roots of the tree** – in terms of behaviours, relationships and attitudes
- In terms of **branches** – in terms of structures and people to support the development of the school as a peace school. Many of these may be in place already.

The **leaves and fruit** are the outcomes – the projects and opportunities which will come from being a Peace School (including learners' ideas of things they'd like to be involved in.) **An example** is given below from a consultation with a Primary School in Swansea. It is evident from the learners' input that the school already has a number of things in place – e.g. a peace rainbow and Ronnie, their school logo, representing the rainbow; Golden Rules reinforcing respectful behaviours; and a number of pupil committees on different issues.

Branches:

- The peace rainbow & Ronnie
- Miss Webb teaches us about other religions, and we celebrate different festivals (Eid, Christmas and Diwali)
- Having a Golden Rule, and making everyone think and understand it
- Committees – e.g. PPG (pupil participation group), Eco-committee, School Council, prefects, Ambassadors, worry box, Rights Respecting Group, etc
- Head and Deputies
- Staff; teaching Assistants
- Have understanding for everyone – children, parents, RWI, etc
- Suggestion box: children make suggestions to make sure every child gets heard
- A colourful environment to join everyone together
- Teamwork
- Government
- Our Lord Mayor



PEACE
SCHOOL

Roots:

- Being listened to!
- Giving respect – good relations
- Doing good and respecting others, giving honestly and working together
- Teamwork
- Working with other people and treating others equally
- Honesty, tolerance and good teamwork
- Collaboration
- Good relationships
- Tolerance and respect
- Treating people with kindness
- Honesty

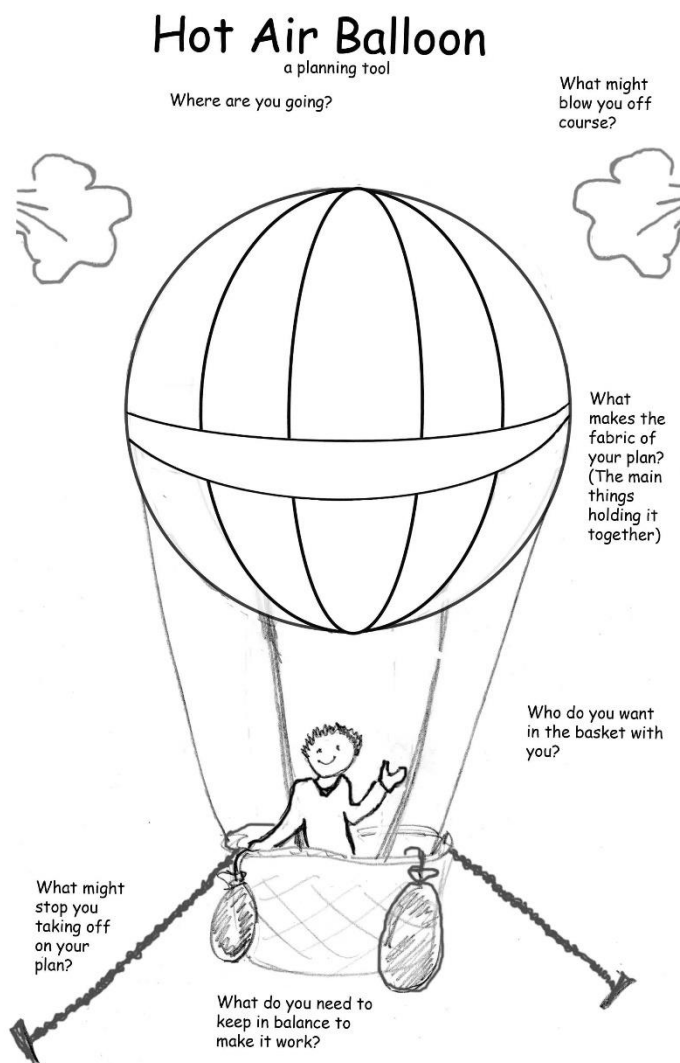
Leaves and Fruit:

- Poster campaign
- Make a peace song
- Go on a march (school have already done this!)
- Digital heritage projects
- Do a play and blogs
- Website – section about peace
- Make a speech > put it on the internet
- Create a diary / tweets
- Create a mural, painting or scroll
- Peace assemblies to share with other schools
- Presentation to share with other schools
- Using the internet: letters, postcards, news
- Encourage other schools to become peace schools

Balloon Planning:

This is a useful model which can be used with learners to think about a project they would like to get involved in. Using the model below, divide the group into smaller groups of 5 – 6 learners, then give each group a large piece of flipchart paper, and ask them to draw a hot-air balloon on it. Using the elements of the balloon, ask the groups to discuss the following questions:

- **Basket** – who do you need on board for your school to develop as a peace school?
- **Pegs** – what might stop the project taking off?
- **Ballast** – what do you need to keep the project in balance and make it work?
- **The sky** – where are you going / what are your aims?
- **The balloon itself** – what are the main things holding your plan together? This could be the main elements of the plan, also the resources you need in terms of people, time and possible materials....
- **The wind** – what might blow you off course?



When learners have finished their balloons, they can share their thoughts. These should also be used by teachers, senior managers, etc as they plan the way ahead for your peace school.

Final Brainstorm:

You may wish to finish off your consultation session by asking learners how they would like to be involved in developing your school as a Peace School. This can be done as a simple brainstorm, or by using post-its to group ideas. Remember to thank them for their input and let them know what will happen as a result of the consultation.