Activity 2 – Pupil Voice

Extract from criteria

C3: Children enjoy their science experiences in school

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<td>When questioned, children in the science subject leader’s class talk with enthusiasm about their current and past school science activities.</td>
<td>A high percentage of children across the school make positive and enthusiastic comments about science activities in school.</td>
<td>Scientific activities are identified by pupils as something they enjoy and remember the most. Many express positive comments, attitudes and values. Children’s opinions are valued and responded to.</td>
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Further criteria that this task may help to evidence: A5; C1; D1; D2, as well as provide a starting point for your self-assessment and an impact of your actions at the end of the year.

The children may help you to identify issues or successes in areas which should be addressed in your action plan, we suggest that you carry out this task early on in your PSQM year, and carry out follow up interviews 6-9 months later to evidence progress and impact of your actions.

It may seem easier, fairer and less time consuming to undertake this activity as a whole school survey, but you are encouraged to undertake it face to face, with as many pupils as time will permit, at least two from each class.

The most important part of any of this activity is to show that the voices have been listened to. You may decide that it is inappropriate/ not relevant to implement some of their ideas but try to explain why.

You will need to compile a short list of questions that you wish to ask of the children. For example
1) How often do you have a science lesson?
2) What is science/scientist?
3) What do you like about science?
4) How could your teacher/School improve science?
5) What’s been your favourite part of science this year?
6) Do you work on your own or in groups in science?
7) Any other comments:
8) What do you think you will do next in science?
9) What do you find hardest in science lessons?
10) Is there anything about science that you do not like?
Suggestions for conducting interview:

- Invite two or three children from a class to join you for 20-30 minutes.
- Have your list of questions to hand, but do not expect to be able to note down everything that is said. Set time aside as soon as interview is over to make any notes.
- Prepare a couple of interesting/ short/ quick demonstrations/ hands on experiments that you can engage the children with, so that the session does not come across as a Q&A time.
- Let children know that the reason for talking with them is to find out what they think of science at the school. Engage them in one of the prepared activities, and start talking with them about the activity and gradually intersperse the questions you wish to explore about their science experiences.
- Remember to thank them for their time. A useful strategy is to give them a piece of equipment or activity they can take back to their class and their teacher. If you do your homework ahead of time this might even link to and extend the science they are doing in class at the moment.
- At the conclusion of all the interviews it is important to pull together all the comments, and look for any emerging issues, patterns, pluses and minuses.
- You must now decide how you will respond to these. Some issues will be easily addressed, some it might be in appropriate to implement, but you can find ways of raising it and explaining/showing how it is not appropriate, some will have longer term implications.

High tech version

Recent developments with the hand held/ interactive voting systems means that some newer ones can actually allow pupils to type in a short response, so you could conduct the interviews with a larger number of pupils by using these devices, capturing their immediate response anonymously and then opening up for conversation.

Use of School Councils, Learning Circles,

The survey, questions etc could be undertaken with the school council representatives, or if you have larger learning circles could form the basis of conversations in those groups.

Alternatively, why not commission the School Council to produce a presentation, possibly in Photostory as opposed to PowerPoint. This presentation is to illustrate science teaching and learning at the school, not just one class, but a year in the life of science teaching. It should last no more than 3-5 minutes. Again, once it is presented, possibly with clearly identifiable pluses and minutes/ recommendations, the school must be seen to act upon the voice.

NB

Evidence in submissions from schools during 2011 has shown many varied approaches to this task, with a wide range of issues emerging. Methods seen in these submissions include the use of the quiz/ question function within the school’s MLE system, e.g. Quizdom. This way, different questions can be asked each week or fortnight. One interesting technique, just emerging, is the use of Wordle (www.wordle.net) This requires children and/or staff or even parents and the community each listing a number of words that describes science at the school. Each person’s list is produced independently, so there will of course be repetition, this is what Wordle relies on. If you then have someone type all the lists into Word on the computer, follow the instructions on screen in Wordle to produce a display of the words. You can change the way it looks. When you are happy, press ‘ctrl + prt scrn’ then paste into a ppt or Word document, to save the image. Now have groups discuss the visual effect and what it seeks to tell you about views of science in school.

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