

Involving and Consulting Children

Summary:

- Why children should be consulted?
- Benefits to involving children
- Methods of involving children

Beechwood School involves and consults children, in a way that suits their age and stage of development, whenever decisions are made about the Beechwood School.

Why children should be consulted?

The commitment to involving and consulting children stems from the 'listening to children' provisions set out in Articles 12 and 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. These state that:

- A child's opinion should be taken into account in anything that affects them
- Children should have information disseminated in a way that enables them to make choices and decisions.

For children, involvement and consultation helps them to develop new skills such as negotiating, sharing and understanding the perspectives of others. It helps them to understand how decisions are made, and recognises that their opinions are important.

Benefits to involving children

There are multiple benefits of such an approach. These include: improved behaviour, a relationship with children based on partnership, a more cohesive environment and activities and decisions that children feel a sense of ownership over.

If appropriate, the manager and staff will work with children to draw up a charter which will set out the expectations and responsibilities of the nursery, the staff team and the children in respect of consultation and involvement. Parent/carer involvement in drawing up and implementing the charter will also be encouraged.

Methods of involving children

All children should be listened to and consulted actively. This will take a number of forms, including:

- Listening to what they say in speech and other forms of communication
- Observing body language and behaviour
- Drama and role play
- Through play and creative expression and the use of visual aids
- Via regular group based discussions and Q and A sessions
- Questionnaires and other regular feedback on activities
- Notice boards that carry important information about activities at the setting
- Regular children's meetings, between children and staff, discussing the settings activities and any other relevant topics

Age, maturity and the type of decision being made will determine the extent and nature of children's involvement. However, the emphasis should always be strongly in favour of involving children.

Consultation and involvement should be regularly monitored and acted on so that children are able to see that their input has led to visible outcomes. Beechwood School is clear about what decisions children will be involved in. They should also attempt to offer clear explanations if and when consultation and involvement is deemed inappropriate.