

ABSTRACT SERA 2016 University of Dundee

INDIVIDUAL PAPER

Theme: Social Justice and Inclusion

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Title: The primary-secondary transition: children and young people's views on opportunities for participation and responsibility at school

This paper presents key findings from a study which examined children's and young people's views on participation and responsibility at the point of the primary-secondary school transition. It draws on a large, mixed methods study undertaken in a range of schools across Scotland (n=25). Schools were located in a variety of localities (rural/urban), as well as in areas facing contrasting socio-economic circumstances. Two main methods of data collection were used in the study:

- A self-report questionnaire administered to Primary 7 and S2 pupils (n = 740 pupils);
- Seventeen focus group discussions with 124 children/young people.

Building on an interview study with teachers (Ross and Brown 2013), it addresses the implications of findings for understanding social justice and inclusion in schools. The present study found significant differences between sectors with regard to children's views. For example, while 84% of primary children agreed with the statement: "Teachers and pupils work together" at my school, only 57% of secondary pupils did so. Stark differences between the opinions of P7 and S2 pupils also emerged from the set of questions about: "Who has a say at your school?", which suggests that primary schools present pupils with a more tangible and coherent model of citizenship. Moreover, opportunities for participation were reported to decline when pupils entered secondary school. In this paper we consider these significant differences and the implications for the participation agenda currently promoted in educational policy not only in Scotland but in other countries across the UK.

244 words

