



Pupils as Citizens: participation, responsibility and voice in the transition from primary to secondary school

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Introduction



- Previous studies which look at the way in which pupil participation is enacted in Scottish schools suggests that “good practice” is uneven and patchy (Cross et al. 2009; Hulme et al. 2011)
- Present study endorses this and suggests areas for action



Research questions

- To explore what is authentic and meaningful participation (i.e. voice, responsibility), from the point of view of pupils
- To identify to what extent children view themselves as ***responsible members of their school community***
- To investigate pupil's views on participatory opportunities on either side of primary-secondary transition



A framework for understanding “active citizenship”

- In main we focused on **non formal curriculum** of active citizenship drawing on Schereen’s conceptual model which stresses students taking action and direct experience
- Defined as: “*informal learning embedded in school context*” (Schereen, 2011: 202)
- Included school ethos, decision-making structures (i.e. pupil councils), informal leadership (i.e. peer mentoring), extra curricular clubs/activities and pupil participation

Research design



- Mixed method study: self-report questionnaires (n = **740** children) and focus group (n=**124** children)
- Sample included children at end of primary school (P7) and pupils in second year (S2) at secondary school
- Included representative sample of **25** schools (15 primary and 10 secondary)
- **Questionnaires:** we asked about school ethos/teacher/child relations, opportunities for decision-making/responsibility at school, what activities were on offer, participation in activities and clubs
- **Focus groups:** we asked about when/where children felt more responsible at school, the purposes of participation and what helped them take part



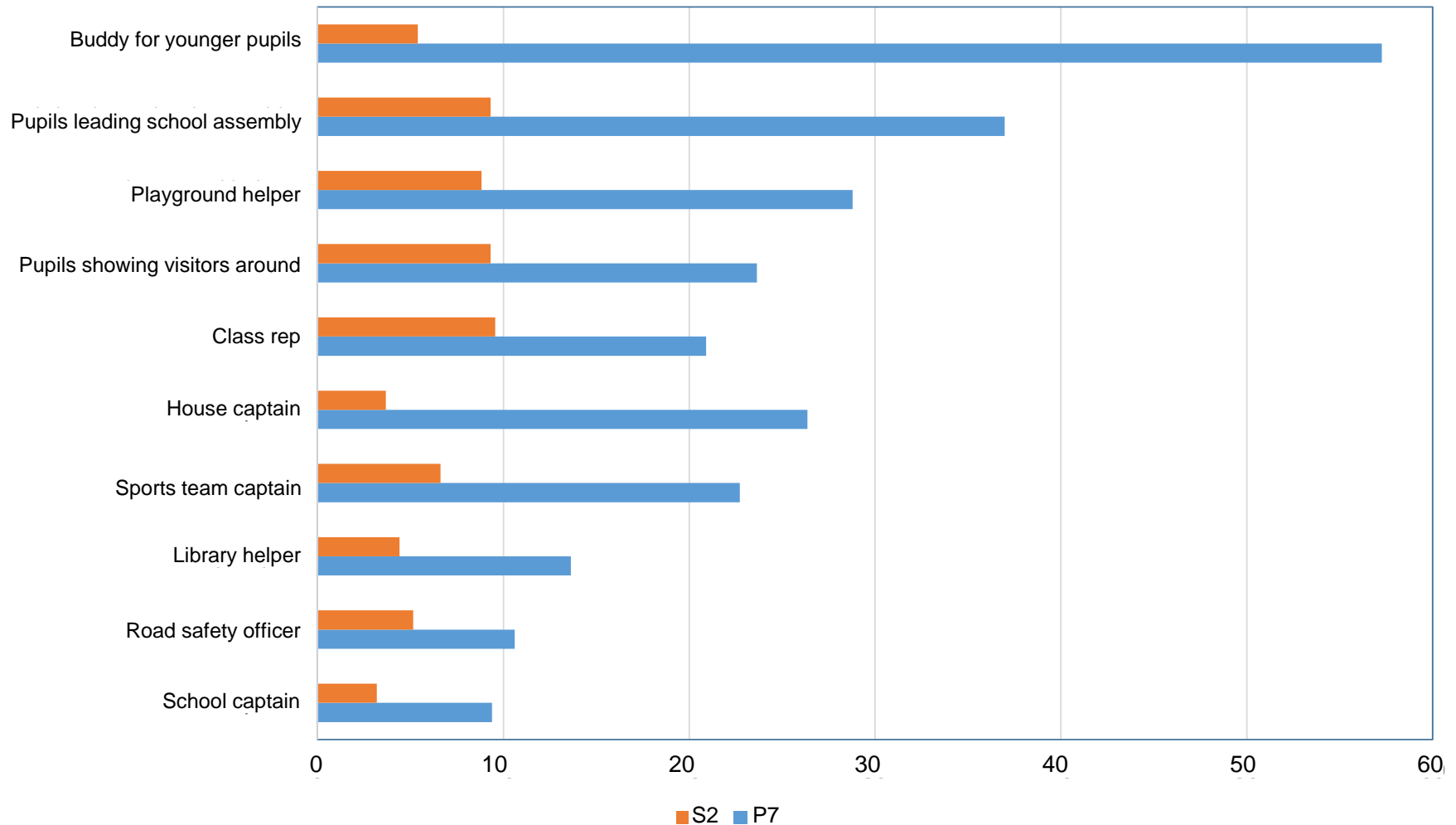
Key findings in brief

- Significant relationship found between positive school ethos and participation at school
- Clear and striking differences found in reported **participation across sectors** for children at primary school, as compared with pupils at secondary school
- Consistent **gender differences**, particularly in perceived **influence** on decision-making
- Approximately **one third of pupils** (mainly boys) reported low levels of pupil participation at school
- Some **differences in participatory experiences found between schools** i.e. rural/urban schools; more deprived/less deprived

Differences in opportunities for responsibility



What chances do pupils have to be responsible at your school?
(% said they had taken part in this role, by stage)



Gender differences



When do pupils have a say at your school?
(% of girls and boys agreed with each statement)

