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Moray House School  
of Education

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

**The Gordon Cook Foundation**

**Commissioned Research**

Jane Brown, Linda Croxford & Sarah Minty

The University of Edinburgh

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## Executive summary

This research reports on a study of pupils' views funded by the Gordon Cook Foundation and was carried out by researchers from Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh. The research examined pupils' views regarding active citizenship in Scottish primary and secondary schools, and their accounts of opportunities for participation at each side of the primary-secondary transition. Moreover, it explored primary children's anticipation of this school transition, in addition to secondary pupils' reflections on their experiences of both sectors. 'Active citizenship' was taken to include ideas of pupil participation and responsibility, decision-making and voice.

This report addresses findings from a questionnaire administered to 738 children and young people and 17 focus groups carried out with 130 children and young people. We targeted children at the end of their primary education in primary seven (P7), and young people at the beginning of secondary school in year two (S2). Fieldwork was conducted in two phases. Primary schools were accessed between April and June 2015 and secondary schools between August and December 2015. This is one of the first, large-scale, studies which examines pupil participation at the point of transition internationally. As a result it provides robust empirical evidence, regarding the primary-secondary transition in Scotland in a representative sample of schools.

## Summary of the main findings

While embedding pupil participation in schools in Scotland is widely regarded as beneficial to the well-being of pupils and their school communities (i.e. [Scottish Executive, 2004](#); [Scottish Executive, 2006](#)), this study maintains that there is more scope to integrate pupil participation in decision-making more widely at school, not only at the beginning of secondary schooling but in specific domains and areas.

### Pupil voice and decision-making

- Overall, opportunities for pupil voice and participation in decision-making at school were found to be relatively low on a number of items. These covered issues such as pupil input into decision-making in the classroom, in addition to having a say on single issues such as school uniforms.

### Pupil participation and 'active citizenship'

- Clear and substantial differences were found in rates of participation between sectors. Primary children reported significantly higher rates of participation and more opportunities to take part, as compared with pupils at secondary school.
- Activities on offer in school were found to differ between different types of schools, including those situated in rural and urban areas, as well as larger and smaller schools.

### School ethos and enjoyment of school

- A significant relationship was found between a participatory school ethos and pupils' reported satisfaction at school. In schools identified as having a developed participatory ethos, on a

number of measures, pupils were more likely to agree with the statement: 'I mostly enjoy school'.

## Gender and decision-making

- In terms of decision-making boys were found to express a greater sense of impact and influence on decision-making at school, compared to girls.
- While these differences were not significant, gender disparities were consistent across a range of items in questionnaire responses.

## Pupils with low levels of participation

- Approximately one third of pupils were found to engage in fewer activities at school.
- Pupils (mainly boys) with 'low activity scores' were much more likely to disagree with the statement: 'I mostly enjoy school', and agree with the statement: 'I am not the kind of person that joins clubs and teams'.
- This suggests that a fairly large minority of pupils may be less integrated into their school community than most of their peers.

## The purposes of participation

- Secondary pupils said that taking part in activities and clubs at school enhanced their peer networks and connections with the wider school community.
- Overall, primary and secondary pupils evaluated the purposes of participation in an instrumental manner. Its benefits for individual well-being, developing self-confidence and improving future prospects were views expressed by pupils in both sectors.

## Promoting participation at school

- Positive relationships with teachers were found to be central to promoting taking part at school. Parents/relatives, peers and friends were also seen as important in terms of encouraging participation in clubs and activities.
- In contrast, some secondary pupils identified particular teaching styles as inhibiting their participation at school.

## Responsibility at school

- Children's relationship with juniors, and specifically being a buddy, was a key way primary children said they behaved responsibly at school.
- Conversely, pupils at the beginning of secondary school tended to view responsibility in relation to responsibility for 'self'. Having a wider choice of teachers and friends, independence to navigate a much larger school campus and the freedom to venture outside of school were identified as new and exciting responsibilities at secondary school.

## Fostering values and Scottish schools

- Being kind to others was a core value promoted by Scottish schools. A majority of pupils (99% of primary pupils and 96% of secondary pupils) agreed with the statement: 'My school expects me to be kind to others'.
- Fostering individual responsibility and pupil autonomy was a key value communicated by schools. Approximately two thirds of primary pupils and secondary pupils agreed that: 'My school expects me to look after myself'.

## Pupil views on the primary-secondary transition

- From the point of view of many secondary pupils, more choice and opportunities to be independent were regarded as the main advantages of being at secondary school.
- In keeping with previous studies, many primary-aged children were found to view the impending transition with mixed feelings of both excitement and trepidation.
- Worries about making friends, getting lost, harder work and stricter discipline were cited as common fears by primary children. Conversely, excitement about new freedoms, making new friends were also commonplace.

## Authors, acknowledgements & citation

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The Gordon Cook Foundation is an Aberdeen-based charity established in 1974 to promote and develop values education in the British education systems. Values and citizenship education includes social and moral education, health education and projects likely to promote character development and citizenship. The Foundation is dedicated to the advancement and promotion of all aspects of education and training which are likely to promote 'character development' and 'citizenship'. In recent years, the Foundation has adopted the term Values Education to denote the wide range of activity it seeks to support.

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Dr Jane Brown is a Senior Research Fellow is a member of the Institute of Education Community & Society and Centre for Research in Education, Inclusion & Diversity (CREID) at the Moray House School of Education, the University of Edinburgh [J.A.Brown@ed.ac.uk](mailto:J.A.Brown@ed.ac.uk)

Dr Linda Croxford is an Honorary Research Fellow in the Centre for Educational Sociology and is a member of the Institute of Education Community & Society, Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh

Sarah Minty is a researcher who is currently undertaking an ESRC funded PhD at Moray House School of Education.

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## The study

This report presents findings of a study funded by the Gordon Cook Foundation. The purpose of the study was to examine the transition between Scottish primary and secondary schools with a view to understanding how pupil citizenship was experienced over the course of this key school transition. The research built on, and complements a previous interview study of teachers ([Ross & Brown, 2013](#)) that was prompted by a widespread recognition that pupil voice, responsibility and participation were growing areas of school activity and that while pupils were treated as active and competent citizens at the end of primary school they were treated as much less so in the early years of secondary school. The present study focused exclusively on the views of pupils and we explored the following aims:

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

The study was conducted in a representative sample of 25 schools (10 secondary schools and 15 primary schools) in 4 Local Authority areas across Scotland.

A short, self-completion questionnaire was administered to classes of pupils in schools, with a view to answering the above questions. In order to gain more extensive insights into children's lived experience of participation and responsibility at school, focus group discussions were undertaken with P7 children, as well as S2 pupils.



## Introduction

There is very little literature internationally that examines the curriculum imperatives of pupil participation, responsibility and ‘active citizenship’ through the transition from primary to secondary education. More specifically, there is meagre research on the topic of pupil participation and citizenship, as it relates to the Scottish context. Our previous study which focused on teachers ([Ross & Brown, 2013](#)), identified a clear gap in research on the primary-secondary transition and the development of civic competence. We argued that while it was widely recognised that this key transition involved considerable changes for pupils, in terms of their social and academic status ([Summerfield, 1986](#)), little information existed on what happened to responsibility, leadership and participation across this primary-secondary transition, and why. With a few notable exceptions (e.g. [Mills, 2004](#); [Cross et al., 2009](#); [Deuchar, 2009](#); [Mannion, et al., 2015](#)), few empirical studies have examined pupil participation in the Scottish context and there is a gap internationally on studies which address opportunities for pupil voice and participation across the primary-secondary transition. The following sections provide an overview for understanding the rationale for this study and with that in mind outlines the relevant Scottish policy framework, in addition to the legislative imperative (i.e. the UN Convention) which has helped shape the child participation agenda, both internationally and nationally.

### An overview of the legislative and Scottish policy background

Broadly speaking, two general developments help frame an understanding of the intensified focus on embedding pupil voice and participation in the organisational and extra-curricular life of Scottish schools. The first is the children’s rights agenda promoted by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, while the second is firmly rooted in the national setting of Scotland; its post devolution context and the development of citizenship education, including the vital role given to ‘active citizenship’. In terms of the UN Convention, particular Articles are especially relevant to pupil participation in schools since Article 12 outlines the right of children and young people to express their views and have their opinions taken into account on matters that impact on their everyday lives. At the time article 12 was regarded by some commentators as one of the most: ‘*radical and far reaching aspects of the United Nations Convention*’ (see [Shier, 2001, p. 108](#)). Moreover, Article 29 stipulates children’s right to an education, including the aspiration to develop the full potential of all children.

Devolution in 1999 signalled a shift in educational policy making in Scotland, placing citizenship at the centre of education. With the establishment of the Scottish Parliament and the five National Priorities for education, Priority 4 gave a clear commitment to citizenship in: ‘Citizenship and Values’ which articulated the goal to: ‘*teach them [pupils] the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society*’. The influential ‘Learning and Teaching’ guidelines followed ([Munn et al., 2004](#)), which laid the foundation for the Scottish position on citizenship education which promoted a cross curricula and permeation model. This, combined with the *National Debate on Education* in 2002 which sought public responses to the question of the purposes of education in Scotland paved the way for the development of the *Curriculum for Excellence* and, in principle a move away from prescriptive approaches to teaching and learning criticised in 5–14 ([Munn et al., 2004](#)). The *Curriculum for Excellence* ([Scottish Executive, 2004](#)) maintains that: ‘responsible citizenship’ is one of the four key capacities which all children in Scotland should develop’. The aspiration, as it was outlined in the original policy initiative is: ‘*to enable all children to develop their capacities as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and*

*effective contributors to society'* ([Scottish Executive, 2004, p. 3](#)). Responsible citizens are individuals who have 'respect for others', in addition to the aptitude to participate as responsible citizens in wider aspects of political, cultural and economic life. While the *Curriculum for Excellence* is criticised for stressing individual capacities at the expense of wider social justice imperatives (see [Biesta & Lawy, 2006](#)), its implementation helped promote the pupil participation agenda. In the Learning and Teaching Scotland documents produced between 2006–10, the positive impact of children's participation at school and its constructive impact on school ethos, as well as pupil attainment is clearly articulated ([Greer, 2012, p. 116](#)). More generally: *Getting it Right for Every Child* adopts a UNCRC rights approach where children are expected to be: 'fully included in decision-making' ([Scottish Executive, 2013, p.13](#)).

## Defining pupil voice and participation

Given the focus of this study, the concepts of pupil voice and participation require explanation. Whitty and Wisby understand pupil voice in two ways. Broadly conceived they maintain that pupil voice is: 'every way in which pupils are allowed or encouraged to offer their views or preferences' ([Whitty & Wisby, 2007, p. 6](#)). More specifically, they argue that pupil voice is students taking an active role in their education, in a way that is integrated into the organisation of everyday life at school in a viable and lasting manner. Many researchers conducting research on pupil voice and participation ([Shier, 2001](#); [Fielding, 2004](#); [Whitty & Wisby, 2007](#); [Cross et al., 2009](#)), continue to draw on, or at the very least refer to Harts 'Ladder of Participation' ([Hart, 1992](#)), as one way of conceptualising the kinds of pupil involvement on offer at school. Hart's continuum of engagement ranges from 'manipulation', 'decoration' and 'tokenism' (Level 1, 2 and 3), to 'child-initiated, shared decisions with adults' (Level 8). This latter level is sometimes regarded as a more meaningful form a participation but one that is challenging for schools ([Lundy, 2007](#)). . Underpinning these various levels of participation are different conceptions of self-determination in children; as comparatively passive, in contrast to a more self-directed model of children's engagement (i.e. Level 8). Participation however tends to be conceived as a variety of activities ([Hudson, 2012](#)), from adults consulting with children in order to solicit their views on adult concerns, to children identifying issues themselves and sharing decision-making with adults. Lansdown ([2001](#)) identifies three key dimensions of participation which, as she points out, are not mutually exclusive:

1. 'consultative processes', which involve adults obtaining information from children
2. 'participative initiatives', which enable children to be involved in the development of policies and services
3. 'self-advocacy projects', which aim to enable children to identify their own goals and initiatives

Fielding ([2004](#)) maintains that student voice encompasses an array of activities which facilitate debate, negotiation and action on issues that impact primarily on students, but inevitably involve teachers and others who are also integral to schools and their communities. Fielding ([2004, p. 199](#)) suggests three general ways in which we can categorise the practice of pupil voice in schools:

1. *Forms of peer support* e.g. peer mentoring, buddying schemes, peer teaching and circle time.

2. *Mechanisms which support student expression of their views that can effect change* e.g. pupil parliaments and councils, pupils on appointment panels for new staff, students as researchers.
3. *'Overt' student leadership* e.g. student led walks.

Fielding's model of children's voice overlaps in some fundamental ways with Scheeren's framework for 'active citizenship' discussed below.

## A framework for understanding 'active citizenship'

As Maitles (2012) argues 'active citizenship' as a focus of research was precipitated by a mounting educational interest in promoting pupil participation and democratic schooling (Murphy, 2012). Nelson and Kerr (2006) observe that the meaning of 'active citizenship' is dynamic and to a large extent context dependent, particularly in relation to the national setting where it is conceived and operationalised. They maintain that a key challenge is identifying the precise relationship between the concept of 'active citizenship' and citizenship education given that the two ideas are often tightly inter-linked. In keeping with this position, the preface to the Learning and Teaching discussion document (2002, p. 3), conceives active learning as fundamental to citizenship:

*Young people learn most about citizenship by being active citizens.*

A fairly recent cross-European study (Scheerens, 2011) provided the present study with a useful conceptual map of the development of active citizenship in schools. This is defined by Scheerens as: '*informal learning embedded in the school context*' (p. 202) where the focus is on pupil participation in school citizenship' as a microcosm of, or bridge to wider and future citizenship, in contrast to the explicit teaching of civics. As a result this study's understanding of 'active citizenship' built on Scheeren's (2011) 'pragmatic dimension' of education for citizenship, premised on students gaining hands on experience of 'active citizenship' and taking action. Drawing on this framework, the present study was in the main concerned with the *non-formal curriculum*, which was understood as being an intended curriculum but outside formal classroom study. Similar in a number of ways to Fielding's (2004) categorisation, the non-formal curriculum included school decision-making structures such as student councils or parliament, school ethos and climates of informal leadership such as 'peer mentoring' schemes and support, and extra-curricular activities such as clubs, as well as campaigns and volunteering (Birzea et al., 2004). The present study while using this framework, also included some aspects of decision-making in the classroom, as well as pupils' understanding of the distribution of decision-making across pupil populations. These were considered important given developments in Scotland since a feature of the policy environment, is that distinctions between the non-formal curriculum have been gradually eroded in pursuit of the overarching goals of developing: '*confident individuals, responsible citizens, successful learners, and effective contributors*'.

## Research design and methods

Given the lack of existing information regarding pupil participation and civic engagement at school over the primary-secondary transition, the present study aimed to include a relatively large sample of children and young people. We undertook research in 25 sample schools situated in four Local Authorities across Scotland. These were located across the breadth of the country, including primary and secondary schools in the north, south, as well as the west of Scotland. Schools were situated in a variety of urban and rural geographical locations.

### Access to schools: seeking permission of Local Authorities

While access to schools, in the last instance was at head teacher discretion, securing formal permission from Local Authorities was essential in order for us to begin to approach schools. This proved a labour intensive process. The level of scrutiny that our request prompted differed between Local Authorities (LA), however, all four Local Authorities required assurances that:

- Ethical approval had been formally granted by the University of Edinburgh.
- All researchers who accessed schools had Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) clearance to work directly with pupils in schools.

While in three local authorities a copy of our original research proposal and consent information for children and parents sufficed, in one authority our research request was examined by a research committee. In this instance, access to schools involved a selective process due to intense demand on schools in this authority.

### The school and questionnaire sample

A representative sample of 25 schools was drawn from four local authorities in Scotland, and comprised 15 primary schools, and 10 secondary schools. Schools were selected on the basis of classifications developed by the Scottish Government, including urban (U)/non-urban (NU), less deprived (LD)/multiply-deprived (MD) and large (L)/small (S) Table (a) (see [Appendix 1](#)). In total, 738 pupils completed questionnaires, of which 330 were in P7, and 408 in S2. Table (b) summarises the locations of the pupils who completed the survey. The composition of the primary and secondary samples was slightly different: more of the sample of primary school pupils was from non-urban, less-deprived, large schools than the secondary school sample.

Within each school, questionnaires were completed by pupils in classroom situations, under the supervision of members of the research team and often their teachers. In order to inform pupils about the research, the rationale for the study was explained to the class and what was expected of pupils in term of completing questionnaires. Here we highlighted that pupils were not required to put their names on the questionnaires and requested that pupils tried to answer all questions as honestly as possible. We also stressed that there were no right or wrong answers. Importantly, the fact that the completed questionnaires would be taken back to the University of Edinburgh was explained and that they would be stored securely and only be looked at by the research team. Pupils were given the opportunity to ask questions and occasionally they asked for clarification. Consequently researchers were on hand to respond to any queries pupils had about filling in the questionnaire. Access to pupil groups were organised by a member of the senior management team and in secondary schools classes were selected so as to fit with the school's timetable.

## Questionnaire design

The user-friendly, pupil questionnaire sought information regarding basic biographical information (i.e. gender, school year), contextual information regarding children's opinions about the prevailing school ethos, relationships with teachers, views about participatory opportunities at school and how responsibility and voice were promoted (see [Appendix 4](#)). The questionnaire was piloted with a small group of P7 pupils who advised on wording and tested out how long it took to complete (20–35 minutes depending on pupil). Moreover, a few questions were asked about leadership given that our previous study found that encouraging leadership skills in pupils emerged as a topical and current area raised by teachers which fits with Scheerens' (2011) model of 'active citizenship'. The same questionnaire format was used in both primary and secondary schools with some minor adjustments to accommodate differences in school sectors. For example, while we asked primary children to anticipate what secondary school would be like, we asked secondary pupils to reflect on the main differences between primary and secondary school.

## Focus group discussions

We undertook seventeen focus group discussions which included a balance of boys and girls (see [Appendix 3](#)). Talking with children and young people in their peer groups can be a supportive and less threatening way to engage with pupils. When carefully managed, they are also an effective way of generating debate between research participants ([Barbour & Kitzinger, 1998](#); [Barbour, 2014](#)). Group discussions gave the opportunity to follow-up issues that had been touched on in the questionnaire in more depth and gain insights into participatory cultures in schools. Prompts for discussions included children's opinions on what helped them participate at school; what they viewed as the purposes and benefits of participation; where and when children/young people felt more responsible at school, in addition to their views about the primary-secondary transition (see [Appendix 5](#) for topic guide). As an initial warm up to groups we asked children to discuss the main activities and clubs they took part in at school. This general introduction served as a non-threatening start to group discussions and connected with, and bridged key areas asked in the questionnaire.

## Data analysis

Questionnaire data were inputted into SPSS and analysed using standard statistical techniques to examine similarities and differences in pupils' responses to all the questions associated with pupil gender, school sector (primary compared with secondary), and school characteristics including large/small, urban/non-urban, and multiple deprivation/not multiple deprivation. School-level differences in the patterns of pupils' responses were analysed using a principal components analysis, with the resulting component score providing a measure of each school's 'participatory ethos'. In relation to the open-ended pupil responses (i.e. on pupil views about the differences between primary and secondary school and activities outside of school), these questions generated a large data set in their own right. The data was coded and entered into SPSS, before using ANOVA to make comparisons of means.

Focus group discussions are known to be challenging to transcribe therefore audio tapes were transcribed by a very experienced audio typist. In the first instance, digital recordings were listened to, and cleaned with the purpose of extending the transcriptions and identifying speakers. The next stage involved examining transcripts closely, in order to map the ways in which children and young people responded to key areas in the topic guide (i.e. participatory opportunities at

school, the purposes of participation and what helped pupils take part). This was aided by field notes. Particular attention was given to comparative analysis of focus group data between school sectors, as well as different types of schools (e.g. urban/non-urban).

## **Ethical considerations**

As in all research involving children and young people, ethical protocols highlight the importance of securing informed consent as a basic requirement of research with potentially vulnerable groups. This research abided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines and Moray House School of Education Ethics Sub-Committee granted formal ethical approval for the research to proceed. Due to the fact that our sampling frame necessitated securing a representative sample of schools and pupils, we sought opt-out consent from parents of pupils. Occasionally parents opted out of the research and withdrew their children from taking part. We were very mindful of seeking the permission of children and young people who took part in focus groups. In keeping with ethical protocols and standard practice, all participants were reassured about confidentiality and the fact that no pupil or school would be named in any report or published findings. Pupils who took part in focus groups were provided with consent information that explained the purpose of the research, how information would be used and freedom to withdraw without penalty. Moreover, young people were given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. In order to explain how children's views might be used they were shown an exemplar of how their views would be anonymised and included in the write-up of the study.

## Main findings

The presentation of findings is divided into 5 main sections:

1. Decision-making at school
2. The practice of 'active citizenship'
3. Values and participation
4. Pupils' perspectives on the primary-secondary transition
5. Activities out of school

Findings draw on both quantitative and qualitative data sets: the questionnaire (closed and open responses), in addition to focus group discussions. In the following these data sets are used independently and where appropriate are combined to support key findings.

### 1. Decision-making in school

A previous HMIE report ([2006](#)) concluded that while schools in general had made considerable progress on citizenship, by contrast they had made modest gains in terms of involving children: '*significantly in decision-making at school*'. This section considers children's and young people's assessments of the extent to which pupils and teachers have a say at their school and subsequently explores key aspects of: 'active citizenship'. As a result it presents findings on the extent to which pupils got to practice representative forms of democracy, including opportunities to vote and committee membership ([Scheerens, 2011](#)). Pupils were also asked about the distribution of decision-making in the classroom which is discussed below.

#### *Learning and pupil participation*

Robinson's ([2014](#)) research found that in situations where pupils were given opportunities: "*to take ownership of their learning*" ([2014, p. 8](#)) these were regarded as effective learning opportunities by pupils. When we asked pupils about input into deciding what topics to work in class and, ways of working, distinct differences were evident between sectors. Fewer secondary pupils indicated that they had input into these two items, in contrast to the majority of P7 pupils who said that they had a say in: 'Choosing some topic that we work on in class' (60%) and 'How we work in class (e.g. in groups)' (61%). Only a minority of S2 pupils felt they had a say deciding on these issues. In focus groups, S2 pupils were more likely to express a sense of disempowerment regarding their learner experiences in the classroom. Examples included situations which impacted on pupil control such as the regular use of worksheets. Completing worksheets where the parameters were predetermined was thought as restrictive by some pupils, giving little opportunity for independent thinking:

BOY 1: *But they gave you a full sheet of how you were supposed to write it and what you were supposed to write.*

BOY 2: *But they've still given us all the stuff that we need. We research the person like we find out what the person we want to do, we pick that person and then we need to fill in all the blanks of what they've given us. So they've given us like sentences that we need to use ...*

Focus group: secondary school (school code 23)



In relation to group work and how pupils worked in class, a fairly high number of primary pupils (61%) indicated that they had some choice on this item. Fewer secondary pupils (47%), however did so. Interestingly, in the context of focus group discussions, group work was spontaneously identified as a site which promoted a sense of exclusion and dissatisfaction in some pupils. When secondary pupils raised group work as an issue (the focus group topic guide was open-ended and did not ask specifically about group work), its discussion was framed in negative terms. For example, group work appeared to be associated with power imbalances and inequity due to the fact that it was said that one person often dominated proceedings, or alternatively one person was left doing the bulk of the work. Putting forward ideas that were not taken on board was highlighted as a further disadvantage of working in groups. Ideas being rejected was construed as a discouraging, impacting on self-confidence, however fleeting. This contrasts with teacher assessments of the value of group work. Previous studies ([Ross & Brown, 2013](#)) show that teachers identified group work as an important example of pupil participation, particularly by primary teachers who suggested that group work gave every child the opportunity to take part.

In terms of teachers, secondary pupils were much more likely to say: 'Teachers mainly decide what happens in class' (85%), and it is relevant that the didactic and authoritarian teaching style of particular teachers was raised by some young people in focus group discussions. Such teaching methods were felt to impede learner autonomy in pupils. It is pertinent that these accounts were often counterbalanced by the mention of teachers who in some way 'stood out' from other teachers. Teachers who were felt to be more responsive to the preferences of pupils (e.g. on occasions letting pupils listen to headphones while working quietly, on task in class) were thought to foster autonomy and was very much appreciated by pupils.

### *The perceived role of the head teacher*

The leadership style of the head teacher (along with other factors), contributes to the identity of the school and to: '*autocratic versus democratic governance*' ([Scheerens, 2011, p. 203](#)). The leading role of the head teacher in decision-making at school was recognised by over half of primary aged and secondary pupils (54%), and responses were very similar across sectors (i.e. 56% and 53% respectively). It is relevant that a fairly large number of pupils remained unsure about the extent to which the head teacher had control over decision-making in school. This uncertainty may reflect the fact that children and young people may be distanced from governance structures operating in schools, particularly in larger schools with more complex organisations. Interestingly, 'low participators' (approximately a third of the questionnaire sample), who reported limited engagement at school were significantly more likely than other pupils to say: 'The head teacher mainly decides what happens in my school' (P7 children 69% compared with 50% of other children and 64% of secondary pupils in comparison to 46% of other young people). This finding suggests that low participators may be more aware of, and sensitized to the distribution of power at school, in contrast to the generality of pupils.

### *Senior and junior pupils: does everyone have a say?*

In the questionnaire we asked about how children evaluated the distribution of decision-making across pupil populations and the extent to which older and younger pupils were thought to have a say at school. Findings on this topic provide nuanced insights into the ways in which moving the participation agenda forward needs to attend to distribution of decision-making given the heterogeneity of pupil populations and the fact they contain many voices and different interests. Tapping into this diversity and range of opinions has been identified as an under researched area



in schools ([Wyness, 2009](#)). We know that formal education is: 'hierarchically structured and chronologically graded' ([Scheerens, 2011, p. 203](#)), based on age and stage (i.e. year group) of pupils ([Ross et al., 2007](#)). The survey found that overall 52% of all pupils agreed with the statement that senior pupils had more of a say at their school, reflecting the established pupil hierarchy operating in schools. Interestingly, primary seven pupils in large schools were more likely to agree with this statement, indicating the impact of school size on the practice of pupil decision-making in schools. For example, in small schools fewer pupils (28%) agreed with the statement: 'Older pupils have more of a say at my school', whereas more pupils in large schools did so (46%). It is noteworthy that during fieldwork we found that in small, non-urban primary schools, with composite classes, children were more likely to report that everyone was involved at school, indicating that the organisational structure of smaller schools may facilitate flattened structures of pupil participation. It is also of note that in some of these small schools, children explained that when in P7, all members of the class were on the pupil council, suggesting that representative forms of democracy may work differently in different school structures.

Overall, well under half of pupils (39%) agreed with the statement that both junior and senior pupils got an equal say at school, with distinct differences found between sectors (53% agreed at primary, compared to 28% at secondary). Such differences are not surprising given P7's position at the top of primary school and S2 pupils' location at the bottom of the 'pecking order' at secondary. In the following focus group extract P7 pupils reflected on their experience of being senior pupils in the top class of their school:

MODERATOR: *And somebody had mentioned being a role model. What does anybody else think about that?*

BOY 1: *I think when we're going down the hall like as we were younger thinking about how like the P7s we all thought they were so good and it's kind of ...*

BOY 2: *An honour.*

BOY 3: *... feels, yeah it's like an honour being the oldest in the school and it's kind of like ... .*

BOY 2: *We're going to go to S1 and be the youngest in the school ...*

[Chorus of agreement 'Yes!']

GIRL 1: *... and we're just going to be like: 'Oh!'.*

GIRL 2: *It's like back to the start when we go into S1.*

BOY 1: *All over again.*

Focus group: primary school (school code 3)

In contrast, the following S2 pupils explained the social order in their larger than average secondary school and which pupils made most decisions in their school:

MODERATOR: *So do you feel as if you have, kind of, less involvement now you're at secondary school?*

BOY 1: *Yeah.*

- BOY 2: *Yeah, cause there's so many pupils here. If you all took in all their opinions you're gonna get so many stuff they would need to add.*
- BOY 1: *Yeah. It's mostly the S5 and 6's that make the decisions.*
- GIRL 1: *They've got more of a say.*
- BOY 1: *The older ones.*
- BOY 2: *The S6's don't really care now. [Laughing]*
- BOY 1: *Cause they'll leave!*

Focus group: secondary school (school code 18)

### *The pupil council*

Pupil councils are regarded as an important and tangible means of promoting 'pupil voice' in schools ([Fielding, 2004](#)). As an established structure for pupil involvement, previous research shows that participation in such processes can promote and enhance democratic awareness and skills in children ([Taylor & Johnson 2002](#); [Scheerens, 2011](#); [Maitles, 2012](#)). As such, pupil councils provide a whole-school forum for participation, connecting with the governance system operating in schools ([Whitty et al., 2007](#)). In Scotland, evidence suggests that the number of pupil councils/parliaments operating in schools increased, between 2003 and 2007 by 6% ([Scottish Consumer Council, 2007](#)). While we know that pupil councils are a common feature of many schools across the UK, ([Kerr et al., 2007](#)), taking part in this forum is inevitably limited to a minority of pupils. Similarly our survey indicated that while 89% pupils confirmed that their school had a pupil council, only 17% of pupils reported they had participated in it. It is worth noting however that information on membership only provides a partial insight to the functioning of pupil councils in schools. In focus groups we found that the status of the school council in the operation of the school was relevant. If it was thought to be highly regarded by the school, the pupil council was more likely to be positively rated by pupils. In one focus group a P7 boy, who was a council member talked in detail about how seeking the views of each class required skill in order to feedback concerns effectively at committee level. This suggests that the process of pupil engagement, and the council's status and importance within the governance system of schools, are salient dimensions of the efficacy of pupil councils.

The extent to which pupil councils were thought to have an impact on decision-making in school produced similar responses in P7 and S2 pupils. For example, 61% children and 55% of S2 pupils agreed that councils had a say in what happened in their school. There were some differences between schools classified as more deprived (MD), as compared to less deprived (LD) since pupils in LD schools were more likely to state that: "The pupil-school council has a say in what happens in my school" (LD: 60%; MD: 50%) suggesting a greater degree of uncertainty in MD schools. In addition, some gender differences were evident in opinions about the effectiveness of the pupil council given that 65% of boys, compared to 50% girls reported that that the pupil council had a say in their school. Overall, some scepticism was apparent since only half of pupils agreed that: 'The pupil-school council has a say in what happens', indicating a high level of uncertainty. This supports earlier research which found that there was a fairly high level of cynicism regarding the efficacy of pupils' councils and feelings that they were tokenistic forums ([Mills, 2004](#); [Tisdall & Davis, 2004](#); [Maitles & Deuchar, 2006](#)). In the present study over one-third of pupils said they were 'not sure' whether pupil councils had an impact with slightly more girls reporting they were

uncertain. Some girls in focus groups expressed the view that the pupil council was ineffective so they would not consider putting themselves forward for this committee at school. It is plausible that some girls may self-exclude from such decision-making forums, as other research shows that girls are more hesitant to engage with selection processes for the pupil council which usually involves the candidate making a public case for what they will bring to the role (Commissioner for Children England, 2011). In one secondary school, young people pointed out that the gender balance of the pupil council was skewed towards boys and teachers were observed to actively encourage girls to take part.

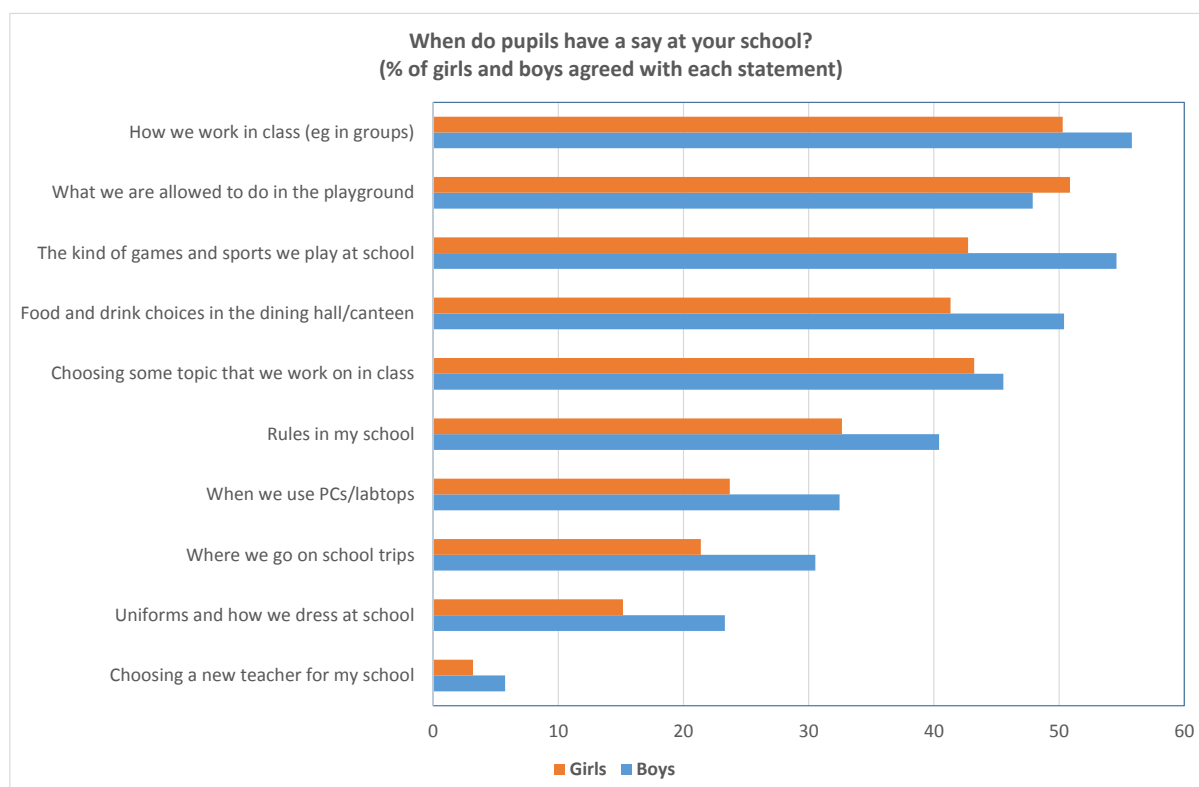
### ***Opportunities to vote***

The Chambers Twentieth Dictionary defines voting as: *'an expression of a wish or opinion'* and, also *'a means by which a wish or a choice is expressed'* which reflect the sentiments expressed in Article 12 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. In the questionnaire we asked one question about this activity but did not collect information on the focus of voting or whether this mechanism was used to consult with children or that children and young people were voting for a pupil representative (i.e. on the pupil council member or for a school captain). The chance to cast a vote, however was found to be rather low given less than half (42%) of children and young people, overall said they had the opportunity to do so. While 60% of P7 pupils said that: 'Pupils get a chance to vote on what happens at my school', only 29% of secondary pupils indicated that they had a chance to vote. This difference may be explained by the fact that there can be many more opportunities to vote in primary schools since studies have found that primary schools often have suggestion boxes in the classroom, giving children opportunities to have a say at school (see [McCluskey et al., 2013](#)). While sector differences, may in part account for this discrepancy, it would appear that there is scope for using this aspect of democratic practice, more extensively in schools. Moreover, it would also be helpful to have more information about pupils' opportunities to vote at school and the extent to which students get to vote as a consultative activity, or whether they get the chance to vote on governance-related issues such as school policies and rules.

### ***Extra-curricular activities***

The survey asked about a list of areas where pupils had a say at school and, as we have seen this included items regarding practices and the distribution of decision-making in the classroom. This section now considers survey responses to additional questions about extra curricula activities, including whether pupils had an input into food and drink choices in the canteen, where they went on school trips, sport activities available at school, the use of PCs/ laptops and what happened in the playground. Overall, pupil input into decision-making in these areas was found to be low and notable gender differences were identified, raising pertinent questions about the sense of efficacy evident in boys, as compared to girls.

**Figure 1: Differences in when pupils have a say at school by gender (%)**



With the exception of what happened in the playground, more boys reported a say in extra-curricular areas, in comparison to girls. This included food and drink choices in the dining hall (boys: 51% agreed; girls: 40%), school trips where just over a quarter of pupils said they had a say (boys: 34%, girls 27%), when pupils used PCs/laptops where 28% of pupils agreed but again, more boys did so than girls (boys: 39%, girls: 27%). Other items focused on the kind of games and sports played at school and just under half of pupils agreed (49%) they contributed to decision-making on this. On this latter issue, the difference between boys' and girls' views were striking, especially at primary level (P7 boys 70%, P7 girls 54%). These findings demonstrate that on most items boys believed that they had more of a say in comparison to girls. This raises questions about the gendered expression of participation given that more boys reported that they had a say on many more items, than girls. This suggests that boys may feel more confident that their views are listened to, or taken into account while girls may be less self-assured or possibly more cynical regarding the extent of their influence. Interestingly, research undertaken in primary schools in Northern Ireland ([Emerson & Lloyd, 2016](#)) found that girls were significantly more positive about their participation rights than boys; a result that was explained in the sociability of girls and the fact that they are more socially responsible than boys.

The issue of sports and games played at school emerged as a contentious issue between boys and girls in focus group discussions, especially at primary school. Which groups of pupils had opportunity to play football appeared to be linked with equity, providing a source of conflict between boys and girls:

BOY 1: *Cause, like, the girls' football started quite a bit before the boys, and the boys were kinda, they were annoyed that they couldn't go to that. So he came in and he started up the boys' football.*

BOY 2: *And the girls started going all mad about it*

- BOY 1: *The reason we were all annoyed about it is because we asked for it. We'd been asking for years, and then the girls get one and the girls have never asked for one, and we were sitting asking for ages.*
- GIRL 1: *No, some did, Emma and that did ask for it.*
- GIRL 2: *Yeah, but it was...*
- BOY 1: *They asked...*
- BOY 3: *We have been asking more though.*

Focus group: primary school (school code 14)

### ***Areas of low participation: school rules, uniforms and staff recruitment***

There were three main areas where pupils reported fewer opportunities (defined as less than 20% of pupils agreeing with the item) to have an impact on decision-making at school. These included decision-making about school rules, school uniforms and the process of staff recruitment. In terms of input into the process of making school rules (e.g. bullying policies), only 20% of pupils acknowledged that they had some say in this area which was consistent across primary and secondary sectors. Such low levels of input are very much at odds with current thinking on promoting children's and young people's meaningful participation at school (see [Hudson, 2012](#)). As with other questionnaire items on decision making, more boys than girls agreed they had a say on rule making at school (boys: 40%, girls: 33%).

In relation to uniforms, a fairly small minority of pupils (20%) said they had a say in what they wore at school. Again, a higher number of boys indicated they had input on this issue in comparison to girls (23% of boys, compared to 15% of girls). It is worth highlighting that out of the sample of secondary schools (n=10), we found that uniforms were worn in all schools with one exception. Young people explained that the decision to abandon uniforms in this school was led by a 'Pupil Steering Group' who sought a wide range of opinions on the matter (e.g. parents, pupils), thus providing a noteworthy instance of pupil involvement in decision-making at school.

Fielding ([2004](#)) uses the example of students being members of interview panels for the recruitment of new teachers as an exemplar of pupil voice and a key way that pupils can effect change. Substantially fewer pupils, in either P7 or S2 said that they had any kind of say in choosing a new teacher given only 4% of pupils agreed that they had some kind of input into assisting with the selection of a new teacher in their school. Again, in keeping with other items, slightly more boys than girls said they had a say in choosing a new teacher. A fairly recent survey (Officer for Commissioner for Children, England 2011) of 2,000 children aged nine to sixteen, found that two-thirds of pupils said they would like a role in the recruitment of teachers. Approximately 1 in 5 pupils (18%) reported that they had taken part in choosing a teacher, while most survey respondents indicated that they would like to do so. A large majority of children (87%) felt confident in that they knew what made a good teacher and pupils – particularly those in secondary school – said that they could identify a teacher who was less competent. Previous research by Whitty and Wisby ([2007](#)) found that teacher support for pupil involvement in this process was mixed since under half of teachers (45%) in their survey indicated they approved of pupil input to the selection of teachers.

## 2. The practice of 'active citizenship' at school

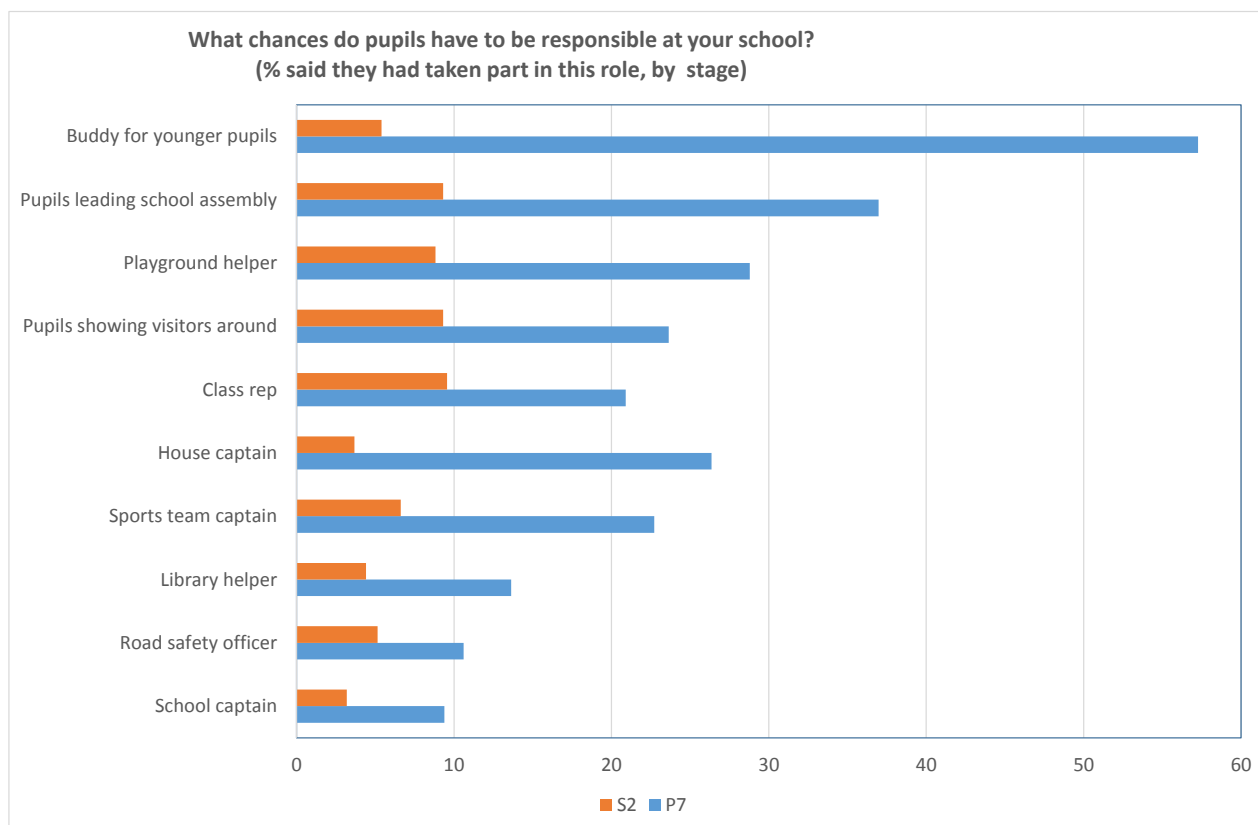
Participatory profiles identified in each school sector showed marked differences both in terms of a) what children said about the opportunities on offer at school, and b) the extent to which pupils indicated they participated in these activities. When assessing these findings, it is worth reiterating that by surveying the most senior pupils in primary, in contrast to junior pupils at the beginning of secondary school, we solicited the views of those with more and less status within each institutional setting. Inevitably, these positions would have impacted on the perceptions and assessments made by pupils in each sector.

### *Membership of clubs and teams and committees*

The questionnaire suggested a list of 14 areas in which schools might have clubs, teams and committees, and ten potential roles of responsibility. For each area, pupils were asked to indicate whether their school had opportunities in that domain, and whether as a pupil they had taken part. A key finding was that in most types of activity, participation in S2 was significantly lower than at primary school.

Overall, the majority (61%) of pupils in both sectors said they were a member of a club, team or committee at school. That said, P7 pupils were much more likely than S2 pupils to say that they participated in all roles of responsibility within the school, as indicated in the discussion below. This suggests that primary schools offer a wide range of 'active citizenship' opportunities for all pupils, especially for senior pupils. However, the proportion fell from 72% of P7 pupils to 53% of S2 pupils. On average, P7 pupils identified nine areas in which their school had clubs, teams and committees, and 3.5 areas in which they personally participated. On the other hand S2 pupils, identified 8 areas in which clubs/teams or committees were available in their school, and indicated they took part in just over 1 area, on average. As a result there were distinct differences between P7 and S2 pupils in the extent to which a) extra-curricular group activities were reportedly available, and b) the extent of participation in these activities. Similar differences were found with respect to roles of responsibility.

**Figure 2: Differences in opportunities for responsibility by sector (%)**



In focus groups primary children often described a strong participatory culture at school while young people at secondary presented a more variable picture. For example, some primary children communicated the idea that it would be hard not to take part at their school in terms of the extent of what was on offer, in addition to the expectations of teachers. In the following extract members of a group from a semi-rural school explained the participatory ethos at their primary school and the fact that they felt everyone was involved:

MODERATOR: *Right, okay - you were talking about?*

BOY 1: *Councils.*

MODERATOR: *And what kind of councils - who's involved in that here?*

BOY 2: *Everyone!*

GIRL 1: *Everyone, everyone in the school.*

Focus group: primary school (school code 14)

The existence of an ethos where it was ‘taken for granted’ that children participated at primary school is supported by our previous teacher interview study where teachers intimated that all children had the opportunity to take on a role while at primary school ([Ross & Brown, 2013](#)). Primary children commonly referred to undertaking specific roles such a buddying, as well as committee membership (e.g. eco and pupil council) when asked about opportunities to be responsible at school. In contrast, young people in S2 when asked about participation at school were more likely to speak about taking part in sports and related activities, and to a lesser extent committee membership.



## Leadership in school: buddying

Scheeren's (2011) framework for 'active citizenship', includes peer mentoring and buddying schemes as ways in which schools can develop leadership skills, and activities such as pupils leading assemblies. Again, we found discrepancies between sectors on these items both in terms of whether buddying was on offer, in addition to the extent to which pupils said they had taken on this role. Overall, 71% of pupils said the role was available in their school (P7: 85%, S2: 59%), indicating that buddying is a common feature across Scottish schools. Interestingly, pupils in non-urban and large schools were more likely to say that their school had a buddying or mentoring scheme, and they were more likely to take part in it. It is likely that in larger schools buddying schemes would be one positive way in which pupil networks can be fostered and supported by schools.

Being responsible at primary school was explicitly linked with developing positive social relationships with younger children and particularly P7s taking part in buddying schemes as a senior pupil. Without exception this was raised in all focus groups carried out with primary-aged children. Children appeared to derive considerable confidence and satisfaction from carrying out this role from a position of status within their school. In the questionnaire, just under fifty percent of children (48%) said that they had engaged in this activity, compared with only 11% of S2 pupils. Clearly, P7 pupils were more likely to carry out this role as the oldest pupils, while young people in S2 pupils were more likely to be the recipients of buddying, especially when they first moved up to secondary school.

Overall, more girls in P7 indicated that they had taken on this role at school given 63% of girls said they had done this, compared to 53% of boys - a discrepancy which may reflect expectations regarding the caring propensity of girls. While children acknowledged that buddying could be a demanding duty, especially monitoring excitable 'younger ones' in a confined space at wet intervals, many primary pupils communicated a strong sense of pride regarding fulfilling this role. Primary 7 pupils said it was most satisfying to build good relationships with younger children who would 'look up' to the P7 children. As one boy succinctly put it, the younger ones respected buddies which conferred a degree of authority and status: *They listen to what you say and look up to you.* Another boy highlighted that the moral and socializing function of being a buddy: *You make sure they are doing the right thing.* A few counter examples were identified to this positive evaluation. Children from two non-urban primary schools said that buddying encroached on children's rights to enjoy playtime at school. In one small primary school buddying, including helping young children in the toilets with hand washing was felt to be an onerous responsibility. In this small rural school the responsibility of buddying was described as demanding:

BOY 1: *It's trying to make them possible but not trying to be too negative here but in a way when you're 'buddying' you do it during your break and your lunch, which in a way yeah, people say: 'Yeah you have to sacrifice' but I'm in a composite so there's only eight P7s in our class so for the whole week I don't have a break or lunch.*

BOY 2: *That's not fair it should be our playtime not watching the little ones.*

Focus group: primary school (school code 3)



## *Participation in school assemblies*

Kerr et al. (2007) concluded from a large scale, European-wide survey that young people contributing to school assemblies, where they led part or all of the proceedings was increasingly a more standard practice adopted by schools. During fieldwork, it is of note that when administering the questionnaire to classes, pupils were sometimes visibly confused by, and asked questions about the phrase 'leading assemblies'. What appeared to be puzzling was the use of the term 'leading' given pupils did not seem to associate the word: 'leading' with their participation in assemblies. This contrasts sharply with teacher accounts of this activity where they conceived pupils as 'leaders' when taking school-wide assemblies (Ross & Brown, 2013). On this issue some dissonance between children's understanding and those of teachers appears to be a relevant. Participation in assemblies was commonplace, particularly in primary schools where P7 children said that they regularly took responsibility in this forum. A group of primary children from an urban school described taking part in school assemblies as: '*having your moment*' at school, and as part and parcel of being a senior pupil at school.

### **3. Values and participation**

This section addresses decision-making at school and presents findings which show some significant differences between the primary and secondary sectors in a number of domains. This includes reported attitudes to relationships with teachers. It is relevant that the views of pupils need to be assessed in the context of two divergent institutional environments which encourage and support quite different relationships between teachers and pupils (see Noyes, 2003; Coffey, 2013; Ross & Brown, 2013).

#### *Key values promoted by Scottish schools*

With regard to fundamental values communicated by schools, here we asked about two different aspects. In the questionnaire this included an item on being kind and thoughtful to others, in contrast to an item on whether schools fostered autonomy and independence in pupils. The vast majority of pupils (99% of primary pupils and 96% of secondary pupils) agreed with the statement: 'My school expects me to be kind to others', reflecting the value of social responsibility, aligned with the notion of the common good (Stoecklin, 2013) and citizenship more generally. Encouraging independence was also a very clear expectation communicated by schools, given that 69% of primary pupils and 70% of secondary pupils agreed that: 'My school expects me to look after myself'. It is of note that more girls than boys agreed with this latter statement which may indicate differences in the expectations of teachers and other adults.

#### *Pupils views on the purposes of participation*

While at the level of policy, pupil participation is assessed overwhelmingly as a constructive development for pupils, little information exists regarding children and young people's views on this matter. The present study identified two main ways in which pupils explained the purposes of participation in focus groups. These were:

1. Collective benefits.
2. Instrumental types of purposes.

Feeling better networked, connected and integrated into school was stressed as an important outcome of participation by secondary pupils. Clearly, this is a community orientated position since 'making more friends' and getting to know people who were in different year groups was viewed as a positive outcome of joining extra-curricular activities at secondary school. This position is in keeping with the *Positive about Pupil Participation* ([Scottish Executive, 2006, p. 10](#)) document which suggests that the benefits of participation are twofold in bringing distinct advantages for both the school and learner. For pupils, this included being more integrated into the milieu of the school community and in a similar vein the guidelines suggest that participation brings: '*an increased sense of connection to the school community for pupils*'.

The second instrumental position on the purposes of participation fits with the idea that participation is: 'individualized' for self-realization in order to equip children with skills for future lives in a globalized economy ([Raby, 2014](#)). It is significant that when children were asked about the purposes of participation in focus groups both primary and secondary pupils placed greater emphasis on the benefits for the individual and their future lives. Examples included the benefits accrued for children's well-being generally, including healthy outcomes from taking part in sports activities, as well as in terms of developing self-confidence. The advantages of participation for 'the future' i.e. in terms of preparing pupils for jobs, as well as facilitating getting a better job as an adult, and as an experience that could be usefully included in a CV. In one group it was thought that taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme would be beneficial to the CV of discussants. These kinds of views were evident at both primary and secondary level and the refrain '*you can put it on your CV*' were not uncommon. The above viewpoints fit with policy pronouncements on this matter where increased confidence, competence and an enhanced sense of responsibility are seen as an outcome of participation in decision-making at school ([Robinson, 2014, p. 4](#)).

### ***Relationships and pupil participation***

It is widely accepted that constructive teacher-pupil relationships in school are the building blocks of meaningful participation (see [Wyness, 2013](#); [Mannion et al., 2015](#)). In the Scottish Executive guidelines, *Positive about Pupil Participation* ([2006](#)), predictably the following observation is made:

*Good relationships are the starting point ... Effective practice [in the field of pupil participation] relies on trusting and enabling relationships at school.*

[\(Scottish Executive, 2006, p. 4\)](#)

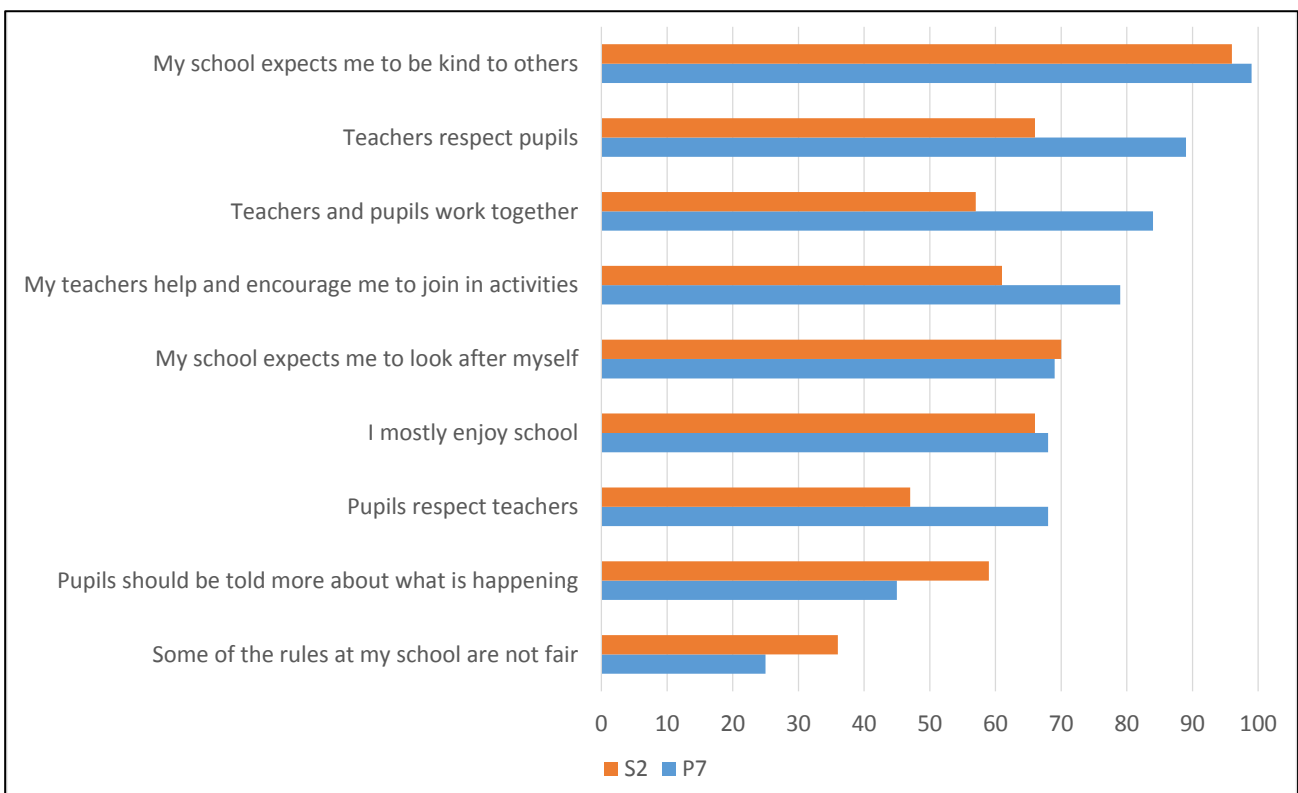
A strong inter-generational component (see [Wyness, 2013](#)) was found in children and young people's responses to the focus group question: '*What helps you take part at school?*' Unsurprisingly, there was less talk of parents and family in the secondary sample. Issues such as whether the teacher who was providing the activity was well liked and if the young person had a good relationship with them, was said to make a considerable difference to whether pupils participated in activities at school. Similarly, targeted and sustained encouragement from a teacher who saw a talent or aptitude in a student was also highlighted as encouraging. In one group a girl described how she had been put forward for a writing competition by her teacher, unbeknown to her and came third. Another boy mentioned that he was put forward for the Pupil Council because his form teacher thought he would be very good at it. As a result teachers who saw a potential or talent in their students and who actively involved them were identified as influential in terms of supporting various kinds of participation at school (e.g. in committees,

competitions). Other teachers were identified as being positive role models who were thought to have a constructive influence on the ethos of the school, including the attitudes of pupils.

As one might expect, there were some differences between the survey responses of children in primary school, as compared with young people at secondary in S2. Young people in secondary overall, gave less positive responses in terms of how they viewed relationships with teachers, in contrast to the more constructive – and perhaps less critical – assessment made by primary pupils. It is worth highlighting however that secondary pupils come into contact with a greater variety of teachers on which to base their judgements while primary pupils’ responses are based on a small number of teachers by comparison ([MacKenzie et al., 2012](#); [Ross & Brown, 2013](#)). Relationships between pupils and teachers were identified as more collaborative, from the point of view of P7 pupils, given that most agreed that teachers and pupils worked together (84%, as compared with 57% of secondary pupils). Overall, primary pupils agreed strongly with the following statements on teacher/pupil relationships: ‘Teachers and pupils work together’ (84%), ‘Teachers respect pupils’ (89%), ‘My teachers help and encourage me to join in activities’ (79%) and ‘Pupils respect teachers’ (68%). Fewer S2 pupils however expressed these attitudes (see Figure 3 below). Young people at secondary school inevitably negotiated a complex myriad of relationships with teachers; a reality which was anticipated by some primary pupils. In the following extract, one primary pupil lamented the fact that she would have a very different relationships with her teachers when she moved up to secondary:

*Some of the subjects at secondary sound quite exciting but I’m not as excited to go there ... I don’t like the fact that I won’t be able to grow close to a teacher as we did with Miss Clarke.*  
(Open ended responses: P7 girl, urban school)

**Figure 3: Pupil perceptions of school and relationships by school sector (%)**



## ***Peers, self-determination and participation***

There were a few relevant counter examples to the idea that young people required friends in order to take part at school or elsewhere. While peer networks were clearly very important, a small number of independently minded young people (and this was also found to be the case with primary children) said that an incentive for them to join activities and clubs was their own personal, intrinsic motivation. These young people intimated that a strong interest in the activity on offer would be enough to encourage them to learn an instrument or take part in a sport (e.g. boxing, judo). Instances of this kind were unusual in that the young person explicitly stated that it was irrelevant whether their friends took part.

The questionnaire asked a number of questions regarding what helped young people take part both inside and outside of school. Unsurprisingly, there were differences in the relative influence of family and friends between sectors and although 45% of P7 pupils said they would be more likely to join clubs or teams if their family encouraged them, only 34% did so in S2. However, 73% of S2 pupils stressed the role of friends, and said they would be more likely to join activities if their friends joined too. Half of P7 pupils also agreed with this statement, thus reaffirming the importance of being integrated into supportive peer networks at school.

## ***Other facilitators of participation: communication, access and inspiration***

In the survey we asked about how activities were communicated by schools and here some differences were found between sectors. Pupils in S2 were more critical of their school with respect to: 'Pupils should be told more about what is happening' (45% of primary pupil agreed with this statement, compared to 59% of secondary pupils). In primary schools there was also a significant difference between urban and non-urban schools, since 54% of pupils agreed with this statement in urban schools while only 39% did so in non-urban ones. This difference could be attributed to school size since the rural primary schools we accessed tended to have smaller school rolls than those in urban areas. Secondary pupils also spontaneously raised the issue of not being fully informed about activities in focus group discussions. On this issue pupils highlighted specific form teachers who were effective communicators and were especially good at imparting information. This finding highlights the need for an integrated school approach to communicating 'what's on' at secondary school, especially in larger schools.

In rural areas where children and young people's family home was a distance away from school, access to activities was raised as an issue for young people. Considerations such as the timing of school buses and the availability of transport, including lifts from family members could impact on whether a young person could take part in extracurricular activities and clubs. While this barrier tended to be confined to rural areas, it was also mentioned as a problem for pupils in urban areas who resided out with the catchment area of their school.

Other less common promoters of participation were raised by children as high profile, inspirational events, as well as visual artefacts on display around the school. In focus groups boys were more likely to raise high profile events and films as influencing their participation in sports, including the Olympics and films such as 'Rocky' which were regarded as motivational. In one primary school, children talked enthusiastically about posters on display around their school. These contained what children described as inspiring slogans including: *'it always seems impossible until it's done'*, and *'it's always too early to give up'*.

## *School ethos and enjoyment of school*

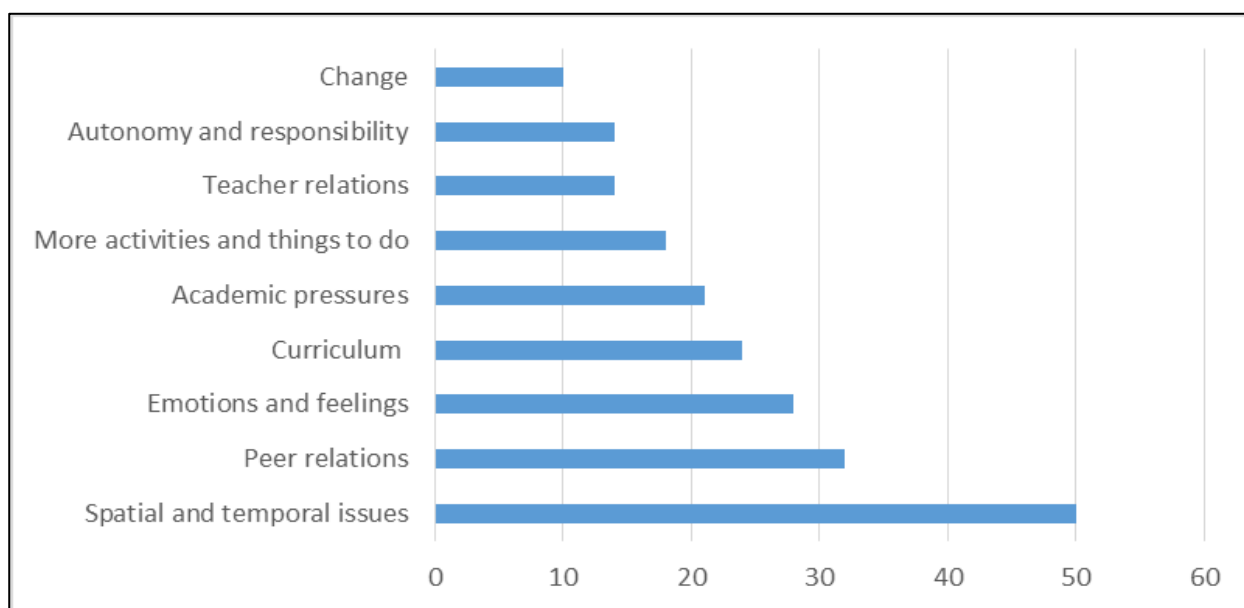
Solvason (2005) explains the use of the term 'ethos' as meaning the 'feelings that results from the school culture' (quoted in [Scheerens, 2011, p. 203](#)). In the present study, a significant relationship was found between the existence of a positive, participatory school ethos and pupils' reported satisfaction with school. In schools identified as having a developed participatory ethos, on a number of measures, pupils were more likely to agree with the statement: 'I mostly enjoy school'. This finding is most relevant given that meagre empirical evidence exists to support an explicit connection between the happiness and well-being of young people with the participatory profiles of their school. Enjoyment of school was found to be very similar across sectors (68% of primary pupils, against 66% of S2 pupils). This positive endorsement of schools was supported in open-ended responses in the questionnaire which asked about the perceived differences between secondary and primary school. Disparities were found between school location (i.e. non-urban and urban schools) since more pupils attending non-urban schools said they enjoyed school (76% of P7 pupils agreed in non-urban schools while only 56% of children in urban primary schools indicated that they enjoyed school). Overall, more pupils in less deprived schools: 69% said that they enjoyed schools as compared with 59% in more deprived schools suggesting that socio-economic disadvantage/advantage impacts on children's satisfaction with school.

From another perspective, pupils (mainly boys) who were identified as having 'low activity scores', and reported that they were not a member of a club, team or committee at school were less likely to agree with the statement that they: 'mostly enjoy school', suggesting a limited assimilation into the school community for some pupils. This group of pupils were also much more likely to agree with the statement: 'I am not the kind of person who joins clubs and teams' and 'I am too busy doing other things', again, implying that there may be issues for some children regarding integration into their school community. It is also relevant that primary pupils who indicated that they did not enjoy school were more likely to state they worried about not having many friends when they moved up to secondary school (i.e. 27% of primary pupils indicated that they worried about friendships as compared with 16% who reported that they enjoyed school). The following P7 girl explained her concern about moving to secondary school: *I feel worried in case I won't have my friends in secondary school*, while a P7 boy expressed similar sentiments about the impending move: *I feel OK but the hardest thing will be to make new friends*.

## **4. Pupil views on the primary-secondary transition**

A large volume of data was collected on what children thought about the impending move up to secondary school and secondary pupils' reflections on their experience in both school settings. The study therefore makes a relevant contribution to what is known about this key transition from the point of view of children and young people in Scotland. Typically, three or more different issues were raised in each open ended response in the questionnaire (see [Appendix 4](#)). Generally, girls gave more expansive responses, covering many more areas. Figure 4 illustrates the percentage of pupils' comments which mentioned each of the nine categories.

Figure 4: Views about differences between primary and secondary school (%)



While there were not particularly significant differences found between male and female pupils there were consistent differences which are worthy of further investigation.

Control over mobility, especially going out for food at lunchbreaks was a significant new responsibility which was highly rated in the open-ended responses in the secondary sample. In young people's descriptions of this new found autonomy they regularly used terms such as 'freedom' and 'independence' and also raised 'choice' as an important aspect of being at secondary school. They explained that they now had the choice to go outside, they had a much wider choice of friends and exposure to a much wider variety of teachers. Similarly, studies which have explored the expectations of primary children regarding transition found that some children were 'looking forward to having more freedom and choice about where to go at break times and what to eat for lunch' (Robinson, 2014, p. 16). The following pupils explained the benefits of being at secondary school:

*There are more subjects and clubs. I have more independence at secondary school. There is more maturity shown.*

(Girl S2, urban school)

*In secondary you are intrusted with responsibility and freedom, a feeling that I have hardly ever felt during my years at primary school.*

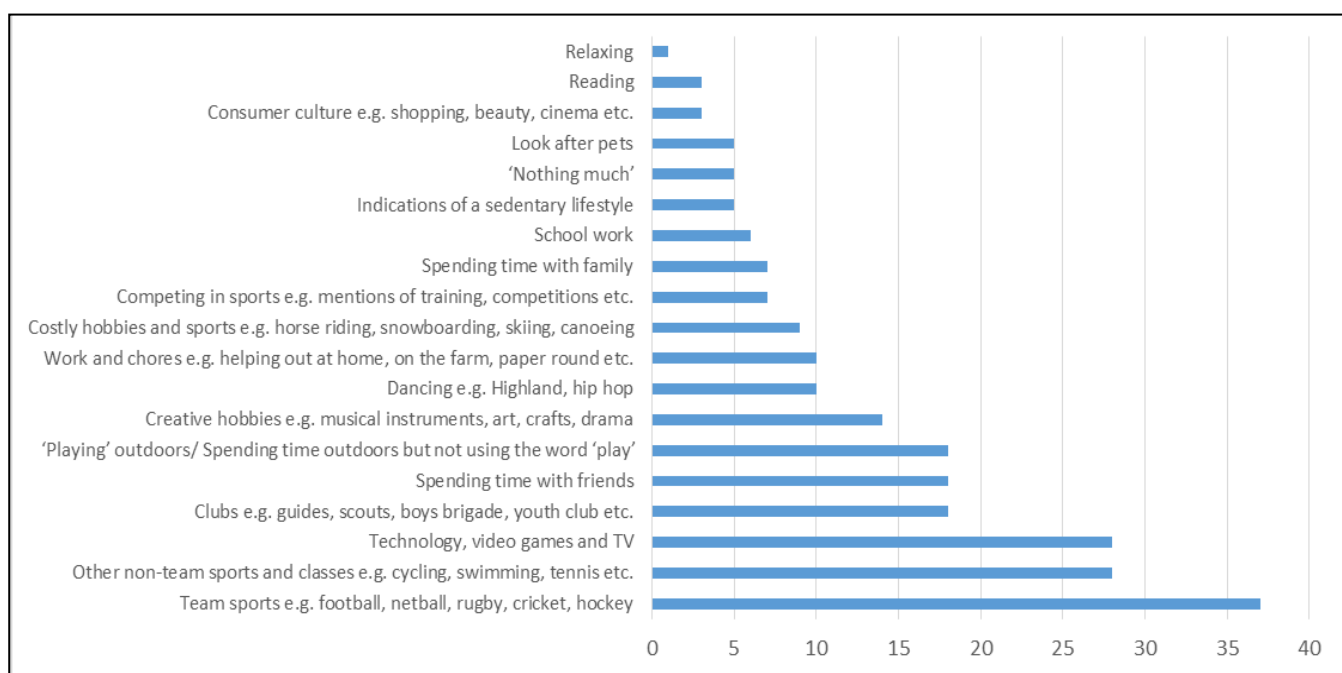
(Boy S2, urban school)

While questionnaire findings show a clear dip and disparity in reported rates of participation at the beginning of secondary school (as compared with primary), it is plausible that this deficit may be counterbalanced and replaced by new, more exciting forms of responsibility when young people arrive at secondary school. New experiences and responsibilities; namely the freedom to negotiate a much wider choice of spaces inside and outside school and greater choice of peers, as well as contact with a variety of teachers could perhaps to some extent supersede and 'cancel out' the advantages identified of being at primary school (i.e. deep connections with teachers, circle time and so on).

## 5. Taking part outside of school

In order to provide a contrast about what happened in school, pupils were asked about activities out of school, including any jobs they did. Findings illustrated that they were involved in an extensive range of activities. Figure 5 below illustrates the variety of activities mentioned. The most frequently cited activities were team sports such as football (37%), followed by non-team sports such as swimming, cycling, and tennis (28%). The use of technology such as watching TV, video games, YouTube, using mobile phones, listening to music on a tablet was highlighted by more than a quarter of respondents (28%). Under a fifth (18%) indicated being members of clubs (e.g. guides, scouts, boys' brigade, youth club); spending time with friends; and 'playing' or spending time outdoors or in the park. Creative and arts based hobbies (playing musical instruments, arts and crafts or drama) were also fairly popular (14%). Figure 5 below shows that opportunities for more reflective and solitary activities such as reading appeared to be low. The gendered nature of hobbies emerged clearly, as well as differences found between urban and rural schools. The following sections explore pupils' responses.

**Figure 5: Participation in activities outside of school (%)**



### *Family and friends*

Spending time with family was frequently mentioned in the open-ended responses, although those in P7 were more likely to mention this than S2 pupils, suggesting that pupils may be more reluctant to spend time with their family as they get older. Pupils attending schools in areas of medium deprivation were more likely to mention spending time with friends (28% vs. 15% in low deprivation areas) and with family (10% vs. 6%) in their responses – activities which have few costs attached to them. Those attending schools in urban areas meanwhile were more likely to say that they spent time with friends than those in non-urban areas.

More than one in five pupils (21%) mentioned spending time with their friends or family. Of these, spending time with friends was the most popular. While boys were more likely to mention playing football or the role of technology in their lives, girls tended to mention their friends much more



(32% vs. 12% of boys). Girls regularly mentioned meeting up with friends and 'hanging out' in the park, going to friends' houses, listening to music together and having sleepovers.

### *Sports-related activities*

A large number of pupils (64%) mentioned sports of some kind in their responses. The most common of these was team sports (e.g. football, hockey, netball, basketball, and cricket). More boys mentioned being involved in team sports, with almost half of boys mentioning this (48% vs. 24% of girls). Football was overwhelmingly popular and many said they played for a local team, as well as after school with their friends. A smaller proportion of girls said they participated in netball, hockey and football and they were also significantly more likely to mention being part of a dance group (e.g. highland dancing, hip hop or Zumba).

There were stark differences in terms of the types of sports P7 and S2 pupils said they were involved in and those pupils in S2 were less likely than P7 pupils to mention being involved in team sports and were more likely to be sedentary, suggesting pupils may lose interest in sport as they get older. This is further evidenced in the responses of some of those in S2, particularly girls, who implied they had recently stopped taking part in some activities due to a drop in interest.

*Outside of school I do gymnastics and dance at home. I used to go to a gymnastics club but I stopped because they didn't even realize I was there.*

(S2 girl, non-urban school)

Pupils in non-urban areas were more likely to mention being involved in sports (team sports, non-team sports, competing in sports, dance groups, and costly hobbies and sports such as horse-riding). As one might expect, sports mentioned varied by location. Pupils from schools situated in the north of the country mentioned snowboarding and skiing, while those near the coast mentioned sailing, fishing and swimming in the sea. Horse-riding was popular among pupils (mainly girls) attending schools in rural areas.

### *Technology and 'doing nothing much'*

While the majority of pupils took part in sports, it was also clear that technology played a huge and significant part in the lives of young people. A wide range of technology was mentioned by the pupils, and included: playing computer games on various consoles (Xbox, PlayStation and Nintendo DS were popular among boys, while girls tended to mention Wii); watching TV (both in the traditional format, but also in terms of online platforms such as Netflix); watching and uploading videos to YouTube; texting and chatting on mobile phones (often, specific brands of phones were mentioned when discussing this); and using tablets such as iPad to access the internet. The following pupil account illustrates not only a variety of activities engaged in, but familiarity with technology:

*Gaming, Par core, Art, climbing, town, park, read, you tube, walk, talk, run, hyggie, St George's Park, amazon, apps, app store, music, iTunes, iTunes/store, amazon, shop, draw, paint, go to the library, buy stuff, Vlogs, blogs, YouTube videos, challenges, have fun, Netflix, food, more food, even more food, skateboard, cycle, go on my scooter, play on my tablet, swimming, subway, KFC, McDonalds, rappa, internet, Google, Bing.*

(P7 boy, urban school)



Boys were more likely to mention technology in their responses (36% vs. 18% of girls) and gender differences were found in the use of technology. While boys played computer games, girls' responses highlighted their use of YouTube and Netflix, with a number of S2 girls adopting the phrase 'Netflix and chill'.

One in 20 pupils said that they did 'nothing' or 'nothing much' in their spare time. S2 pupils were significantly more likely to make this kind of comment (9% vs. 1% of P7 pupils) and girls were also more likely to say that they did 'nothing much' in their spare time (7% vs. 3% of boys). As with sports, the data suggests that older pupils and girls begin to lose interest in former hobbies and activities.

### **Clubs and hobbies**

A third of pupils mentioned being part of clubs; said they enjoyed creative hobbies or reading; or made references to aspects of consumer culture. Those in large schools were more likely to mention being part of a club like the guides/ scouts or youth club and that they were involved in creative hobbies, suggesting that there are greater levels of choice in larger schools.

Attending local clubs was frequently mentioned by pupils including: the guides, scouts, girls' brigade and boys' brigade, the air cadets, and local youth clubs. These activities were significantly more popular among P7s (25% vs. 13% of S2 pupils). Pupils in non-urban areas were also more likely to mention they were part of a club. P7 girls were evidently proud of the badges they achieved in the guides although girls in S2 developed interest in other activities:

*I have a pony so I go riding most nights and play hockey at the weekends. I used to do lots of clubs but since high school I quit most of them.*

(S2 girl, non-urban school)

Girls were significantly more likely to mention creative hobbies in their responses (19% vs. 9% of boys). Girls in low deprivation areas were also more likely to mention creative hobbies (15% vs. 8% in medium deprivation areas). A minority of pupils, particularly those living in a city location, mentioned the cinema, and shopping as out of school activities.

### **Work and chores**

Almost a fifth (18%) of pupils mentioned work, including doing chores at home or helping people out, caring for pets and undertaking school work. Of these, the most commonly mentioned was chores around the house. Those attending schools in low deprivation areas were more likely to mention work and chores around the house (11% vs. 5% in medium deprivation areas). While there were no significant differences by gender or by year group in terms of the number of times pupils mentioned helping out at home, gender differences were evident in activities pupils mentioned by pupils. Pupils' responses illustrated the gendered nature of tasks given that girls indicated that they looked after siblings, babysat, as well as did 'housework'. Conversely, boys were more likely to mention putting the bins out and cutting the grass.

School work was mentioned only by a minority of pupils, with those in S2 more likely to raise this. Pressure to do well at school was apparent and some pupils mentioned extra tuition. This following extract is suggestive of a middle class and aspiring background:

*When I'm not in school I normally do work or play games, I revise subjects which I struggle on. I also play outside on my trampoline or inside on my Xbox. ... I attend sessions with my tutor to get a head start on next year's work.*

(S2 boy, urban school)

# Summary

## Pupil voice and participation in schools

Previously Hulmes et al. ([2011](#)), drawing on findings from Scottish-based empirical studies, as well as their own large scale study of participation in Scottish schools ([Cross et al., 2009](#)), maintained that the implementation of pupil participation across Scottish schools remained “patchy” and uneven. In their study they identified that most mechanisms for participation were either invitational or constituted an exercise in consultation with pupils. This suggests that there is considerable scope for the development of pupil voice in Scottish schools. The present study adds to the debate on pupil participation in a number of ways. First, it concurs that pupil participation remains uneven across schools. Second, it identifies specific areas for future development and third, it shows in a representative sample of Scottish schools, that school type (e.g. location of school, school size) helps shape the nature and practice of pupil participation. Given the study is based on robust sampling procedures, our findings provide a reliable evidence base for developing the pupil participation agenda. These are explained more fully below.

## Relationships and participation

A key finding of this research was the significance of teacher and peer relations for facilitating participation at school which is supported by previous studies ([Mannion et al., 2015](#)). The importance of social relationships at school in pupils belonging to strong and supportive peer networks, as well as enjoying positive, collaborative relationships with teachers, as well as supportive family relations (especially for primary children) were found to be of vital importance to taking part at school. Some secondary pupils also indicated that participation in activities at school, enhanced their integration into their school community by extending their peer networks beyond the bounds of established pupil hierarchies. This connection with others, including teachers is crucial to understanding the value of pupil voice and participation for schools and is in keeping with current theoretical thinking on children’s participation. Here the need to attend to, and understand the subtleties of its relational context are advocated ([Jupp Kina, 2012](#); [Wyness, 2013](#)). This insight helps situate the present study’s findings because the perspective of pupils needs to be understood as one vital dimension of understanding pupil engagement at school.

## School ethos and participatory cultures

A crucial finding of this study was that a significant relationship was found between a positive participatory school ethos (assessed on a number of measures such as pupil/teacher relationships, activities on offer at school), and pupils’ enjoyment of school. This finding is important given that the commentary on pupil participation suggests that the benefits of participation are built, in part, on anecdotal evidence. As a consequence this study provides sound empirical support for the idea that a strong participatory ethos at school impacts positively on pupils’ experiences. This is also supported by findings which show that one third of pupils report lower levels of satisfaction with school. These particular pupils were less inclined to engage in clubs and activities at school, and were much more likely to say that they did not enjoy school. While we cannot assume that all of these pupils were disengaged from school, we can surmise that they may be less well integrated into their school community. This is a pertinent finding since we know that vulnerable pupils are more likely to encounter challenges with the primary-secondary transition and find it harder to adjust to their new school community ([Beinart et al., 2002](#)). These findings suggest that levels of

pupil participation and engagement at school is one very useful barometer of the well-being of pupils. This is supported by John-Akinola and Nic-Gabhainn's (2014) study of 213 pupils (9–13 years of age) which found positive associations between schools which encourage pupil participation and the wellbeing of pupils.

## Conclusion and key recommendations

The following recommendations suggest pointers for action. In keeping with the position of Hulme et al. (2011), we observed a discernible gap between what is recommended at the level of policy and what pupils say happens in their school. As a result we propose that the gap between policy and what children say about the practice of participation requires sustained attention. Predictably, this would involve aiming for a more balanced alignment with policy guidelines on the issue of pupil voice and meaningful participation at school. This is a challenge given the way in which this study shows relevant and noteworthy differences in school practices in different types of schools (i.e. small and large, urban, non-urban) but especially between primary and secondary sectors.

## Embedding pupil voice and participation in decision-making in schools

Building on the earlier HMIE report (2006), the general and substantive implication of this study is that there continues to be considerable scope for embedding pupil voice and participation in decision-making across Scottish schools. Our findings suggest:

1. *Sector differences*: the discontinuity in what happens in terms of participation at the end of primary school and the beginning of secondary schooling is an area that requires attention if the policy imperative is to embed pupil participation evenly across schools, including both junior and senior pupils. Marked differences were found in opportunities to take part and levels of participation between sectors which suggests that this is a key site for future development.
2. *Gender and participation*: this study found that more boys expressed a greater sense of impact on decision-making at school, than girls. While these difference were not significant, consistent gender differences were evident across a range of items in children's and young people's questionnaire responses. This area would certainly benefit from sustained attention and a focus on the barriers encountered by girls. These findings suggest that schools need to develop proactive solutions to encourage confidence and participation in girls.
3. *Areas of low pupil participation*: scope for development was identified in particular areas. For instance, limited pupil participation in specific areas of decision-making (defined as under 20% of pupils agreeing with an item), included input into the formulation of school rules (e.g. bullying policies). Advances in this domain are suggested as especially important for meaningful student engagement at school (Lansdown, 2001; Drakeford et al., 2009; Hudson, 2012). Another area was staff recruitment; an arena according to Fielding (2004) and others (Robinson, 2014), where pupils could effect a degree of change.
4. *Low participators*: this study identified a group of pupils (around a third of the sample) as "low participators" at school. Previously we suggested that *some* of these pupils may be less well integrated into their school community than other pupils. Again, this implies that levels of pupil participation - used prudently and wisely - may be one very helpful gauge of pupil well-being at school.

It was also highlighted that opportunities to be active citizens and engage in democratic practices such as voting, as well as committee membership were fairly limited. The above findings indicate that a multi-pronged approach is necessary in a number of domains in order to make continued headway. Findings show clear sector deficits, particularly at the beginning of secondary school and point to the need for raised awareness in the developed sense of agency and influence reported by boys. In conclusion this study provides a firm evidence base from which to develop research informed strategies to move the participation agenda forward in Scottish schools.

## Appendix 1: Questionnaire sample

**Table (a). Location of sample schools (numbers)**

	Primary	Secondary	All
Local Authority 1	2	2	4
Local Authority 2	5	2	7
Local Authority 3	4	3	7
Local Authority 4	4	3	7
Not-urban (NU)	9	3	12
Urban (U)	6	7	13
Less-deprived (LD)	12	8	20
More-deprived (MD)	3	2	5
Large (L)	6	5	11
Small (S)	9	5	14
Total	15	10	25

**Table (b). Sample of pupils (numbers)**

	Primary	Secondary	All
Local Authority 1	107	97	204
Local Authority 2	79	59	138
Local Authority 3	82	101	183
Local Authority 4	62	151	213
Not-urban (NU)	198	123	321
Urban (U)	132	285	417
Less-deprived (LD)	265	308	573
More-deprived (MD)	65	100	165
Large (L)	207	198	405
Small (S)	123	210	333
Total	330	408	738

## Appendix 2: Focus group sample

### SECONDARY SAMPLE

SCHOOL CODE	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
17	4	4	8
18	3	3	6
19	3	3	6
20	5	4	9
21	4	5	9
22	4	4	8
23	4	4	8
24	4	4	8
25	3	4	7
26	4	4	8
TOTAL	38	39	<b>77 young people</b>

### PRIMARY SAMPLE

SCHOOL CODE	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
3	4	4	8
4	3	4	7
6	4	4	8
10	7	2	9
13	2	4	6
14	4	4	8
16	2	5	7
TOTAL	26	27	53 children
			<b>130 children</b>

## Appendix 3: Consent information

Dear Parent or Guardian

### Research project: what young people think about taking part at school and the differences between secondary and primary school?

There has been a lot of interest in the transition from primary to secondary school and how it impacts on children. While we know a lot about how this move influences issues such as children's learning and achievement, very little is currently known about how it affects children's independence, including the extent to which they take part at school. This is important because we know that taking part can benefit children and help develop their self-confidence.

### What taking part involves for your child: filling in a short questionnaire

If your child takes part in this study we would ask them to fill in a short questionnaire in class with their friends and other pupils. This asks them about what kinds of activities that are on offer at their school and the clubs and committees they take part in. We also ask them to compare what happened at their primary school with what happens now at secondary school.

### Focus group discussions

A small number of pupils (about 6-8) will be asked to take part in a group discussion with other pupils in S2. Topics for discussion will include views on the purposes of participation and how children think this might help them in future. Permission will be sought to record group interviews and it will be made clear to children that they are free to withdraw from this part of the research at any time, without penalty if they so wish.

### Why your child's school was chosen

Your child's secondary school was chosen because of the type of school it is. We are including a selection of large and small schools in our study, as well as those in urban and rural areas. The head teacher of your child's school fully supports this project and your Local Authority has given permission for us to contact schools in your area. This project has been approved by the Moray House Ethics Committee at the University of Edinburgh.

### Confidentiality and feedback

We do not need to know your child's name when they fill in the questionnaire or if they take part in the focus group. No child or individual school will be named in any report of this study. All children will be asked if they want to take part so completing the questionnaire and/or taking part in the group discussion is voluntary. When the study is finished, a summary of what we found out will be sent to your child's school. We hope that this research will help schools plan how they encourage children to participate.



## If you do not want your child to take part in this research

If you do **NOT** want your child to complete our questionnaire in class or take part in a group discussion ***please sign the form below*** and return it to your child's school as soon as possible. If you are happy for your child to take part ***you do not need to do anything***. If you would like further information about this research please contact Dr Jane Brown at the University of Edinburgh (Tel: 0131 651 6385 or email [J.A.Brown@ed.ac.uk](mailto:J.A.Brown@ed.ac.uk)) who would be very happy to answer your questions.

Best wishes and many thanks,

Dr Jane Brown

Moray House School of Education

University of Edinburgh

EH8 8AQ

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### Research project: what children think about taking part at school and the differences between secondary and primary school?

I **do not** wish my child to participate in the above research project.

Name of child.....

Signed (parent/guardian) .....

**Please complete and return this form to your child's school ASAP**

## Appendix 4: The questionnaire



### WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL?

- This survey asks you about your views of school and taking part at school.
- **There are no right or wrong answers.** If you are not sure about any question just ask your teacher or the person who gave it to you.
- Please **DO NOT** put your name on it. Only the researchers will see your answers.

We are very interested in **your** views and what **you** think!

#### ABOUT YOU

1. Are you a boy or a girl? (Please tick one box)

Boy  Girl

2. Which class or year group are you in? (Please tick one box)

P7  S2

#### ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

3. Please tick **ONE BOX**, to say whether you agree, disagree or are not sure.

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
A I mostly enjoy school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B My school expects me to be kind to others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C Some of the rules at my school are not fair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D My school expects me to look after myself and be independent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E Pupils should be told more about what is happening at my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F My teachers help and encourage me to join in activities at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>G</b>	Teachers and pupils work together in my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>H</b>	Teachers respect pupils at my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>I</b>	Pupils respect teachers at my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### WHO HAS A SAY AT YOUR SCHOOL?

4. Please tick **ONE BOX**, to say whether you agree, disagree or are not sure.

		Agree	Disagree	Not sure
<b>A</b>	Pupils get a chance to vote on what happens in my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>B</b>	Pupils get a say in what happens in their class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C</b>	Teachers mainly decide what happens in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>D</b>	Older and younger pupils get an equal say at my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>E</b>	Older pupils have more of a say at my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>F</b>	The pupil school council has a say in what happens in my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>G</b>	The head teacher mainly decides what happens in my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Please write in below** any other people who have a say in your school, who are **not** in the above list.

.....

## WHEN DO PUPILS HAVE A SAY AT YOUR SCHOOL?

5. Please tick **ONE BOX**, to say whether you agree, disagree or are not sure.

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
A Choosing some topics that we work on in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B How we work in class (e.g. in groups)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C Food and drink choices in the dining hall / canteen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D Where we go on school trips	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E The kind of games and sports we play at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F When we use PCs / laptops	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G What we are allowed to do in the playground	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
H Choosing a new teacher for my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I Uniforms and how we dress at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
J Rules in my school (e.g. about bullying or homework)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Please write in below** any other things you have a say on at your school that are **not** in the above list.

.....

## WHAT CLUBS, TEAMS AND COMMITTEES DO YOU HAVE AT YOUR SCHOOL?

6. Please tick the **FIRST BOX** if you have this at your school. Please tick the **SECOND BOX** if you have taken part in this activity at your school.

Clubs, groups, teams, or committees	Tick this box if you have this at your school	Tick this box if you have taken part in this	Not sure
A Eco group / committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B Team sports (i.e. football, netball)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C Health and wellbeing group / committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D Drama club	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E Pupil council	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F Fair Trade group / committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G Charities group / committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
H Buddying / mentoring schemes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I Enterprise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
J Garden / growing club / team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
K Choirs / bands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
L Computer / IT club	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M Homework club / study groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
N Pupil-run shop / café	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Please write in below** any other activity or things you have at your school that are **not** in the above list.

.....

## WHAT CHANCES DO PUPILS HAVE TO BE RESPONSIBLE AT YOUR SCHOOL?

7. For each role, please tick the **FIRST BOX** if your school has this role. Please tick the **SECOND BOX** if you have taken this role at your school.

Role	Tick this box if you have this at your school	Tick this box if you have taken part in this	Not sure
<b>A</b> Pupils leading the school assembly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>B</b> Sports team captain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C</b> Road Safety Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>D</b> Class rep (e.g. on school committee / council)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>E</b> Library helper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>F</b> House captain / leader	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>G</b> School captain / head of school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>H</b> Buddy for younger pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>I</b> Pupils showing school visitors around	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>J</b> Playground helper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Please write in below** any other school roles you know about, that are **not** in the above list.

.....

## DO YOU TAKE PART IN ACTIVITIES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL?

8. Please tick **ONE BOX**, to say whether you agree, disagree or are not sure.

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
<b>A</b> I am not the kind of person who joins clubs and teams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>B</b> I am a member of a club, team and / or a committee at my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C</b> I am too busy doing other things to join activities at my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>D</b> Some people don't get the chance to join clubs or teams at my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>E</b> I prefer to join clubs and teams outside of my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>F</b> I am more likely to join clubs or teams if my friends join too	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>G</b> I am more likely to join clubs or teams if my family encourage me to join	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT MOVING UP TO SECONDARY SCHOOL?

9. Please tick **ONE BOX** to say whether you agree, disagree or are not sure.

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
<b>A</b> There will be a lot more clubs and activities to join when I am at secondary school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>B</b> There will be less help and support when I am secondary school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C</b> There will be more interesting things to do when I am at secondary school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>D</b> I worry I will not have many friends when I go to secondary school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>E</b> I am confident I will know what to expect when I go to secondary school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## PLEASE TELL US MORE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

### 10. What do you do when you are NOT at school?

What activities (e.g. classes, games, sports) or jobs do you do outside of school? Please tell us about them below.

### 11. Compare your primary school with what you think it will be like at secondary school

What do you think will be the main differences between primary and secondary school? How do you feel about it?



REMEMBER **DO NOT** PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP

**Code (For official use only)**

## Appendix 5: Focus group topic guide

The focus group topic guides aimed to follow up issues addressed in the questionnaire in more depth, eliciting concrete examples of participation at school. A further objective was to gather information about barriers and facilitators to participation. In addition we also wished to collect information about children's anticipation of secondary school and in the case of secondary pupils their reflections on the differences between secondary and primary.

### Focus Group Topic Guide

Introductions: explanation of who the researchers. Distribute consent information and then advise about the kinds of questions to be asked – go through some of list below and then ask about permissions. Forewarn children regarding difficult questions (i.e. purposes of participation) which they might 'have to think about'. Go through consent sheet/ask to sign and seek permissions for recording.

#### 1. PARTICIPATION/TAKING PART GENERAL

*Warm-up topic – activities and interests inside/outside school (link with questionnaire and what they've just filled in as an introduction to topic)*

- What are the main things that you are involved in at school? (i.e. sports, clubs, houses)

*What/who helps people take part at school?*

- Some people say that certain things can help children/people take part at school. What do you think about that?

*Purposes of participation (forewarn- hard question)*

- You've told me quite a lot about the kind of things you like to do (sum-up). What you think people get out of being involved and doing the kinds of things that you've mentioned at school?

#### 2. PUPIL VOICE: WHERE AND WHEN

*Having a say/not having a have a say*

- Thinking about the places around your school - go through them as systematically – classrooms, outside space, dining hall and encourage contributions Is there a time or place when you feel more responsible at school? THEN follow-up with what about when you feel less responsible and explore why that might be.

#### 3. VIEWS ABOUT TRANSITIONS

*Moving up to secondary school*

- How different do you think secondary school will be and could refer and link back to questionnaire and last question. Ask whether everyone agrees. How will it compare with primary school?

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