

Pupil participation case study

In one school in Nottinghamshire, pupils were given the opportunity to develop an Autism Voice Group. The pupils were from all Key Stages in the secondary school and met regularly. Their latest venture was to produce a training DVD to be used as part of a training awareness session with staff in the school. This DVD was very effective in that the pupils themselves determined the content and also took control of the filming and editing. They were able to rehearse what they wanted to say to the staff about their needs in a safe and supportive environment, before being filmed.

The production of the DVD allowed pupils to work individually but also collectively to consider both their strengths and reflect on areas they found difficult in the secondary school. This has led to them working together in their preferred learning styles to develop ideas to produce materials for the DVD. The opportunity for pupils to work in their preferred learning style is important if their thoughts and feelings are going to be communicated effectively to the group.

In addition to the DVD, the pupils were asked to conduct an environmental audit in school and report back their findings and recommendations to the Senior Leadership team. Currently the pupils are working on an awareness display in the Library for Autism Day during April. The work taking place is coordinated by the pupils and led by two Year 11 boys who work with staff to ensure that the materials and message they are aiming to get across is appropriate and helpful for all.

The pupils started working together on a project which led to this more structured group being set up. It fits into the school system as some of the pupils are also representatives on the House and School Councils which meet regularly with School Leadership Staff. The group has provided these pupils with the opportunity to develop an understanding around each other's strengths and needs whilst developing skills around sharing and turn-taking. They have also benefited from understanding that peers have similar difficulties and they explore solutions to common difficulties together in a supportive manner.

