



LIFT OFF Pupil Forum Tuesday 13th October 2009

Dudhope Castle, University of Abertay Dundee

Pupil Forum Report

The LIFT OFF Pupil Forum is a group of S4-S6 pupils from LIFT OFF's partner schools in Fife and Tayside. All of the Pupil Forum members have attended Lift Off to Success, LIFT OFF's Summer residential program. The Pupil Forum meets twice a year and the members give up their time during school holidays to attend. It is an opportunity for pupils to provide feedback on LIFT OFF's activities, to contribute to the improvement of our future programs and to voice their opinions on various issues. One issue that the pupils were asked to give their views on during the morning session was 'Confidence in the Classroom'. This was a chance for pupils to discuss what teachers do well with regard to building their confidence. They were also asked to discuss what they think is meant by the concept of confidence (conclusions are summarised below).

The LIFT OFF Pupil Forum exists to:

- Give young people a voice that will be listened to
- Empower young people to make a difference
- Demonstrate confidence in young people by giving them extra responsibilities
- Help in raising the aspirations of young people in Fife & Tayside
- Provide pupil representation for LIFT OFF's partner schools

In attendance at the Pupil Forum were;

Area	School	Pupil Rep	Year Group
Angus	Arbroath Academy	Bethany	S4
		Gemma	S6
	Brechin High School	Megan	S4
		Katie	S4
Dundee	Baldragon Academy	Kayleigh	S5
	Braeview Academy	Sean	S5
		Samantha	S6
	Menzieshill High School	Jade	S4
		Heather	S4
	St Paul's RC Academy	Jozette	S4
Fife	Beath High School	Deeana	S5
		Kris	S6
	Lochgelly High School	Callum	S4
	Kirkland High School	Kathryn	S4
		Caitlin	S6
	Viewforth High School	Megan	S4
		Kirsten	S6
Woodmill High School	Ben	S4	
Perth & Kinross	Blairgowrie High School	Connor	S5
		Jack	S4

Also present:

Sarah Morisson	LIFT OFF Manager	Stan Godek	Facilitator
Gary Walsh	LIFT OFF Development Worker	Sean Godek	Assisting
Callum Ball	LIFT OFF Development Worker	University of Abertay	
Cheryl Cairns	LIFT OFF Development Worker	'White Space'	Film crew
Andy McKay	Senior Student Volunteer	Rachael Purvis	Student Volunteer
Gemma Johnsen	Senior Student Volunteer	Razia Javed	Student Volunteer

Pupil Forum Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions Sarah, Gary, Cheryl & Callum 10.00am

2. Confidence in the Classroom Stan Godek, all pupils

Lunch

3. Group discussions as follows:

Pupil Forum S5 and S6 members

Responsibilities

Benefits

S6 residential

Sarah, Gary, volunteers

Pupil Forum S4 members

Lift Off to Success

Communication questionnaires

Cheryl, Callum, volunteers

4. LIFT OFF Student Volunteers

Role of volunteers in school workshops

Proposed 'Student Q&A' section of website

All pupils, volunteers

5. Purpose of Pupil Forum

Agreement of Pupil Forum role

Agreement of Pupil Forum "rules"

All pupils, volunteers, LIFT OFF team

CLOSE

3.30pm

1. Welcome and introductions

Sarah welcomed all Pupil Forum members to the event and thanked them for attending. Gary gave an overview of the day and explained what the film crew would be doing during the morning session. Gary then handed over to Callum who led an ice-breaker activity called 'Cowboys'.

2. Confidence in the Classroom

Gary explained the purpose of this session and that the pupils' responses would be captured on video by White Space Solutions. It is hoped that the footage may be used to provide information for teachers in LIFT OFF's target schools with regard to this topic. The session was introduced to the Pupil Forum members as a chance for them to 'teach their teachers'. After a brief introduction, Stan asked pupils to consider a time when pupils were "given a bad time" by an authority figure and to discuss this in pairs. Stan then asked the pupils to feed back as to what authority figures they had spoken about. Below is the list of figures they mentioned:

Teachers (by subject)		Others	
English	History	Parents	Brother
Biology	French	Sister	Cousin
PE	German	Boss	Colleagues
Head teacher	Music	Bus driver	Taxi driver
Art	Home economics	Security guard	Police
		Community wardens	

Pupils were then asked to describe what emotions they felt in these situations. Pupils were also asked to say whether these emotions were generated in a situation with a teacher, with another person or whether the emotion was relevant to both a teacher and somebody else. Below is the list they arrived at:

Angry	Teacher
Irritated	Teacher
Annoyed	Teacher
Sadness	Both
Picked on	Teacher
Frustrated	Both
Awkward	Both
Disgust	Teacher
Hilarity	Both
Heart broken	Family member
Hostile	Both
Betrayed	Both
Closed	Both

Stan commented on how teachers were very prevalent in this list (listed either as 'teacher' or 'both'). Judging by this exercise, it is clear that teachers from all disciplines can have a demonstrable effect on pupils' emotions in the classroom (albeit in this exercise pupils were being asked to focus on negative feelings).

Therefore, pupil confidence can be affected dramatically by what teachers say and do.

Pupils were then split into three groups. Stan explained that the pupils were about to be asked to discuss some questions relating to confidence in the classroom. One person from each group would be asked to feed back. The questions asked were as follows;

- I. What is more important – looking clever in class or just knowing you are learning?
- II. What are the best ways for a teacher to give you praise for your work?
- III. Is it possible for a teacher to give you too much praise?
- IV. If you need to make a big effort to succeed in a subject – does that mean you are not very good at it?
- V. Does your relationship with your teacher affect how well you do in a subject?
- VI. What is confidence – what does a confident person look like/say/do?
- VII. Can you give some examples of what teachers have done to help you become more confident?
- VIII. What more could teachers do to help you and other students become more confident?
- IX. Please give us your Top Ten Tips to help teachers to be good/better at teaching.

A full summary of the pupils' responses to these questions can be found in the **Appendix (item 1)**. Below is a sample of the pupil's conclusions (paraphrased);

- I. What is more important – looking clever in class or just knowing you are learning?

"If you are too busy trying to look clever, you can focus too much on that and not pay attention. Some people might think you are a swot. Looking clever in class can lead to competition."

- II. What are the best ways for a teacher to give you praise for your work?

"They need to show not just what you're getting right, but also where you need to do more. Written feedback is good to help parents see how you're doing too. Spoken feedback 1:1 with the teacher is very effective."

III. Is it possible for a teacher to give you too much praise?

"Yes it's easy for teachers to give too much praise as they want you to do well but saying you are doing well when you know you're not doesn't help... Sometimes teachers praise some pupils and not others when they do the same thing. When it comes to teaching styles, informal is more relaxed because it puts pupils at ease. Teachers who have a formal style of teaching, i.e. heads down and no talking, make it more difficult for pupils to learn. Just because you have completed the work doesn't mean you have learned anything."

IV. If you need to make a big effort to succeed in a subject – does that mean you are not very good at it?

"Teachers should understand that some people will take longer to understand, but that the more you try the more you succeed. Teachers need to be patient and appreciate that pupils learn at different speeds. It is important that teachers appreciate it when people try their best. Pupils also need to recognise that sometimes they need to make more effort."

V. Does your relationship with your teacher affect how well you do in a subject?

"Yes. It really helps when there is mutual respect between the pupils and teacher. It really helps to keep motivated in the subject if you have a good relationship with the teacher. Strict teachers can be good, as you know what is expected of you"

VI. What is confidence – what does a confident person look like/say/do?

"Confident people are not afraid to speak up. They are outgoing and are not afraid to be themselves in different situations, and will do what they want to do – i.e. they won't just copy other people. Over-confident people are cocky and arrogant. Confident people make their presence known. They have a good posture and walk with a bit of a swagger. They are not afraid to try new things. Under-confident people walk with their heads and eyes down."

VII. Can you give some examples of what teachers have done to help you become more confident?

"Praising people. Giving them more responsibility. Encouraging people to speak out. Not putting too much pressure on pupils. Giving praise for confident behaviour when that is not the normal behaviour of that person. Encourage people to try things outwith their comfort zones. Get more confident pupils to encourage those that are less so."

VIII. What more could teachers do to help you and other students become more confident?

"Demonstrating confidence in the pupil. Give pupils the chance to make their own decisions / dictate their own actions. Help work on confidence in a non-classroom environment (take under-confident individuals out, give a pep talk and reintroduce)"

IX. Please give us your Top Ten Tips to help teachers to be good/better at teaching.

"Relax, mutual respect, sense of humour, boundaries, level of discipline, movement around class (pupils), get to know pupils, be consistent, equal amounts of time for "good" and "bad" pupils, if pupils act like children they should be treated as children; if they act as adults they should be treated like adults."

After this session, Gary invited pupils to thank Stan for his input. Gary also explained that after lunch, pupils will have an opportunity to work on an individual basis with the White Space film crew to express their opinions further in front of the camera, if they are interested in doing so. Eight pupils expressed an interest in doing this.

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3. Group discussions

Pupils were split into two groups. One group was made up of S4 pupils and the other was made up of S5 and S6 pupils.

While the group discussions were taking place, individual pupils were taken to a separate room to work with the White Space film crew to provide some short items of footage. These pupils were asked the question 'what makes a good teacher?'

A summary of items discussed in each group discussion can be found below.

S5 and S6 group

Sarah facilitated the discussion with the senior pupils. The pupils were asked to provide their feedback and opinions on the following topics:

- Vote on the proposed idea of having a LIFT OFF Ambassador/s (spokesperson/s).
- If proposal is approved, vote in LIFT OFF Ambassador/s.
- Discuss ideas for responsibilities and benefits of being a LIFT OFF Ambassador.
- Discuss the proposed idea of having an S6 residential event.
- AOB.

A minute of this discussion can be found in the **Appendix (item 2)**

S4 group

Cheryl and Callum facilitated the discussion with the S4 pupils. The pupils were asked to provide their feedback and opinions on the following topics:

- Lift Off to Success
 - Good/bad points
 - How has LO2S affected you?
 - Suggestions for improvement
- Communication with LIFT OFF
 - Communication Questionnaire

The Appendix includes a minute of the LO2S discussion (**Appendix item 3**) and a summary of the completed Communication Questionnaires (**Appendix item 4**).

4. LIFT OFF Student Volunteers

The LIFT OFF team felt that it was important to give the floor to the LIFT OFF Student Volunteers to lead this discussion. The volunteers were consulted about this before the Pupil Forum and were also given some guidelines to use for the delivery of the session. Topics discussed were as follows;

- The role of LIFT OFF Student Volunteers in school workshops
- Proposed Q&A section of LIFT OFF website

A minute of the discussion can be found in the **Appendix (item 5)**

5. Purpose of Pupil Forum

In order to empower the Pupil Forum members, it was felt that LIFT OFF should let the members decide what the role of the Pupil Forum should/could be and how the Pupil Forum should operate. Pupils were asked to discuss the following topics and to write the group suggestions down.

- What can the LIFT OFF Pupil Forum do...
 - For you?
 - For other LIFT OFF Core Pupils?
 - For your school?
 - For LIFT OFF?
 - Any other suggestions
- Can you suggest any "rules" for the Pupil Forum?
 - During Pupil Forum meetings
 - General rules/responsibilities

The responses were collated and can be found in the **Appendix (item 6)**

Pupils finished the day by creating LIFT OFF Pupil Forum posters.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE A COPY OF THE APPENDIX PLEASE CONTACT GARY ON
lift.off@fife.gov.uk