

Meadows School

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Participation & Empowering Young People Policy & Procedure

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	Contents	Page
1.	Introduction	2
2.	Aims	2
3.	General Principles	3
4.	Unit Meetings	3
5.	Tutor Groups	3
6.	Student Council	4
7.	Key-working	4
8.	Suggestion Boxes	4
9.	Annual Reviews	5
10.	Independent Living Skills	5
11.	Food Choices	5
12.	Recruitment of Staff	5
13.	OFSTED/Independent Visitors	5
14.	Complaints	5
15.	Additional Information	

1. Introduction:

Meadows School is committed to Barnardo's Basis and Values, which provides the framework within which we can engage in giving young people a better start in life.

- We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils.
- We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued.
- We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice.
- We understand that as a Special School we are working with some of the most vulnerable young people in the UK and therefore have a duty to ensure stringent procedures and training must be in place and available to all staff.

The procedures contained in this policy apply to all staff, volunteers and governors and are consistent with those of the Kent Safeguarding Children Board (KSCB).

2. Aims:

At Meadows School we believe that students should contribute to the decisions made about their care, education and future choices. We encourage students to participate in the decision making processes that affect their lives.

There are many ways in which they can be empowered which are suited to their age and ability, but an important factor is that, regardless of ability, we continue to uphold anti-oppressive practice in ensuring their ideas, thoughts or concerns are heard and taken seriously.

Only by empowering students to make decisions in a safe environment can we prepare them for successful and confident integration into a wider and more independent social world.

3. General Principles:

There are numerous ways in which students can be empowered to participate within discussions and decision making processes across the school.

The following is a non-exhaustive list that highlights forums and opportunities for students to be heard, influence the culture of the school and their own lives and futures.

- **Unit Meetings**
- **Tutor Groups**
- **Student Council**
- **Key-working**
- **Suggestion Boxes**
- **Annual Reviews**
- **Independent Living Skills Programme**
- **Food Choices**
- **Recruitment of staff**
- **OFSTED/Independent visitors**

4. Unit Meetings:

The unit holds regular house meetings to provide a forum to formally discuss matters that concern their daily lives. The meeting is recorded and must include the following information:

- **Date and Time**
- **Names of staff present**
- **Names of students present**
- **An agenda**
- **Actions from the meeting**

It is encouraged that students add to the agenda and participate in the actions so that their concerns and issues are raised, either by themselves or by a member of staff acting as an advocate. These concerns must be taken seriously and where possible or economically viable, action taken within an agreed timescale.

5. Tutor Groups:

Tutor groups meet daily and the teaching team promote an open forum for discussion and encourage students to take ideas forward through the student council.

6. Student Council:

The school council is composed of representatives from all areas of the school. Student council members are periodically voted in by their peers.

Meetings take place once a term and it is expected that Council Members bring items to the agenda based on discussions held with their peers.

Two members of staff support these meetings which are recorded.

Minutes are considered at the Senior Managers Meeting.

Nominated students can lose their seat on the Council if their behaviour is deemed to not represent a positive image for the school. This can be instigated for discussion by Council Members or staff.

7. Key-working:

Each student is given a Key Worker upon admission, this person provides guidance and support on an individual basis but can also take on the role of an advocate to ensure the student's views and wishes are heard. However all young people have access to all staff in the school and are encouraged to choose to discuss issues, share concerns etc with a member of staff they feel most appropriate for them.

8. Suggestion Boxes:

Each classroom has a suggestion box in it. Students can leave comments and suggestions openly or confidentially.

Suggestion boxes are checked regularly by tutors and appropriate suggestions are brought to the attention of senior leaders.

9. Annual Reviews:

All of our students have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). We follow a person centred process for all of our reviews meaning that information and decisions are reflective of the student's viewpoint. We encourage our students to take part at every point of the process, including completing a questionnaire prior to the meeting (with staff support) and attending the meeting if they feel comfortable to.

Where a young person may feel they cannot take part in either of these, every effort will be made to ensure that their voice is heard and reflected in the process. We also champion the voice of the parent/carer and they too will have the opportunity to complete part of the questionnaire the young person has completed and to attend all meetings. Again, if for any reason either of these processes may be difficult, staff will be able to advise and offer support as necessary.

10. Independent Living Skills:

The school has developed a structured Independent Living Skills Programme which is accredited through AQA. The programme encompasses a variety of specific tasks designed to increase independence and knowledge of the wider world. Students are offered a variety of qualifications based on their individual support needs.

11. Food Choices:

Students are encouraged to try new foods and follow a healthy and balanced diet whilst at school. To facilitate choice, they are given a choice of three lunchtime meals. Students enjoy a broad food studies curriculum which challenges the students not only to try new foods but learn different ways of creating with foods they currently enjoy. Food Studies qualifications are available to all students. Residential students are encouraged to get involved in menu planning, shopping for the unit and helping to prepare meals or cook for themselves independently.

12. Recruitment of Staff:

During the recruitment process, particularly for external applicants, where appropriate, selected students are given the opportunity to take part in the interview process. Their conclusions will then be discussed with the staff interview panel and considerations made from their judgements.

13. OFSTED/ Independent Visitors:

Whenever visitors representing formal bodies or for purposes of inspection attend the school, every opportunity is given to students to speak with visitors independently in private, or where requested with staff acting as advocates. Often there will be a requirement for this to occur and staff should ensure the facilities are provided for these meetings.

Staff are reminded to check identification beforehand to ensure the individual is signed into the school.

Prior to inspections, students are also required to complete questionnaires provided by Ofsted.

14. Complaints:

Students have a right to have their voices heard and it is of paramount importance that staff support young people in this process. Meadows School and Barnardo's operate many systems in which young people can complain. For further information refer to the school's [Complaints and Representation Policy](#).

15. Additional Information

Copies of this policy may be obtained from:

- Content Server
- The Main School Office

This policy links with the following policies & Documents

[Complaints and Representation Policy.](#)

Relevant statutory guidance, circulars, legislation & other sources of information are:

[The Children Act 1989, rev 2004](#)
[National Minimum Care Standards 2015](#)

The lead member of staff is:

Principal