

How to involve young children in reviewing SRE

Promoting a culture of listening and choosing appropriate methods is key to effective consultation with young children. While the youngest children may not directly state what it is they want to learn about growing up, identifying what they know, including their use of vocabulary, and what ideas and misconceptions they have helps focus the early stages of SRE to meet their needs.

Methods that can work well with young children include the use of toys or puppets to talk to as young children find it easier to share with or confide in dolls or other inanimate objects. Visual arts and still and moving film provide a useful alternative to verbal communication (Lancaster 2003). A range of methods is presented in this toolkit, for example the 'draw and write' technique which enables children to express their opinion using a combination of words and pictures.

There are important ethical and practical considerations when asking children of any age for their views and opinions. Here are some key considerations:

- **Have you allowed enough time?** This is important when working with very young children and children with communication difficulties.
- **Have you explained the process?** Children should be told why they are being asked for their views, who they will be shared with and how confidentiality will be upheld. Also give feedback about the responses to those views and share any changes that are made as a result of them.
- **Are child protection protocols clear?** When children feel they are really being listened to they may open up and this could result in a disclosure of abuse. Staff need to be clear about how to respond in the event of a disclosure and also how to use a group agreement to prevent inappropriate sharing of private information with the group.

It is very important that the views of children gathered by using the activities in this toolkit are shared with school staff involved in planning and teaching SRE. It can also be very useful to share material with parents.

Pupil views should be shared anonymously with no individual children being named. Children's comments can be an eye-opener for adults and can be the most compelling evidence of the need for changes in the school SRE programme. Children should be told about changes made to SRE in response to their views and suggestions.

A step-by-step guide to involving pupils and the whole school community in reviewing the SRE policy and curriculum is provided below.