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RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL AWARD SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF HAVING STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS?

- The purpose of conducting student focus groups is to see the school through the eyes of its young people.
- The student focus groups should take place as one of the first steps the school makes towards becoming a Rights Respecting School.
- It is important that the views of students are taken into account when identifying what actions need to take place for the school to meet the Rights Respecting Schools Award standards.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL DO WITH THE FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS?

- The findings from the focus groups form part of the baseline audit of the school.
- The focus group findings and the baseline audit together contribute to the school's action plan for becoming a Rights Respecting school.

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS

- Students should be representative of the school (in terms of diversity and ability)
- You should try to include every year group in the focus groups (minimum of 3), interviewing single year groups in an area where they won't be disturbed or distracted and can hear each other clearly.
- Six to eight students is about the ideal number for a focus group.
- All students taking part must be happy and willing to do so. Anyone not wanting to take part should be free to leave.
- One person (the interviewer) asks the questions and another (the scribe) writes down the main points the students say. It is important that the two work as a team and help each other out.
- The interviewer should try to make sure everyone in the group has a say and feels included, rather than one or two saying everything.
- The scribe needs to listen carefully and write down the range of opinions in the group, not just those they agree with.
- Sometimes students will give you the information you want easily, sometimes you may need to ask for more detailed responses e.g. if you get 'yes' and 'no' answers to questions then ask them to explain why they think this.
- The questionnaire takes about an hour to complete, so try to pace the interview, *but it does not matter if every single question is not asked.*
- Make sure you include your names and those you are interviewing on Page 2.

It is important that students facilitate the group rather than a teacher or adult, as the objective is for young people to feel free to speak openly and honestly, and not for there to be any criticism, repercussions or come-back on what they say.



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Name of interviewer(s) and scribe(s):	
School Name:	
Local Authority:	
Date:	

Pupils' first & family names	Year group	Class

Please tick if:

- You were not able to hear each other speak
- Individual students dominated the group
- Some students did not contribute
- You did not have enough time to finish
- Anything else which affected the focus group (please say what happened in the box below)



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1. KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE UNCRC, RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESPECT

Do you know the difference between something you 'Want' and something you 'Need'?

Can you give examples?

What does everyone **Need** to grow up safe and well?

Do you know what **Rights** are?

Can you think of any rights that you all have?

Do you think rights are important?
Why?

Have you ever heard of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (**UNCRC**)?

What do you know about it?

Have you ever learned about rights in school?

If so, in which lessons, or where else?

Do you know what 'Responsibilities' are?

Can you give an example?



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What Responsibilities do students have in school?

What Responsibilities do adults have in school?

When people are being responsible, how does this help everyone enjoy their rights?

What can we all do to make sure everyone in school is able to understand and enjoy their rights?

Do you think students respect each others rights in the classroom and around school?

Can you give examples?

Do you think that teachers and other adults in school respect your rights?

How do they show this?

Is there anything around the school which would show a visitor that rights are important here?



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2. FEELING SAFE, RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER PEOPLE

Do students always feel safe and well around all parts of the school (e.g. *in the classroom, in the dining hall, in corridors, toilets, outside?*)
Give examples.

Do you and the teachers ever talk about how to make the school safer and happier for everyone?

Are there any good school clubs or lunchtime or after school activities?

Does everyone get the same chance to join in?

Does bullying, racism, sexism or any other form of discrimination happen in school?

If so, what happens; how are things dealt with?

What happens and how do people react if a new student arrives in your class?

Would they be treated differently because of their religion, race or culture?

Do you think they would feel welcome and happy in this school?

Do some students get picked on by others?



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Why do you think this happens?

How do the teachers and other adults
in school treat you?

Do they treat you fairly and equally?

If not, can you give an example?

If you break a school rule and get
caught by an adult and you get
punished, are the punishments fair?

How do older students treat you?

Do they do anything to help you in
school?

Do you think that making everyone
more aware of young people's rights
will change how students treat each
other?

Will it change how adults treat
students?

Will it change how students act towards
adults?

Do the adults in school know all the
important things about you, e.g. if you
have any special needs, if you speak a
language apart from English, how to
pronounce your name properly?



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3. TEACHING AND LEARNING / SCHOOL RULES / RIGHTS RESPECTING CLASSROOMS

Do you know how your rules for students came to be written?

Do the rules help to make you feel safer and happier?

Do you know if any students were involved in writing them?

Are the rules on display around school? Where?

Are the teachers and other adults in school good at listening to you?

Is it easy to ask them questions and are they easy to talk to?

What would you do if you had a problem or didn't understand something that your teacher wanted you to learn?

Do teachers give you regular feedback on your work and how to improve?

Do teachers spend time or use any ways of finding out how you have all



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understood the lesson and the work?

Do students ever talk to teachers about what helps them learn? E.g. different teaching methods.

Do you think everyone gets a fair and equal chance to do their best in the classroom?

Does it make a difference if you are a female or a male, or a confident or a shy person?

Do students ever get the chance to speak about or teach things to other students or help run part of a lesson?

If so, in what subjects?

How and where do you learn about issues which affect your health and wellbeing e.g. drugs/alcohol, relationships, diet, exercise etc?

Does this help you to make informed decisions and choices?



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4. STUDENT VOICE AND EMPOWERMENT: STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY

Do students ever get a chance to say what they think about how things are done in this school?

Does this ever lead to changes being made?

Do you think students have enough say in how the school is run?

What would you do if you thought something could be changed for the better?

Do you know about your school council and who is on it?

Do you think the School Council is a good thing?

Can you think of something the School Council has done to make the school a better place?

How do you find about what the School Council has been talking about in their meetings?

Do teachers make enough time for you all to talk about what happens in



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School Council meetings and discuss what you would want to tell the School Council?

Would you make any changes to the School Council and how it works?

Are there any other ways apart from School Council where students can give their opinions?

Do you or any students get involved in appointing new staff?

Is it a good idea to involve students in appointing new staff? Why?

Do students know about or ever get to meet the school governors?

What would tell Governors you would like to change about the school if you could change anything?



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5. YOUNG PEOPLE'S RIGHTS AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Do you learn anything in school about different cultures and religions and people from different places around the world?

Give examples of what you've learned?

Have students in this school done anything to make things better for other people in the community, or nationally or globally?

How has this helped other people enjoy their rights?

Have you learned anything about Fair Trade, child labour, how war affects children and young people, the reasons for poverty in the world?

Give examples of what you've done?

Why do you think some people in the world are very poor and others are richer or better off?

Do you think that being poor affects people's rights in any way? How?

Have you learned anything about what we can do to reduce waste, what can be recycled, or how to use less valuable resources like water or electricity or gas?

Does this have any effect on children and young people's rights?



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Do all young people in the world have the same rights as you do?

What can we all do to make the world a better place for everyone?

Do we all have responsibilities to make this happen?

Do you feel that you as a young person can make a difference to make the world a better place? How?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Is there anything you would change about the school if you could?

Do you think this school should get an award for being a school that respects everyone's rights? Why?



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6. QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ONLY

How do you get to be a school councillor?

How long are you a School Council rep for?

How often does the School Council meet?

When and where do meetings happen?

How long do they last?

Do you think the School Council is representative of your school community?

Who chairs/organises meetings?

What sorts of things does the School Council talk about?

Who decides what is talked about?



Impact on school

Has the School Council made a difference to the school?

Do you think the adults in school think the School Council is important?
If so, how do you know?

Do other students think the School Council is important?

How do you know this?

Does the School Council have enough power to make changes to the school?

How do you find out what other students think about things?

How do other students in school find out about what you have been talking about and deciding at School Council meetings?

Do you think the School Council is a good thing for the school? Why?

Would you make any changes?