

## "Ethos – Why Bother?"

West Park Centre, Dundee



September 2004



### ORGANISATION

**Save the Children, Scotland**

### FOCUS

**Citizenship and Participation: letting pupils take the lead in their learning**

#### **What We Do**

All children have the right to education – it's guaranteed in Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Save the Children helps young people in Scotland and around the world to speak out about the education issues that concern them. We aim to create a global movement of informed young people who are passionate about their own and other children's rights and are aware of the interconnected social, political and environmental forces that shape their lives.

The following initiatives and projects are examples of work we have recently engaged in around some of the themes with which the Ethos Network Annual Conference is most concerned – citizenship, participation and inclusion.

#### **Citizenship and Participation: letting pupils take the lead in their learning**

*'It makes you more confident about yourself because people listen to you – when you're in your class nobody really listens to you'* Young Person aged 12

Save the Children has teamed up with two secondary schools in Glasgow, with funding from Scottish Gas' 'Here to Help' scheme, to pilot participatory approaches to citizenship education. The project aims to demonstrate how children can take responsibility for their own learning and make positive contributions to their school and wider community, including tackling the negative impact of poverty on their lives and others.

Working in schools with pastoral care staff, Save the Children has developed a range of opportunities to engage young people in and outside the classroom. Youth Scotland's Dynamic Youth Award Scheme is being adapted for use in the school setting and is a key component of the project. The peer-led, peer-assessed awards give pupils recognition for their participation in school and community life. They are designed to encourage pupils to work together, proactively planning their chosen projects, taking responsibility for the projects and peer-assessing their work.

Pupils from S1 and S2 are being asked to identify issues of interest and concern which have an impact on their local community and, in groups, have developed projects to raise awareness and to address these concerns. Pupils have tackled issues such as misuse of alcohol, graffiti and vandalism, racism and prejudice, refugees and asylum seekers and have undertaken an in-depth pupil survey on the school development plan.

*"What I like about Dynamic Youth Award is having choice and responsibility and what you say could affect the school."* Young Person aged 13, Glasgow

#### **Children's Rights and Participation at School**

Save the Children and Stirling University are working together on research which is looking at one primary school committed to a rights approach to education to examine how that impacts on the school community. The research explores what children understand of their rights and what effect rights-based participation has on

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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children's understanding, learning, achievement and relationships. This research is about the benefits of a child rights' approach to schooling in Scotland. A report of the research will be available late autumn 2004.

## **Training Activities and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

Save the Children is promoting greater understanding of children's rights through training activities for teachers and school staff. As a General Teaching Council registered provider of CPD, we promote greater pupil participation in planning and decision-making, helping school staff to develop a range of effective 'tools' and approaches.

## **Learning With Care: Care to Learn?**

Save the Children and Who Cares? Scotland launched 'Care to Learn', a report presenting the educational experiences of looked after young people and their views of good practice<sup>1</sup>. The report is part of the 'Learning with Care' materials commissioned by the Scottish Executive to assist local authorities in implementing the recommendations of the Learning with Care report (2001)<sup>2</sup> and to improve educational outcomes for looked after and accommodated children and young people at home and at school.

We are also GTC registered providers of training on Learning with Care.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation of these initiatives**

Various models of monitoring and evaluation have been in place for these projects according to project design. The project presented at the conference workshop, Citizenship and Participation: letting pupils take the lead in their learning, has been subject to an in-depth, formative evaluation process, including quantitative and qualitative data sources such as interviews, focus groups and validated questionnaires. A mid-project report is available from [a.priestley@savethechildren.org.uk](mailto:a.priestley@savethechildren.org.uk)

## **Biggest Challenges**

In our education work as a whole we have found the following challenges:

- Supporting schools in converting policy and research findings into practice given practical considerations and competing priorities.
- Enabling staff to find the time and the space to introduce new ideas and methodologies which would model good citizenship and participation in the classroom and whole school setting.

- Supporting schools to move beyond content driven citizenship work and to critically evaluate current citizenship work more in terms of process than content or outcome.

## **What has worked well?**

In projects where young people have been given greater levels of responsibility, time and scope to develop their own ideas and the opportunity to articulate their views and ideas more widely, the standard of contribution has generally been highly impressive.

## **What did not work and lessons learned?**

In our current project in Glasgow we are working hard to find the balance between the quality of process used with the pupils whilst creating a package which teachers feel they can fit into the busy curriculum, especially in secondary school setting.

## **Future Plans**

Developing the citizenship award scheme so that more schools can adopt it for easy delivery.

Making more of our experience in children's rights and in developing pupil participation and citizenship easily available to schools through websites and published materials.

<sup>1</sup> Care to Learn? A joint report by Save the Children and Who Cares? Scotland, May 2003

<sup>2</sup> Learning with Care: The Education of Children Looked After Away from Home by Local Authorities Report of an Inspection undertaken jointly by HM Inspectors of Schools and Social Work Services Inspectorate, Scottish Executive 2001