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As children learn new skills in Pupil Voice meetings, they develop confidence without arrogance

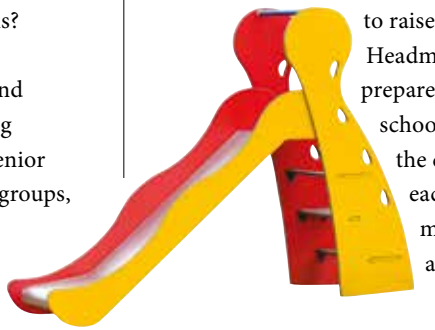


FINDING YOUR VOICE

The White House School, Clapham

Principal Mary McCahery explains why the new Pupil Voice initiative is proving such a hit with pupils

Outstanding London Prep Schools are commonplace these days, so how exactly can a school go beyond this, to stand out from the competition and get the best from their pupils? At The White House Prep in Clapham, Pupil Voice is a new and exciting initiative that's preparing children for the next step into Senior School. Children across all year groups, from Reception to Year Six, are encouraged to get involved in



all aspects of school life, to help improve their experience and ensure that coming to school each day remains enjoyable. Alongside an extensive curriculum and wealth of extra-curricular activities, termly council meetings see the four Houses – Stirling, Balmoral, Edinburgh and Drummond – come together to raise points with the Headmaster from a pre-prepared agenda. Topics such as school lunches, uniform and the clubs they want to try each term are discussed, minutes are taken and actioned accordingly.

So, what evidence do we have to prove this system works? Well, shepherd's pie is now officially off the lunch menu! There are a countless variety of skills that pupils develop from these meetings – public speaking, teamwork, preparing an ICT agenda, to name a few – but it has led to comments from Headteachers at other schools stating that pupils from The White House Prep are some of the nicest children they have met. They are confident but without arrogance, which is something not always seen in London schools today. Pupils in Years Four to Six also have an afternoon per week of "Choice", where they choose which subject they want to

attend, whether this be art, sport, music or drama. Pupils can either stick to their "Choice" throughout the whole school year, or change termly. Offering the children these choices is an excellent way of preparing them for their all-important 11+ exams, and means they can start working on an arts portfolio or honing their sports skills two years in advance. This removes a lot of the pressure they experience in the lead-up to the exams, and they are rewarded for it. The White House Prep's focus on Pupil Voice even extends to Junior and Senior Librarians and Playground Leaders, who work together with their peers and teachers to recommend new playground toys, games and books. These suggestions have led to the recent instalment of reading cabins in the garden, which have proven very popular. Pupil Voice listens to everyone in the school, to ensure nobody gets lost among



Pupils from all year groups get involved in all aspects of school life

the noise. As a result, we can tailor children's education to suit their needs, not just the needs of the school – and this is something our new Headmaster, Tony Lewis is continuing to support.

What evidence do we have to prove that the Pupil Voice system works? Well, shepherd's pie is now officially off the lunch menu!



Left, the school's ethos is that children should be allowed to be children

Tony's extensive experience as a Head is a wonderful new addition to the school, and the children are looking forward to working with him in the classroom. What's certain is The White House Prep continues to go from strength to strength, and sticks by the principle that children should be allowed to be children. Along with the expansion of the building, including new classrooms and a bigger library, the core values of being a nurturing, family-focused school is still at the forefront of everything we do. Pupils are nurtured throughout their school career, so that when they leave, they are confident, armed with an excellent education and a strong sense of their own voice. ♥

