



Science leadership tools: focus groups

Introduction

Exploring what your pupils have to say about their science lessons and science across the school can really add insight to your quality assurance systems. There are a number of different approaches for carrying out pupil voice work: focus groups, science surveys, school council meetings, science committee meetings or interviews. A focus group is a very effective way of making time to listen to what pupils have to say and exploring their opinions.

Top tips



- **Keep groups small**
To encourage sharing and ensure every voice is heard, four to six children per focus group works well.
- **Stick to one year group at a time**
Peers tend to have more in common with each other and will feel more relaxed and comfortable talking with each other.
- **Keep it short and sweet**
To ensure the session has lots of energy and the children don't suffer from fatigue try to keep a session to 20–30 minutes.
- **Keep it active**
Use props, puppets, simple practical activities, stickers to express feelings, racing to put post-it notes in a space, etc, to get children on their feet and engaged.
- **Value every voice**
Show the children that you have listened to them, and that you value their ideas.

Questions

Understanding science lessons

- How often do you have science lessons?
- What happens in science lessons?
- What makes science different to other lessons?
- What have you been learning about in science this year?
- What do you find difficult in science lessons?
- How well are you doing in science? How do you know?

Working scientifically

- How often do you plan your own science enquiries to explore your own questions about science?
- How often do you carry out practical enquiries to find the answers to scientific questions?
- Why are they helpful to you when you are working scientifically?
- How often do you use maths (measuring, graphs and charts) in science lessons?
- What equipment do you use to measure?
- What things do you measure in science lessons?
- What does it mean to work like a scientist? Do you work like a scientist?
- What working scientifically skills have you developed this year? How have you improved?

Exploring attitudes and aspirations

- Describe a scientist.
- Is science important? Why?
- What do you enjoy most about science? Why?
- Is there anything that you don't like about science? Why?
- Do you participate in any extracurricular science activities (science clubs, STEM club, annual science fair, family visits to science museums, etc)?
- What would you like to do for a job when you have grown up? Are there any science jobs that you might like to do when you grow up?

Recommendations

- What could the school or your teacher do to improve science lessons?
- Are there any science learning experiences you would like to have beyond your lessons – field trips? Clubs? Science fairs? Family learning nights? Science cinema nights?