

Student Voice and Involvement Policy

More Than Ed | Independent School

Date: September 2026

Review Date: September 2028

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The term 'student voice' refers to ways of listening to the views of students and/or involving them in decision-making.

1. Student Voice

At More Than Ed Independent School we believe that children should be active participants in their own learning, and that their opinions should be heard and valued, both in school and in the wider community.

For young people with SEN this is especially important. Too often their challenging behaviours, poor communication skills and mental health needs will have made their involvement in school or social decisions impossible. Safeguarding disclosures by young people with SEN may also not always have been taken seriously enough, with disastrous results. Student voice is, therefore, one of our highest priorities.

As a trauma-informed school, we encourage our students to discuss their feelings, and thereby learn to identify, understand and regulate them. All staff are trained in Emotion Coaching, which allows them to communicate at a more meaningful level with our students. Our Speech and Language Therapist assesses all students and offers strategies and CPD to all staff, helping us to develop each student's communication skills.

2. Student Voice and Participation at Our School

There are a wide range of approaches used across school to support students of all ages and abilities to engage in participation and promote student voice:

- Student contribution to the annual EHCP review
- 1:1 therapy (for some) — Speech and Language, Psychotherapy
- A 1:1 available adult at all times
- Breakfast communication sessions each morning
- Pastoral time during the journey to and from home
- Conversations regarding the suitability of their bespoke timetable
- Explicit executive functioning sessions and Growth Mindset lessons to encourage discussion and student voice

3. The Curriculum

As all our students have extremely low executive functioning and communication skills, they are encouraged to communicate in any way they feel comfortable regarding all areas of their school life. There are always opportunities for discussion around their learning and the subjects they are covering, and these conversations and feedback are always recorded on conversation logs.

Our young people all display extremely low resilience and trust with regard to school. This is a result of many years of poor mental health, unmet needs and negative school experiences. It is vital that our students build trusting relationships with staff before any learning is possible; therefore, students must feel in control of their learning, allowing them the emotional safety and security to 'dare' to try.

4. Whole-School Approach to Student Involvement

We are committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We believe that all children and young people should have opportunities to express their opinion in matters that affect their lives, and we strive to ensure they are provided with learning opportunities that equip them to do so as effectively as possible.

We are always mindful that our students function significantly below their chronological age, both emotionally and cognitively, and this is considered with regard to students' involvement in decision-making. Parents and carers are always included in any decisions made regarding their child's therapeutic and learning curriculum, and all parents and carers must give written permission for therapy.

5. Student Complaints Procedure

It is extremely important that our students feel comfortable to report a complaint or a safeguarding issue; however, due to their SEN, this process has to be explained in language that is accessible to all.

The Student Induction Handbooks explain the processes to students, and all students and their parents receive regular copies of this leaflet. Staff reiterate their rights constantly and encourage them to speak to anyone about any concerns they have. Please see the Student Induction Handbook.