

HIGHFIELD AFTER SCHOOL CLUB

Involving and Consulting Children

Our Club, and all its members of staff, are committed to the principle of involving and consulting children whenever decisions are made within the Club that affect them.

The Club's commitment to involving and consulting children stems from the 'listening to children' provisions set out in Articles 12 and 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. These state that:

A child's opinion should be taken into account in anything that affects them. Children should have information disseminated in a way that enables them to make choices and decisions. And with the development of Participation Charter which states

Participation is a right

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that any child or young person has a right to express their views and have them given due weight in decisions affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity. Participation is not a privilege and it does not have to be earned; rather, it values children and young people as citizens in their own right. The UK has ratified the convention, and increasingly public services are required by law to take seriously the wishes and feelings of children

For children, involvement and consultation helps them to develop new skills such as negotiating, sharing and understanding the perspectives of others. It helps them to understand how decisions are made, and recognises that their opinions are important.

There are multiple benefits of such an approach such as a relationship with children based on partnership, a more cohesive environment and activities and decisions that children feel a sense of ownership over, that leads to an improved over all higher standard of behaviour.

All children that attend the club will be listened to and consulted actively. This will take a number of forms, including:

- Listening to what they say in speech and other forms of communication.
- Observing body language and behaviour.
- Drama and role-play.
- Through play and creative expression and the use of visual aids.
- Via regular group based discussions and Q & A sessions.
- Questionnaires and other regular feedback on activities.
- Notice boards that display important information about activities at the Club.
- Regular children's meetings, between children and staff, discussing the Club's activities and any other relevant topics.

Age, maturity and the type of decision being made will determine the extent and nature of children's involvement. However, the emphasis should always be strongly in favour of involving children.

We undertake to ensure that children have the opportunity to make decisions and or participate in as a minimum in the following areas

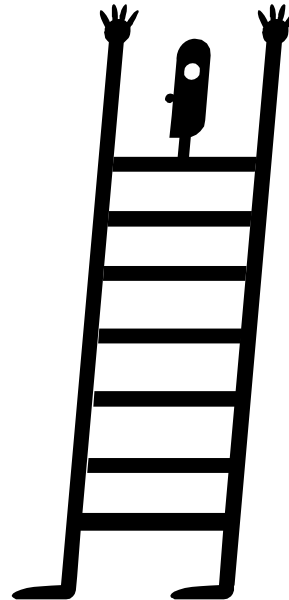
- ✓ **Choosing the type of snacks available**
- ✓ **Being involved with the preparation of snack**
- ✓ **Involved with choosing new toys/ equipment/resources**
- ✓ **Involved with the actual purchase of toys/equipment/resources**
- ✓ **Choosing to play inside / outside when they want to**
- ✓ **Choosing the venue on excursions**
- ✓ **Involved with developing club rules**
- ✓ **Contribution to the clubs newsletters**
- ✓ **Assisting with the evaluation of fire drills**

Consultation and involvement will be regularly monitored and acted upon so that children are able to see that their input has led to visible outcomes. The Club and its staff will also be clear about what decisions children will be involved in and attempt to offer clear explanations if and when consultation and involvement is deemed inappropriate.

The club and its staff are committed to working towards achieving level 10 on Harts ladder.

What's it all about - Harts Ladder

10. **Children and young people in charge!**
9. **Young people lead with help from others**
8. **Joint decision making**
7. **Consultation**
6. **Invitation**
5. **Tokenism**
4. **Decoration**
3. **Manipulation**
2. **Adults rule kindly**
1. **Adults rule!**



Hart's ladder is the standard framework for understanding children and young people's participation. It's progressive, encouraging practitioners to build on their experience, but its distinctions are sharp, supporting us to separate our aspirations from our actual achievements. By way of example, much of what gets called consultation is more properly described as invitation, where children and young people are invited to contribute their opinions, but the opinions themselves aren't really used or reflected on. This kind of distinction stands even in situations where what the young people say is written up and published in glossy formats - recording something doesn't always equate to considering it.