

## Investing in Children Membership Award™



### Re-evaluation of Tow Law Millennium Primary School



## **Introduction**

Tow Law Millennium Primary School is a small school in a rural village in County Durham. They have just under 100 children in five different classes. The school aims to provide a vibrant environment where children are enthusiastic and motivated to achieve great things. The children get to have a say through five main groups in school, these are: school council, young carers, sports leaders, buddies and green leaders as well as everyone having a say through the suggestion box. When I visited the school, I met with representatives from each of the different groups who told me about the ways that they have a say and what has changed in school because of their ideas. The children were called Isabelle, Darcey, Ella, Grace, Tristan, Thomas, Rosie, Kani and Olivia.

## **Evidence of Dialogue and Change**

### School Council

Every Monday the school council meet and go through the suggestions that have been put in the school's suggestion box – the children showed me the box and it was bursting with ideas. An idea that one child had was to support St Teresa's Hospice and after a discussion and vote it was agreed that St Teresa's Hospice would become the charity for the year. The school council thought of ideas of how they could raise money and one child suggested having a wild hair day and everyone agreed this was a good idea. The children arranged and presented an assembly to let everyone know what was happening, wrote letters to parents and staff to inform them and ask for

donations for their bake sale. Everyone enjoyed getting involved and seeing the wild hair and after the event the school council presented the cheque to staff from St Teresa's Hospice. One child commented: ***"I really enjoyed crazy hair day when we were raising money for St Teresa's Hospice."***

Another suggestion that was put in the box was to have mixed-age reading on a regular basis as everyone really enjoyed doing this during World Book Day. The school council are going to meet with the Headteacher to see if this can happen and if it can, will create a timetable so everyone can take part. The timetable is currently being discussed with class teachers. There has been a parent and child reading session introduced once every half-term on a Friday afternoon which happened because of these conversations.

The children told me that they are involved in decision making even if the suggestion doesn't happen. One idea that was put in the box was to have a slime club. The children told me that they discussed this and thought about the cost of buying the ingredients and the mess it might make. The children said that they decided it wasn't very realistic that there was a permanent slime club but said: ***"Even if we can't have a slime club Mrs Dobson would let us have it as a one-off activity for a treat."*** This is a good example of how children are involved in making decisions and if their ideas can't happen they are still thought about and discussed.

Some children said that they wanted the opportunity to be able to review school clubs and put forward their ideas for new ones. Lots of ideas were put forward and these are used to create a termly club list so a big variety of clubs can be offered. Suggestions for clubs that have been offered include football, tag rugby, KS1 activities, French, dance, homework club and gymnastics. The children told me that a professional referee, David Webb, visited them last year and ran some workshops which everyone was really excited about. Some children said that they would like to discuss what activities they do during clubs when it's raining, especially for football club; this is something they would like to discuss over the coming year.

There were some suggestions to have more school trips which were put in the suggestion box and also highlighted on the pupil questionnaires. The school council

looked at different possible school trips and looked at how these would fit in with the curriculum. The children decided that they would like to visit Teesmouth Field Centre as this would be suitable for the whole school. Teesmouth Field Centre said that they could accommodate one class per day so the children looked at how buses for the trip would be funded and decided to write to the Town Council and Councillor Manchester to ask if they could help with the cost. They kindly agreed and everyone enjoyed their trips.

There have been some changes made to school lunches. There is a half-termly meeting between children and Taylor Shaw (school lunch providers). In these meetings children asked for different fruit and now have fruit salads with grapes and melon; they asked for different bread which has happened, and there are now 3 options that children can choose from each day. The children were able to enjoy making their own ice-cream before the summer holidays. One young person said: ***“It tasted really milky!”*** The year 6’s enjoyed a Leaver’s Lunch where they were able to choose their favourite meals to have that day. The children talked about other things that they would like to discuss, including changing the yogurts back to the ones they used to have and having turkey sandwiches again. This is something that the school council would like to discuss during their next meetings with Taylor Shaw.

Some children wanted to learn more about first aid and thought it was important that everyone should be able to help if they saw someone who was injured. The children looked at different courses that were on offer and picked one that looked right for them. They wrote letters to the Town Council and Councillor Manchester who kindly offered to help cover the costs of the training. The children decided to hold the training for all children in KS1 and KS2. Everyone learned a lot and got to practise doing CPR, mouth-to-mouth and the recovery position. One child said: ***“It was hard doing the CPR but now I know how to do it!”***

Some children told me what they think about being in school council: ***“A school councillor is someone who makes the school a better place by improving the dinners, having new clubs, doing first aid training and even more,” “I like helping and making people happy,” and “I like helping.”***

## Sports Leaders

Sports Leaders help to promote activity in school and have been talking about new equipment. The children chose some new things to use on the yard and now have hula-hoops, skateboards and stilts. Some children have not been looking after the stilts very well and some got damaged so the children thought about what they could do about this and decided to make some posters and stick them up next to the equipment.

The group decided to take part in the Aldi sticker scheme where schools can collect stickers to be in with a chance of winning £20,000. The children were able to decide what they would want to spend the money on if they won and chose an outdoor gym. This scheme is still ongoing and so the children are hoping that their ideas can be made into a reality. The group said that they are able to tell everyone about these sorts of things in assembly, so everyone is aware of what is happening in school.

Part of the sport leaders' role is to provide activities for other children in school and they are able to choose what games to play and whether they do this on the KS1 or KS2 yard.

The group also decided that they wanted red hoodies so they could be easily identified on the playground and these have now been ordered.

## Green Leaders

Last year the Green Leaders found out about a competition that that they could enter by recycling Christmas cards and the school that had the most cards could win £20,000. The children decided that they wanted to enter and wrote a letter to all parents asking to bring their cards into school. They spent a lot of their own time sorting through cards and taking the non-recyclable parts such as bows and ribbons away. The children also discussed and researched what they would use the £20,000 for and decided they would buy some energy-efficient lights for the school. Unfortunately, the children didn't win the prize money, but they were still pleased they were able to recycle all of the cards and have a go at trying to get some funding for

new lights for the school. The children said they might think about doing this again this Christmas.

There was some concern that decking in the local community had been damaged and children wanted to help change this. The group decided to write a letter to the Town Council and tell them about the issue. The decking has now been fixed which the children are pleased about.

Kani told me: ***“My favourite group to be part of is the Green Leaders because we get to go litter picking.”***

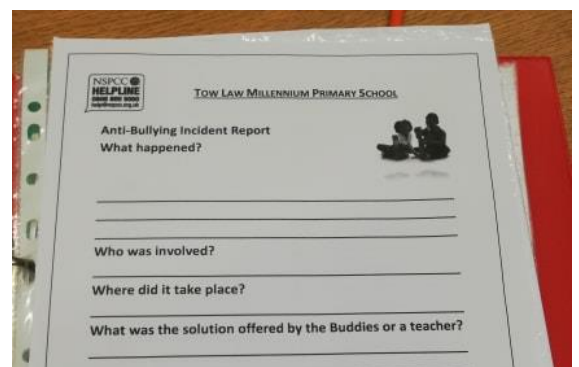
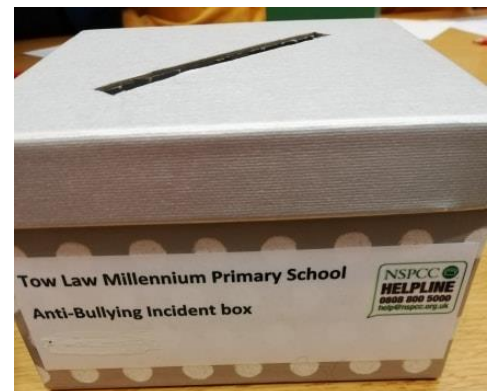
### Young Carers

The school provides support for young carers and offers them a space to meet together and get support from one another. The children said that they wanted to do some relaxation sessions and because of this everyone took part in meditation and yoga sessions. One child who I spoke to had taken part in those sessions and said they really enjoyed them and they were really helpful.

### Buddies

The buddies said: ***“Our job is to help other people and tell the teachers when something is wrong.”***

The buddies said that they have regular meetings to discuss any issues so they can decide how they can support other children in school. There is now a buddy box and form that any child can fill out and give feedback and ask for help. One child told me that no-one has filled out a form and put it in the box yet, but it is checked regularly in case anyone has used it. There is also a buddy bench in KS1 and KS2 yards so the buddies can provide a friend for anyone who is feeling lonely or wants to talk.



## Having a Say

There are 5 main children's voice groups in school and, apart from the young carers group, children can apply for each position and write a speech and then there is an election process to decide who is in each group. Children who are not in a specific group can give their ideas by posting them in the suggestion and buddy box, telling a teacher or their classmates who are in a group. Children who are in a group wear a different coloured jumper so they can easily be identified.

One child said: ***"If people are not in a group they can talk to us so their voices can be heard."***

Another child added ***"My favourite thing about school is that everyone has a say."***



For bigger things that are happening in school, such as choosing charities to support, everyone gets to have a vote.

The children also happily told me that they take the notes in each meeting so they can keep a record of what has been said and what is going to happen.

Some children told me other things that they like about school including: ***"My favourite thing at school is show and tell"*** and ***"My favourite part is the support from the teachers."***

## **Previous Recommendations**

Last year the children made two recommendations:

More of a say over break time activities and rules.

This has developed through the introduction of the sports leaders last year. They now have a timetable rota for organising activities on both yards.

Buddy benches for younger pupils and older buddies to support this.

This has happened and now the KS1 children have a buddy bench which the buddy group chose and ordered. The older buddies support children on the KS1 yard.

## **Recommendations**

The children had two recommendations that they would like to look at over the coming year:

Discuss what activities children can do during after-school clubs if it's raining.

Continue to discuss school lunches, in particular changing the yogurts and adding turkey sandwiches.

On my second visit one child suggested that it would be good to use the library more, especially during wet playtimes. Another child who is in School Council said that they are currently discussing this and are going to create a library club and be able to use the library during playtimes. The children also said that they are planning on choosing and buying more books for the library. Everyone is looking forward to this happening.

## **Conclusion**

The children could clearly identify ways that they can have a say in school and changes that have happened because of their ideas and suggestions. The school has five robust groups that look at different aspects of school life as well as the use of regular voting systems and pupil questionnaires alongside the suggestion and buddy boxes. For this reason, I would like to recommend that Tow Law Millennium Primary School remains a valued member of the Investing in Children Membership Award Scheme™.

The children agreed and wanted to tell me their reasons why their school should get the award. They said:

***“I think that our school deserves this award because our school always gives us a voice and they are always there for you!”***

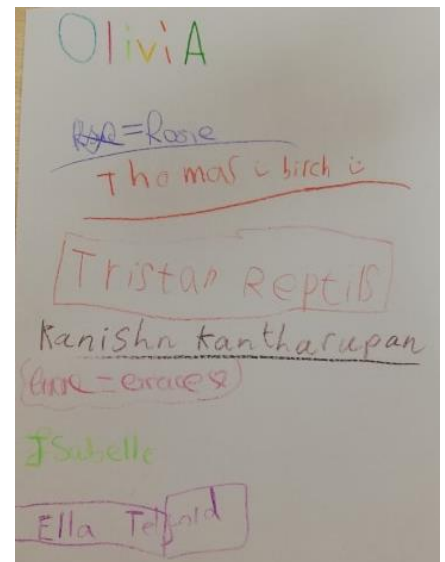
***“I think we should get the award because our school listens to us and helps us achieve it.”***

***“I think that our school should get the award because our school is a good place to learn. My school deserves this because they are kind and teach you step by step.”***

The children have endorsed this report and their signatures are included.

**Well Done!**

**Chloe Brown**  
**Project Officer**  
**Investing in Children**  
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The Sjovoll Centre, Front Street, Pity Me, Durham, DH1 5BZ

Tel: 0191 307 7030. Company Reg. 8428687

[info@investinginchildren.net](mailto:info@investinginchildren.net)  [www.investinginchildren.net](http://www.investinginchildren.net)

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