

# **Student Leadership in the Weston Federation North Somerset**

## **The Weston Federation Student Parliament**

The Weston Federation, consisting of four 11-16 secondary and two special schools in Weston-super-Mare North Somerset, was officially launched in January 2004. The drive to federate came from school leaders who recognised that regeneration in the town was undermined by a culture of low aspiration and underachievement. In attempting to address these challenging issues, the federation recognised that the views of young people must be included when looking for solutions. The Student Parliament provided a vehicle for the student voice to be heard.

The Federation has just over 4,000 students and the Student Parliament comprises of student representatives from across the schools. Each member has a responsibility for reporting back to their own School Council and for raising agenda items on behalf of their council at Parliament meetings. The Parliament meets six times a year and is supported by a Student Parliament coordinator who is a member of staff from one of the schools.

The Parliament is completely run by the students who select their own officials from amongst the membership. They have their own budget for resources and a training programme which provides them with opportunities to develop team building and leadership skills.

The Student Parliament gives students an opportunity to contribute to the direction of federation policy and planning. Students participate in federation leadership and working group meetings and liaise with the Director. They commission research into areas of concern for young people and have made the Parliament an inclusive forum that takes account of views from mainstream and special school students. Initiatives undertaken by the Parliament include

- student participation in school self evaluation,
- eco projects,
- healthy eating
- enrichment provision
- social activities for young people in the town

Student leadership activities have helped young people to gain skills and confidence. They feel more able to represent the views of others and take the lead on new initiatives. They have helped to create a more positive image of young people in the town and act as role models for younger students to emulate.

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