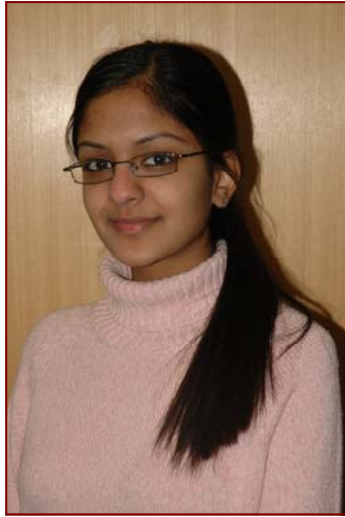


The Student Voice

Beauchamp's Educational Supplement

Autumn 2005



The Student Voice

By Rithee Pandya

The official launch of 'The Student Voice' was on the Teachers' Training Day in Summer 2005. However, the teachers have recognised the Student Voice as a key factor to the progression and strengthening of the student-teacher relationship for as long as they've been in the teaching profession. So what is the new agenda all about?

Student Voice is specifically directed to the development of learning in the classroom. At the first Student Voice meetings, points discussed were diverse and ranged from things as simple as what students thought of particular pieces of work or as complex as students being encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. The students that gave the presentation have found that they too are expected to be aware of, and be a part of, the suggestions laid down by teachers regarding boundaries and expectations – they do not just have to follow them. The vital aspect of education today is the students being responsible in setting their own boundaries.

A response to the Student Voice presentation in August 2005 was that it was 'bigger than could be explained' and the general response from teachers has been positive. The intention was to make teachers aware of what students hoped to see happening in lessons, in an effort to engage students more in the teaching and learning experience. But where the 'real' advancement would be, according to teachers, is to actively see **every** member of the student population connect with what goes on throughout the college; not just a vocal minority. This was essential for the development of the 'greater good', according to one teacher, and not just those who 'demand extra attention through misbehaviour'.

For the Student Voice to work effectively it is fundamental for teachers to recognise its role. Fortunately, the understanding between teachers and students has always been part of the foundation of Beauchamp. Head of General Studies, Ms Gair, said that in response to listening to the opinions of the students she has been able to 'provide stimulating, challenging and satisfying educational experiences for young people...' and she also acknowledged that 'Mutual respect is an essential quality for any teacher'.

What the Student Voice aimed to do was to see the positive effects of their presentation and efforts applied directly in the classroom in the Autumn term 2005. Largely, the results seem very positive and, according to one teacher, staff have 'embraced' the contributions made by the students. As this comment suggests it is not enough to just accept Student Voice opinions - they must be acted upon.

Finally, students at Beauchamp College have done what many schools would be apprehensive of: they have shared their opinions and expressed them. But now it is time to actively work to make a change. Teachers want students to express their views coherently and positively enabling change to come from 'experience - not just an idealistic stance.'



The Learning Environment

By Krishan Ghandi and Peter Swan

It has been scientifically proven that the aesthetics of a room in which education takes place can significantly heighten or severely lower the concentration and learning of students. Thus, the environment in which we learn is of high importance.

First and foremost, the placement of windows; natural lighting gives a much more serene and calm atmosphere to that emitted by our electrical sources. It gives us a sense of light and space and yet many classrooms throughout the college have dark plastic covering over the windows. This presents a conundrum: obviously it is done to prevent the light of the sun when viewing any kind of image, however it doesn't make for a pleasant environment.

When we were in years 10 and 11 in G2 the students were aligned so that the windows were on their left, all facing toward the boards at the front. As the afternoon drew on, and the sun set in the sky, the light from the windows fell on the board, and thus blocked the artificial light of the projector, and removed the joy of our customary video last thing on a Friday, unavoidable due to the absence of curtains. Nowadays, the positioning has been changed drastically. The tables have been aligned so that the window is behind the students, allowing light but disallowing distraction. The boards are on the opposite side, so light will only get to it very late in the afternoon when lessons have ended. We personally feel this is an incredible improvement, and one which probably didn't take more than half an hour for staff to change the room around.

Teachers who change the layout of rooms regularly and for different styles of lessons make the classroom environment exciting. Last year one teacher lay out the room differently from week to week. In some rooms tables are set out in rows, reminiscent of the Victorian era, and the sad thing is they can stay that way for the entire year!

Of course, there are other issues to consider, for example, the placement of our own work on the walls. All around the college student work is displayed boasting the achievements of the creators. In the design area work is made to

look professional, which can be most encouraging, particularly for those of us who work hard but perhaps achieve lower grades. However, it is a shame that not all classrooms are as presentable, some with out of date work and displays, ripped and torn or none at all. In Geography and Business Studies teachers have placed white placards along the walls each sporting geographical or economic facts, such as the amount of money spent on computers in a year in America and so on. This not only distracts students from their mischievous, pre-lesson activities, but also inspires them in their studies and induces intellectual discussion that sets their frame of mind to be useful to the lesson.

In other departments such as English and Maths there are examples of 'how to achieve an A*' on the wall, or grade ladders telling you what you should be achieving for particular modules. All this just heightens the learning environment, not only giving us information but reinforcing the idea that we are here to learn.

Computers, and let's face it we have a lot at this college, instantaneously add to the learning within a classroom. In a sly, deceptive move, students subconsciously believe that working on computers is an easy alternative to any written activity. Even if they do not have such an opportunity during the lesson the inspiration to work is increased by the mere presence of such technology! Computer suites need to look professional and swish, and the new History Hub and the General Studies room next to the sixth form are fantastic examples. These rooms promote a sense of professionalism; you could forget you were in a classroom but rather a place of business.

Crisp packets strewn about, discarded bottles lying on tables, chewing gum under work surfaces and pressed into the floors seemed last year almost entirely unavoidable. This year has seen a significant improvement, with the new lunchtimes and the ban on eating in classrooms. Our moods have greatly increased greatly upon entering a room where we don't need to pick up food before the lesson can begin! The atmosphere in the college is calmer and seems in strange way more studious and directed towards learning.

The library is an excellent example of what a refurbishment can do for the learning environment. The working atmosphere has radically changed as has the noise level! If you provide students with a good environment we believe we are more likely to respect it and learn within it.

In conclusion, there are many different ways in which the education experienced by students can be absorbed more thoroughly though the learning environment. Some of our ideas may be deemed unfeasible, as they require much funding and refurbishment, but they are undeniably useful in the continual struggle to form the perfect student environment.



What makes a positive and productive lesson?

By Mandeep Sokhi (Student Governor)

Following on from the Teacher Training day, which proved to be very successful, I decided to write this review on what I believed to be a positive and productive lesson. I have written this review as I imagined that it can act as a guideline for teachers, as to what students expect from them. I based it on an English Literature lesson as I feel that I have gained the most out of these lessons because of the way in which they are structured and delivered. The teaching method applied is shown below and what is so crucial, is that this method of teaching is used regularly rather than once in a while. A particular lesson that I enjoyed was one just before half term.

During the lesson:

- ❖ The teacher set clear aims and objectives at the beginning of the lesson: this gave us students a focus and helped direct us at what we should have established and learnt by the end. We were studying 'Edward II', we read a scene together and were then asked to complete a sheet based on what we had just read.
- ❖ Whilst we worked through the sheet the teacher called us out individually to give feedback on an essay we had done recently. This demonstrated was very beneficial as we were talking on a one-to-one basis and plenty of feedback was given on what we could do in order to improve and develop our writing skills. In addition, cover sheets were given back with our essays giving clear targets and goals reflecting the assessment criteria for literature.
- ❖ After the one-to-one feedback session, we went through the sheet as a class and the teacher engaged us in a thought-provoking discussion about the play and the sheet we had completed. I feel that discussions are an essential part of learning as the teacher is encouraging us to interact with one another rather than "spoon feeding" us. Questions evoke ideas and response and it is easier to remember something from a discussion, rather than a textbook. It also encourages us to take on board other people's ideas and points of view.
- ❖ At the end of each lesson the teacher summarised what we had done and what we should have achieved. The lesson was brought to a close and the teacher then touched on what we would be doing in the lessons in the future and the lesson ended with the munching of 'Heroes' box of chocolates: not only because we had a week's break but because we had worked so well all term!

I feel that my English Literature lessons have boosted my confidence in both my writing and communication skills. I hope that this review of a good lesson will be useful for other teachers, and I will look forward to receiving any comments that the teachers may have regarding this.



Review of an Effective Lesson

By Ian Jordan

An effective lesson can depend on a number of things, not least our own preferences, as it stands to reason that we're going to learn more in lessons that we actually want to be in. It's also true that we all learn in different ways; some can remember things just by seeing them written down on a page, others need to actually get their hands dirty, so to speak. It all depends on the student. However, an effective lesson, I would generally define, is one where you actually come away feeling you've done your thinking for the day, a lesson where you leave actually feeling like you've taken in something significant - that is a good lesson. Here I shall be describing a Physics lesson I have had just like that, and pointing out why I think it was so successful.

The lesson began with the teacher getting us students going through last week's homework. Starters like this I have found immensely useful as it serves as a reminder of what went on last lesson. This is especially important at A-level because with two (or more) teachers to one subject it's all too easy to get confused as to where you are today without some sort of warm up (too many times have I started differentiating, when I should be integrating!). However, it's not necessary to use homework for this; in my GCSE Biology the teacher would just pick a few examples from the syllabus sheet, and get us to talk him through some key points. All this warms the brain up, as well as getting the class to simmer down.

With that out of the way we moved on to the actual point of the lesson – moments. The teacher got us to briefly discuss what we know of moments already as she prepared her notes/projector sheets. Again, this warms the brain up as for most of us it's a subject we've not dealt with for a year or so, and also helps so there's not a break in the learning whilst the teacher finds the materials. Once we've ascertained what we know so far, the teacher began talking us through and getting us to discuss the theory of moments, doing the usual teacher things: writing key points on the board, bringing up OHP slides etcetera. This is important, as not all of us are auditory learners. True, at university we'll have to be lectured at, but we aren't at university yet, so a happy medium between discussion and writing on the board what notes to take

down is beneficial, and ensures we all have something to refer back to.

As I previously mentioned, the teacher went through the starter and the theory by getting the class to discuss it. This I feel is especially crucial as I certainly find it beneficial to analyse and formulate the conclusion I'm going to learn for myself. It's all very well to learn the final result and remember it, but it's all so much clearer if we come to that conclusion (with the teacher's guidance, of course) for ourselves. We may not need to know how to derive a formula, or a conclusion, but getting the gist of how to often makes it easier to remember.

With the theory done it was time to put it into practice. The teacher briefly explained how the practical was going to work but left most of the work to us. Whilst we went through the experiment the teacher wandered around, making sure everything was running smoothly and we knew what we're actually doing. She didn't get terribly involved with the setting up and running of the experiment. This is a good thing, as setting up a successful practical is something we have to do by the end of the year for ourselves. She did, however, stop and discuss with individual groups what exactly this was supposed to be showing us. Again, this was helpful as it is all too easy to get too caught up in counting the weights on the end of a ruler, and forget exactly why we are doing that, and how it actually relates to the lesson.

The practical was over a good fifteen or twenty minutes before the end of the lesson and we worked through what we had just done. A written or verbal summing up of the practical was useful, as what we've just done often doesn't become clear until we actually look at the results and see how it all fits with the point of the lesson.

The teacher ended the lesson by just giving out some questions on moments, which served as a nice warm down in preparation for the end of the lesson and also helped put the new knowledge into practice, something that is vital if we were to stand any chance of remembering what we were supposed to have learnt.



The Extended Schools Conference 2005

By Tom Farmer (Student Governor)

On 30th June, Bob Mitchell and I travelled down to London to represent Beauchamp in the Extended Schools Conference 2005. Having reached our destination, the very swanky Waldorf Hotel, we both got stuck into a nice cup of coffee and a sticky bun. We felt right at home!

Extended schools earn their title by providing a range of services and activities, during and beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of children and their families in the wider community. The extended services offered often include childcare, adult education, parenting support programmes, community-based health and social services, multi-agency behaviour support teams and after school activities. Beauchamp, along with many other schools, are already providing these extended services, but there is a lot more progress to be made and so the conference focused discussions largely on the future of Extended Schools.

Bob gave a fantastic presentation and speech explaining how Beauchamp College is developing from a 14 -19 Comprehensive Community College to an Extended School, without the benefit of Government funding and offers a full range of activities and services. Luckily for me, Bob kept them attentive and enthusiastic for my speech after the break.

Although speaking to Principals and Governors was a tad daunting, I was pleasantly surprised by the genuine interest and enthusiasm shown by many of the attendees. I wanted not only to inform those present about what my role as Student Governor involves and what it means to me, but also to portray just how passionately I feel that student responsibility and participation is the way forward.

The key points in my speech were:

- My role as Student Governor, listening to and understanding student's views, is to carry their ideas forward to the Governing body and feedback to the students. Schools, Colleges and Universities are

almost entirely focused around young people, and so it is vital that these young people get involved in the running of these institutions.

- I have already made efforts to promote the Student Voice in and around the college. For example, in the past two weeks I have assisted in the citizenship lessons for year ten students. This involved giving a presentation on the ESSA Student Voice Conference and describing plans for the September Teacher Training day in which students will be involved.
- I explained the electoral process and my efforts to give students a clear understanding of why they have a Student Governor. My first real experience as Student Governor came last week at my first Governors meeting at which, I participated in all discussions and voted on various issues as well as the election of two new Governors.
- We have already seen the positive impact a Student Governor has on the college. Teaching is a two-way process and so there must be a strong partnership between students and staff. We, therefore, believe it's crucial that the Student Voice is promoted across the country and steps are taken to set a national standard regarding student representation.
- I finished with a call to all Principals asking them to facilitate the election of student representation to their Governing bodies. For those of them who don't already have year committees and school councils, at the earliest opportunity, they need to establish these tried and tested systems for communicating and hearing their Student Voice. Give them the support and validity they need to succeed!

The day was a great success. Bob and I both received a great deal of positive feedback regarding our ideas around Extended Schools and Governorship, and how we have worked towards developing these ideas. Several people told me they were going to investigate the possibility of Student Governors in their institutions, and one Head Teacher said he had found the day exceptionally rewarding.



Student Learning Walk

By Rob Hayes

Our Learning Walk took place at Finham Park School in Coventry and involved months of preparation in advance of this exciting new idea. Aziz Easat, Rachel Jeffreys and I attended many meetings with Mrs Hartland and Mme Benitez to discuss our aims and protocol required and to discuss and form questions to ask our shadow pupils. We eventually produced a booklet that we took around with us on the day to record our findings.

On the day, we arrived early at Beauchamp wearing white shirts, black trousers and black shoes. We had agreed to do this as Finham Park School has a uniform and we decided to be respectful and wear smart clothes. We left in the Beauchamp minibus, accompanied by Mme Benitez, Mrs Hartland and Mrs Woodland.

We arrived slightly later than planned, but were made to feel welcome all the same.

During my time at Finham Park, the main thing I noticed was the excellently organised lunch time. Students were split into three groups: Year 7 on their own, Years 8 and 10 together and then Years 9 and 11. They queued outside the canteen when it was their sitting, then they were let in by a teacher to collect and pay for their food. They weren't allowed to take their food outside, but ate in the canteen or three nearby classrooms called "lunch rooms". I would recommend that Beauchamp look at a system like this, as it would cut down on litter, wouldn't separate year groups and would make it easier for lunch time activities to take place.

I also noted that the school council was very efficient. They were well organised, worked hard and well together and produced excellent ideas, such as presenting their ideas to school assemblies and to the leadership team of the college. All decisions taken by the council were recorded by a member of the group on a laptop. I found they worked so well together because they had received training from a youth worker, who trained them all in leadership, teamwork and confidence. I believe this is something Beauchamp could use to everyone's advantage.

Another observation that I made was the displays of pupil work. Lots of art work gave the college a bright and stimulating atmosphere. It gave the corridors a bright, colourful feel and I believe that it was much better than having nothing or non-pupil work on display.

At the end of the day we met with the principal and discussed our observations and findings, giving him an opinion of his school from an outsider's perspective. This hopefully enabled him and his staff to discuss possible improvements for their school. We particularly expressed our views on their Behaviour for Learning policy, which was a very structured and complicated system. We decided that it was easier at Finham Park to get sanctions rather than rewards.

Since the Learning Walk, Aziz, Rachel and I have been involved in presentations at meetings here at Beauchamp. We discussed our findings with Mr Parker and the vice and assistant principals who found it very interesting finding out the way different schools work. In fact we have used our PowerPoint presentation seven times: at a Leading Edge meeting, at a governors meeting and during the school citizenship week we delivered the presentation to five groups of our peers.

Overall, it was a very rewarding experience for both schools and us as students and we hope that students from Finham Park will visit us on a return journey very soon. We recommend this experience to other students and teachers too.



Improving Teaching and Learning

Beth Langham and Sammy Ashmore

Many teachers have commented on how useful they found the Student Voice presentations on Teacher Day and have asked us for a summary of our main points.

We are Year 11, 12 and 13 students and we believe that by voicing our opinions and ideas about learning we will improve the student – teacher relationship. Please take the time to read through our suggestions; we hope that they are of use to you.

Teachers – What Can You Do?

- Being **friendly** and **approachable**, students feel comfortable speaking up and asking questions.
- Having **optimism** and **enthusiasm**: everyone loves praise; a teacher who emphasises a student’s strengths makes them feel confident about their abilities. This definitely has an impact on the work we produce.
- A balance between **authority** and **informality** – we learn well when we enjoy ourselves but discipline needs to be maintained.
- In the classroom students are inspired by: **varied lesson plans, class discussion, individual and group work.**
- Starting a lesson effectively: **recapping** what had been done previously engages students and puts our work into context. **Lesson objectives** allow students to understand what they are aiming to achieve and why we are doing the work we are. A number of teachers write these on the board, which really helps.
- Ending a lesson effectively: **quick fire recap**, by undertaking recap questions helps to ensure that everyone has been listening and has

understood. Also if you are setting homework please don't leave it till the last minute, as often we can be unsure of what we have been asked to do, or not been given time to write it down. **Finishing on time** help students focus better if they are aware the teacher will bring the lesson to an end in good time.

- **Revision lessons** throughout the year, even after the end of each topic. This means that each part of the subject is fully understood; it also gets students into the habit before the major exams begin.
- Assessment – **simple grades and numbers** are not enough; the best marking contains **constructive criticisms and targets**. Showing examples of other students work both of a higher and lower standard is useful. **One to one feedback** was agreed by all students as the best form of feedback on work.
- **Mark schemes** should be accessible throughout lessons, as students like to be continually reminded of the criteria they need to fulfil. **Communication** – students like to know **where** they are going, and **how** to get there. **Peer marking** allows students to gain an insight into how their peers undertake a task; it is also a fun exercise!
- Students **teaching lessons, giving presentations**, or being asked to prepare work sheets etc. Really helps with our learning and encourages us to be independent and undertake our own research and planning.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and for being such fantastic teachers; we will continue to try and be fantastic learners!

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