

# THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY

## Voice network activities – asking everyone about costs

### Create a focus group

**An activity to help your group find out people’s views and opinions.**

Focus group discussions can help you find out people’s ideas and opinions about a particular subject. Voice network groups have run discussions on lots of different topics, including uniform costs and the school canteen.

When you run your own focus groups, it’s helpful to decide:

- What you want to find out about. Write a list of questions and make sure none of them are too personal. You don’t want to put people on the spot or embarrass them.
- Who you want to talk to. Whose opinions and ideas are you interested in? Are there particular year groups or types of pupil or parent that you want to hear from?
- What you’re going to do with the information and where you’re going to share it in the school. Who needs to hear about this topic?

### Recruit people to take part

You might want to involve other teachers in your school to help.

- Pick a time and place that might work for the people you want to speak with.
- Groups of between 4 and 8 people are a good size to be able to chat comfortably.
- Reassure people that what they say will be kept confidential. This means sharing what’s been said but not who said it. For example, you might tell your head teacher that: “We heard from pupils that the canteen is too busy,” rather than “Kelly in S2 said that the canteen is too busy.”

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#### Prepare for the session

- What roles will you take? You'll need people to ask questions, keep an eye on time and make sure that what's being said is being written down or recorded in some way.
- Look again at your questions. Have you covered everything?
- Think about how you might manage different types of people. How will you encourage quiet people to speak up or make sure the discussion isn't taken over by a chatty person?
- Make sure you've got a comfortable space for people to sit. It's great if you can offer drinks and snacks too.

#### Run the focus group

- Introduce your group, what you're going to talk about and why it's important.
- Do a round of introductions. You can do a quick game to kick things off if you like.
- Remind people of confidentiality and what you're going to do with what's been said.
- Ask your questions. You can use prompts like:
  - "Can you tell me more about that?"
  - "Why do you think that?"
  - "Does anyone else have anything to say about that?"
  - "Does everyone agree with that?"
- Make sure you keep to time. You don't want to get through only half of the questions. You can move people along by saying: "Thanks for that. Now we're going to move on to the next question."

Listen carefully and show that you're interested. People will take part and enjoy it more if you do. When you're finished, thank people for taking part and tell them again what will be done with the information.