

TALKING SAFELY IN SCHOOL

1962 pupils aged 8-16



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Changefactory Knowledge Centre

Changefactory Knowledge Centre
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Project leaders Nina Frøkedal og Andrea Steen Hernes
Photo Helge Hansen, Ole Martin Wold, Morten Brun
The photos are of participants in the survey

THANK YOU

A HUGE THANK YOU to all of you wise, good and brave pupils who have taken part in this survey. Thank you very much for sharing your experiences and giving important advice.

You know how it feels to go to school, and why it's important that all children can talk safely there. You know what it takes to feel safe enough to tell the most important things that the school needs to know. You also know a lot about what adults have to do to be able to decide in a good way for you.

Those who work in schools can bring with them your experiences and advice into the classrooms. Those who decide what the schools will be like in the coming years can bring this knowledge with them, in the work to develop the schools further.

THANK YOU FROM OUR HEARTS

TO ALL ADULTS IN SCHOOL

We're at school almost every day and spend many hours of our lives there. You can be one of the adults we meet a lot. You can be an important person in our life.

Many children carry important things inside of them that we think some adults at school should know. Many of us are looking for adults we can confide in. If you collaborate with us, it can give us faith that there are safe adults in the school who understand this.

We hope you will take our experiences and advice with you and do what you can to make it safe enough for more children to tell an adult the important things the school should know. This increases the chances of you making good decisions in collaboration with children. It can become easier to learn and enjoy school.

This can enable us to find out together what we need for the school to become a place where we feel safe. When we are safe, we learn better.

WELCOME



ABOUT THE SURVEY



This report presents responses from two qualitative surveys, carried out in the spring of 2021 and the spring of 2022, in primary and secondary school classes around the country. Changefactory invited schools from both large and smaller municipalities.

About the method

The qualitative surveys were conducted using the Changemethod. This is a participatory research method, to collect in-depth knowledge for use in change work and equivalent collaboration with children and young people. It's developed with a starting point in Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) and is built on answers from children and young people about how participating in a survey can feel safe.

The Changemethod consists of a value base, working principles and a number of concrete tools, to collect knowledge directly from children and young people. The tools are creative and visual activities, to help make it safe, fun and possible for many different children and young people.

Qualitative and quantitative approaches

The surveys were carried out with both a qualitative and quantitative approach. The qualitative aspect has been most important, in order to bring out a range of experiences, and to ensure an in-depth understanding of what the pupils express.

Summary of the knowledge

The experience and advice that was collected, was thematically sorted. Explanations that were repeated by many children have been summarised in the form of text or bullet points in this report. The language used is as similar as possible to what children have used. The answers aren't tied to theory. In the report, some answers are presented in the form of percentages. The percentages are calculated based on how many answered each of the questions.

How the survey was conducted

A total of 1962 pupils have participated. Some classes have taken part in both surveys, but no pupils have been registered twice in the total number.

Survey conducted in the spring of 2021

1200 pupils, in grades 3-10, from around the country, gave advice on how schools can facilitate so that children are able to say what's most important to them. Researchers from Changefactory visited 25 large and small schools around the country - in Våler, Indre Østfold, Drammen, Nittedal, Bergen, Trondheim, Malvik, Kristiansand and Bodø. The schools were mainly selected by the municipalities' school management.

Survey conducted in the spring of 2022

1142 pupils, in grades 5-10, from around the country, gave advice to teachers on what pupils want to be involved in decision-making and in what ways they must be allowed to be involved in decision-making. Researchers from Changefactory visited 42 large and small schools around the country - in Tromsø, Trondheim, Bergen, Sandnes, Stavanger, Oslo, Drammen, Porsgrunn and Kristiansand.

Information

The pupils were given information in advance about the survey, what their answers would be used for, and that they could choose how much or little they wanted to say. They were informed that all the answers would be anonymised and sorted with answers from many others, and that no one would know what exactly they had said.

Stations and assignments

Each of the classes were divided into groups of 2-5 pupils. Each group went to different stations, with assignments adapted to their year. The main focus throughout was the pupils' advice to the school. Out of consideration for each individual participant and privacy, the researchers were conscious of ensuring that the pupils' history or family didn't become the focus.



SNAKKE
TRYGT

Children's rights give all pupils procedural rights

Since 2015, Changefactory has carried out more than 10 qualitative surveys on the topic of school. Pupils around the country have shared experiences and advice. An answer that has been repeated is that when something is to be decided for a pupil, it must be done together with the pupil. The chance is then much greater that what's decided will be right for them. When asked what's needed for them to feel that they're being collaborated with, many pupils have answered that they need to know enough, to be able to talk to or have someone they trust with them and to know what's happening with what they tell.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was made Norwegian law in 2003, through Section 2 of the Human Rights Act. The Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to all children under the age of 18.

Several of the rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child were included in the Constitution in 2014, which is Norway's highest law. Some of the rights are also included in the various special laws. The Convention on the Rights of the Child must be used together with the special laws, and if the special laws say something different to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the provision in the Convention on the Rights of the Child shall prevail.

Children's procedural rights

The Convention on the Rights of the Child gives children some procedural rights. These are rights that describe how children should be met, in all actions and decisions that concern them, so that adults can assess what's best for the child. Actions and decisions that affect pupils can, for example, be telling something from or about the pupil to parents, deciding that the pupil should get extra help, giving a demerit to a pupil or what an employee does when they see an argument between pupils.

The procedural rights are the child's right to information, to speak freely, the right to respect for privacy and that these rights are secured, before the child's best interests are assessed.

National authorities, educational institutions and everyone who works with children have a duty to know about and contribute to ensuring that children get these rights.

The child's right to information

- *Implicitly follows BK art. 12 cf. general comment no. 12 sections 16, 25 and 41*

The UN Children's Committee states that children have the right to receive all the information necessary to be able to express themselves freely and decide what's best for themselves in the situation. In other words, the right to information is a prerequisite for the child to be able to speak freely about actions and decisions to be taken, and is therefore very important.

The right to information means that the child must, among other things, receive information about:

- The situation and the matter at hand
- What information the adults have and from whom
- What happens if the child shares information
- Which decisions must be taken and which alternative solutions exist
- What consequences the decisions may have

The information must be given in a considerate and understandable way, it must be repeated when needed, and the child must receive new information that comes along the way.

The child's right to express themselves freely

- *BK art. 12 and Grl. Section 104*

Children have the right to express themselves freely in all matters that concern them, and their opinion must be emphasised. The authority has a duty to ensure this right for all children, without exception. This is an independent right children have, which neither parents nor other adults can limit.

That children are allowed to express themselves freely is done by ensuring that:

- The child receives useful and understandable information (General comment no. 12 section 25),
- The child feels safe and respected (General comment no. 12 section 23),
- The child is allowed to speak without influence, pressure or manipulation (General comment no. 12 section 22), and
- The child may speak without the consent of parents or other guardians.

As a starting point, the child's best interests cannot be used as justification for children not being heard in various processes. If other solutions are chosen than what the child wants, the child must be given a say on how the child thinks this will turn out. If it's considered that the child's statements shouldn't be given weight, it must be documented and justified what significance and consequences it may have for the child to act contrary to the child's statements.

There is no age limit for when the child must be heard; the key is whether the child is able to express themselves freely about the question. The UN Children's Committee emphasises that the state has a duty to examine the child's ability to express their opinion, and that expressing themselves can take place in many ways. For those children who cannot express themselves verbally by speaking, they can, for example, express themselves through body language. (General Comment No. 12 paragraphs 20-21).

The child's right to respect for their privacy

- *BK art. 16, Grl. Section 102 and EPC art. 8*

The Convention on the Rights of the Child specifies that no child shall be subjected to arbitrary or illegal interference with their privacy. This right means, among other things, that professionals cannot automatically share information from or about the child with others within the service, with other services or with parents.

In order to be able to share information from or about the child to others, there must be an authority in law that allows such sharing and the intervention in the child's privacy must be necessary. It must also be assessed whether the sharing is in the best interests of the child.

In many cases, information from or about the child can be shared, without the child's right to privacy being assessed. If information is shared without the child's knowledge, the child may lose trust in the adult who shares. Safeguarding children's right to respect for their privacy is an important prerequisite for ensuring children's right to express themselves freely.

The child needs to know what can happen to what the child says, before an adult starts talking to a child. When professionals consider sharing information from or about the child with others, it's an "action" or a "decision" that "affects" the child. The adult must therefore inform the child that they're considering sharing information, and let the child express themselves freely about this, before information is shared. This applies to all children regardless of age. Based on this, it must be assessed whether it's in the child's best interests to share the information.

This does not mean that other professionals, services or parents should never receive information from or about the child. But the procedure of giving the child information and letting them speak first must be followed. In addition, there must be a basis for sharing and the adult must assess whether it's necessary and in the best interest of the child.

How to assess what's in the best interests of the child

- *BK art. 3 and Grl. 104*

After the child has received information, the opportunity to express themselves freely and their respect for privacy has been ensured, an assessment can be made of what's best for the child. The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that the child's best interests must be a fundamental consideration in actions and decisions affecting a child. This applies, for example, when the school wants to carry out a survey, refer to Special Education Services or contact a health nurse. What's best for the child must be decided on the basis of a concrete assessment, where the child's own opinions are a central element (HR-2021-475-A section 62).

That the best interests of the child "must" be a fundamental consideration means:

1. What's best for the child must be assessed in all matters and decisions affecting the child.
2. Consideration of the child's best interests must be given great weight and be the starting point for the decision (Rt 2015 p.93 section 65).

At school, many decisions are made every day that affect one or many children. Whether that's what to do, whether to give a pupil a demerit or whether a pupil should get extra help. In all these cases, the adult must take into account what's best for the pupil or pupils as a group in these situations. The significance of procedural rights in practice will vary from case to case.

it'll be much
easier for the
adults if they
just listen to me
first, because
then they
get solutions
straight away

SOMETHING
HAS TO BE
DONE



To national and local authorities

Based closely on the responses from the pupils in the qualitative survey, advice for local and national authorities is presented here. The advice has been prepared in collaboration, by young people and factory workers.

Norwegian schools are missing out on too much

- 2 out of 3 pupils haven't told the adults at school the most important things the school should know
- 3 out of 5 pupils often feel that it's not safe enough to talk to the homeroom teacher about difficult things
- 2 out of 3 pupils usually don't experience adults telling them before they tell something children say and do to their parents
- 3 out of 4 pupils are often not allowed to express their opinion when adults decide important things about them at school

Children have clear advice on what's needed to improve these numbers. The advice is important for adults in school and equally important for those of you who make laws, regulations, guidelines and initiatives for Norwegian schools. They're also important for the students on in higher education.

Serious and important

When 2 out of 3 children in school answer that they haven't told the most important thing that the adults need to know, something must be done. The municipalities spend millions of kroner each year on measures for children who need help. These are measures to prevent learning difficulties, outsidership, bullying and violence in school.

Advice on what can be done nationally

After input from pros, the Storting unanimously adopted in June 2021: "The Storting asks the government to ensure that the new Education Act and Kindergarten Act are in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child's fundamental rights for procedures regarding children's right to information, to express themselves freely, children's right to privacy and that all actions and decisions concerning children are made in the child's best interest."

New § 1-6 in the Education Act – Pupils' right to participation.

In the new Child Protection Act, children's right to participate is made clearer. In autumn 2021, the Education Act was subject to consultation, and in the spring of 2023 a new Education Act will be adopted. The framework for Norwegian schools must be determined anew.

In order for schools to understand and become better able to work with children, children's right to participation must be described more clearly in the Education Act. Here is a concrete proposal for a new legal text based on the changes that have been adopted in the new Child Protection Act, and the current Kindergarten Act:

«Pupils have the right to participate in everything that concerns themselves according to this law. Pupils must regularly have the opportunity to actively participate in the planning and assessment of the school's activities. Pupils must receive sufficient and comprehensible information and have the right to express their opinions freely.

The pupils have the right to express themselves independently of their parents' consent, and without the parents being informed in advance or being present. Pupils must be heard, and weight must be given to their opinions according to their age and maturity.

The pupil must be informed about what information they provide can be used for and who can access this information. The pupil has the right to express themselves before it's decided that the information should be shared. The school must take into account any views expressed by the pupil before deciding whether the information should be shared.

In meetings with the school and other bodies, a pupil may be given the opportunity to bring with them a person whom the pupil has stated that they are particularly safe with. The safety person may be subject to a duty of confidentiality.»

New education act precept

In the formulation of the new education act precept, it'll also be crucial that collaboration with the pupils, both at individual and class level, is made clear. In the spring of 2023, this will come up for consultation. Here are concrete proposals for regulations:

§ Collaboration with individual pupils

«In all actions and decisions that concern children, the pupil's right to receive information, to speak freely, the right to respect for privacy must be ensured before it can be assessed what's in the best interest of the pupil.

In the pupil-teacher conference, it must be ensured that the pupil can express what's important to them. It must facilitate that the conversation is conducted in a way that feels safe for the pupil.

The teacher must regularly follow up each pupil's progress in the subjects and what's needed for the pupil to get a satisfactory result from the training according to Section 11-1 of the Education Act.

If a pupil has disrupted the teaching, done something bad to others or themselves or in other ways broken the school rules, the pupil's right to receive information and to speak freely about the situation must always be ensured as a starting point, before measures are taken. Any measures must take into account what's best for the pupil. Information about the situation cannot be shared with parents unless the pupil has been given the right to speak and their right to respect for privacy is secured.

When the school considers introducing measures for a pupil in accordance with Chapter 11 of the Education Act, it must ensure that the child receives comprehensible information about this and the opportunity to express themselves freely about what the pupil themselves thinks they need. When measures have been implemented, the school must ensure that the pupil is followed up regularly to ensure that the measure is useful for the pupil.»

§ Collaboration with the class

The teacher must regularly give the class the opportunity to be involved in deciding how the teaching is to be laid out, in order to ensure satisfactory

results from the training according to Section 11-1 of the Education Act. When assessing subjects, the teacher must ensure that the pupils can show what they've learned by arranging for the pupils to be assessed in different ways.

The teacher is responsible for collecting feedback and advice about the teaching, and the class and learning environment from all pupils in their classes. Feedback and advice must be obtained at least every six months, but should be obtained continuously as a natural part of everyday school life. As far as possible, the feedback and advice must be used as a basis for work with teaching and the learning environment.

The class representative for the pupil council/in the school democracy must have access to the pupils' feedback and advice. The representative is responsible for promoting this advice and feedback to teachers and the school management.

§ Experiences and advice from all the pupils at the school

Pupils have the right to express their views on the school's daily activities. The school is responsible for gathering feedback about the school and learning environment from all the pupils at the school and advice on what can be improved. Feedback and advice must be obtained at least once every six months.

The feedback must be central to the development of the school and the learning environment. The feedback must be taken seriously and provide a basis for the development of the school and learning environment.

Governance documents that we think Udir should review:

- bullying and dissatisfaction - what should the school do?
- values and principles for basic education
- circular about the school environment
- collaboration between home and school
- the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the proceedings

All initiatives that the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Udir) helps to roll out must also be secured with children's procedural rights. The knowledge from children must be included to ensure that the initiatives are useful for the children they're designed for.

Advice on what can be done locally

You who make decisions in the municipalities are important in ensuring that more children in your municipality can speak safely at school. You can change routines, make initiatives and ensure that the initiatives you have ensure children's rights and are built on knowledge from children, together with other knowledge. Important objectives must be that children are collaborated with, so that children can speak more safely at school.

Change routines and plans for follow-up and interaction

To ensure that children's basic rights to how they should be met are safeguarded, all local authorities must go through routines for how they follow up children. Children's right to information, to express themselves freely and the right to respect for their privacy must be ensured. Without it, professionals cannot properly assess what's in a child's best interests. Collaboration between services can be useful. At the same time, it can cause children to lose confidence. To ensure that routines, action plans and initiatives for interdisciplinary collaboration are useful for the children in your municipality, the rights must be clearly described.

Securing children's rights in school-home collaboration

For the school, collaboration with parents is important. For many children, collaboration with parents can be nice and safe, for others it can be unsafe and scary. Adults cannot know what this is like for each individual child. The collaboration must be done in a way that feels as safe as possible for children and does not contribute to destroying the trust children have in adults. All descriptions and routines about school-home collaboration must ensure children's procedural rights.

Pupil democracy

All pupils must be able to give feedback on how they experience the class and learning environment. The head of school or principals must have the overall responsibility for systematically collecting feedback and advice from all the pupils in the school. Many children have answered that not only the pupil council can say something about how the school feels. Teachers can also systematically include pupils in planning how the teaching should be. The municipalities can have routines that describe this, to ensure that pupil democracy in the municipality includes all children.

Brave adults

Children at school tell of encounters with many brave adults. There are adults who dare to go in depth to understand the pupils, and to emphasise creating safe classrooms, where everyone feels seen and heard. It takes courage to break the usual routine. It takes courage to think new. It also takes courage to do what's right, even if it may contradict some of what you have learned. Children are the experts in their lives, and they often know best what's in their best interest.

KNOWLEDGE FROM CHILDREN





1 INFORMATION

INFORMATION

In order for pupils to be able to speak safely, they must receive sufficient and comprehensible information about what concerns them. Then it gets easier to say what's important for the school to feel safe and for them to learn. Adults can then more easily make good decisions for the pupils.

From children's rights

To ensure that children can express themselves freely and safely, it's important that the child receives all the information and guidance they need. It's important that those responsible for hearing the child safeguard the right to information because it's a prerequisite for the child to be able to make clear decisions. (BK art. 12 and General comment no. 12 par. 16,25)

ADVICE

Repeated answers to what the pupils want to receive information about:

Give information about our rights

What pupils want to know about their rights:

- we have the right to know everything that is to be decided about us
- we have the right to know the ways in which we can learn and get help
- adults aren't allowed to share anything we say to other adults, without talking to us first
- we have the right to say something about everything that is decided about us
- we have the right to think differently than adults
- the child's opinions are important for everything adults decide about children
- no adult can know what's in our best interests without knowing what we think about it

How it's important that adults give information:

- explain in ways we understand
- use concrete examples of how the rights work in the school when you explain
- be absolutely sure that we've understood the rights correctly. Ask us if there is something we think is unclear or difficult to understand

Give information about sharing information

What pupils want to know about sharing information:

- what's shared with parents/carers
- what's shared with other adults at school
- what's shared with adults in support systems
- remind us that nothing should be said without us knowing, and that this applies to everything we do or say in everyday conversations, pupil talks and when we talk to you alone
- tell us well in advance of meetings with parents or other adults what you intend to share

Give information about well-being at school

What pupils want to know about well-being at school:

- that the school is a place that should feel safe
- how we should treat each other at school
- how the adults should treat us
- how you want us to feel at school
- how you can help if the school does not feel safe
- what adults aren't allowed to do, such as judging us, being very angry, grabbing us or using force in other ways

Give information about who the adults are

What pupils want to know about the adults at school:

- adults' work tasks
- how each of you can help pupils
- when the various adults are available

Give information when something new will happen

What pupils want to know when something different is going to happen:

- let us know well in advance when something out of the ordinary is going to happen, such as changes in timetables or homework plans, that a substitute is coming, special days or arrangements, trips or events
- give us the opportunity to talk to an adult if we are dreading something or want to have a different plan than the others

Give information about how the school works

What pupils want to know about how the school works:

- how various things are determined
- who in the school is responsible for what
- why we go to school
- why we learn what we learn
- why we learn in the way we learn
- what rules exist at school and why they exist

Give information on assessments

Repeated answers to what pupils want to know about assessments:

- what we will be assessed on
- how the assessment situation will take place
- how you will assess us
- give good feedback that explains why we've received an assessment
- explain what we can do to make it even better next time
- that teachers aren't allowed to give pupils worse assessments or grades because they don't like us

EXPERIENCES

56% didn't know what they could report at school

70% haven't been told enough about things about them

Summarised experiences

When pupils receive enough information:

What pupils have received enough information about:

- that they can talk to adults at school about things that are important to pupils
- what they can express their opinion about
- that they can express their opinion about how the school feels and how it can be improved
- how adults can help them
- the different adults' roles at school
- that adults aren't allowed to pass on anything a pupil has said, without the pupil knowing

How it has turned out for pupils:

- safer to talk about important things
- they've felt confident that nothing will be passed on to other adults in their lives without it first being agreed with them

When pupils receive too little information:

What pupils haven't received enough information about:

- what they can express their opinion about
- that they have the right to express their opinion about how things should be at school
- that they have the right to express their opinion when something about them is to be decided
- how adults at school can help them
- that they can talk to adults at school about important things in their lives
- how teachers should talk to each other and pupils
- what teachers write about them
- what information adults aren't allowed to share, without having spoken to the pupil about it first
- which adults in their lives will come to know what they've told
- when something has been decided about them, and why

How it has turned out for pupils:

- they've lost faith that what they think is important
- they've thought that adults at the school don't need to know the most important things from each pupil
- they've become afraid that adults have misunderstood what they've said or done

QUOTES ABOUT INFORMATION

I never learned about the most important children's rights. I didn't learn about them until I started the 8th grade.

I don't know what happens to what I say to the adults, and I really wish I knew. Then I could take part in deciding what we should do and such.

I want to know what they're talking about. It's scary when I don't know.

I haven't known anything about what they write. I should know that, so that she doesn't write something wrong, interpret something wrong or misunderstand something.

I don't talk to anyone very often, but I feel I can if I need to.

I have learned something about what I can tell about at school.

When I had a conversation with the public health nurse, she said at least that she has a duty of confidentiality, that she will not say anything further.

We've been told this way: Go to a public health nurse or go to an environmental therapist, but it doesn't always work.

I don't know
what happens
to what I say to
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knew

2

SHARING INFORMATION



SHARING INFORMATION

Adults at school share different things about pupils to other adults. If this is done in a way that does not feel safe for pupils, it can create bad feelings, and it can make things worse in their lives. If it's done in a way that feels safe, pupils can gain trust in the adult and tell them important things.

From children's rights

Children have the right to respect for their privacy (BK art. 16, EMF art. 8 and GrL § 102). In order to share information, there must be a legal basis that allows it, and it must be necessary. Adults must consider whether it's in the child's best interests to share. Children have the right to information and to express themselves when adults consider sharing information from a child.

ADVICE

Repeated answers from the pupils, about sharing information

Check with us before you share information

What adults must talk to pupils about before they share information:

- ask us if it's okay, before you share - regardless of whether it's something good or bad and regardless of who you intend to share it with
- explain to us why you want to share information
- if we say yes, make a plan with us that feels safe for us
- make an agreement with us about who you will share the information with, how you will tell and when you will tell

Be brave when we say no

How adults can be brave if a pupil says they don't want anything to shared:

- find out why we say no, before you decide to share anything
- remember that you must find out why we say no, even if you're stressed, worried or scared
- listen with your heart and body when we tell why we say no
- show us that you hear what we say and take it seriously
- be brave adults and keep our secret as long as you can, if we aren't ready for you to share

Make collaboration with those at home safe for us

How adults at school can make collaboration with adults at home safe for pupils:

- include our opinions when it's decided what parents should know
- talk to us about what they should know when they pick us up, at parent meetings and when you otherwise talk to them
- agree with us who it's safest for you to call, if you're going to call home
- remember that we may be afraid of disappointing our parents, or of making them angry
- remember that we may be afraid that our parents share it with other parents, and that others at school will find out
- remember that those of us who are having a difficult time at home may be afraid of it becoming even more difficult

EXPERIENCES

55% often don't experience that the adults tell them before they share something the pupil says or does to their parents

Summarised experiences

When adults talk with pupils, before they share information

How adults have talked with pupils before they shared information:

- asked the pupil if it's okay for things the pupil has said or done to be shared with other adults
- asked sometimes, but not always
- said that they're going to share something, but didn't ask what the pupil thought about it

How it has turned out for pupils:

- they've felt that they had more control
- it has felt safer to tell adults important things
- they haven't known whether they could really trust the adult, and have chosen not to tell the most important thing
- knowing that something must be shared has felt safer than not knowing. They wanted to be able to share their thoughts about what was going to be shared
- adults have missed out on important explanations from the pupils
- it has become safer to trust adults and tell big and important things, when adults have cared about the little things

When adults don't talk with pupils, before they share information

How adults haven't talked with pupils before they shared information:

- adults haven't asked the pupil before they've told someone else what they've said or done
- adults have shared how the pupil is at school, which subjects they're good or bad at, things they struggle with and bad things that have happened in the past
- adults have shared secrets that pupils have told them, with someone else
- adults have used sharing information as a threat

How it has turned out for pupils:

- they've been yelled at or given consequences by adults at home
- they're left with bad feelings inside
- they've realised that other adults have found out something, because adults have looked at the pupil differently, or asked questions about things that pupils haven't told them themselves
- it has felt scary
- they've felt that they have no control, and have become afraid to tell more

QUOTES ABOUT SHARING INFORMATION

When I say something I've done, everyone gets mad and then they call home and yell at me. It's pretty awful.

Suddenly they just call home and they don't ask me.

For example, when parents come and say "we need to have a chat" I become less confident in the people I've told it to. Then that person doesn't get to know much more.

All the teachers go straight to the principal - it's scary and uncomfortable.

I don't feel safe around adults at all. What I said to the social pedagogue was shared.

If they say it at all, they often say who they're thinking of sharing it with.

They don't always ask for permission, but they do sometimes.

It's safe for me because they always ask and I get to decide what I want to do with it.

She has a duty of confidentiality, but they need to explain it better so we don't feel tricked when they suddenly have to share something anyway.

They say it's safe and that they won't share the information. Then I feel confident that they won't.

3

ADULTS
WHO
FEEL
SAFE



ADULTS WHO FEEL SAFE

For pupils to be able to talk safely, the adult they're talking to must feel safe for the pupil. Adults need to take the time to figure out how to make it as safe as possible for pupils to talk safely.

From children's rights

Adults must ensure that it's safe enough for children to express their views. Adults must understand and receive training about the child's right to be able to safely express their point of view (BK art. 12 and General comment no. 12 par. 49)

ADVICE

Repeated answers from the pupils, about what makes adults feel safe:

Get to know us

How adults can get to know pupils:

- tell us about yourselves and your lives
- talk to us about things other than subjects
- find interests we have in common
- show that you're curious
- ask us how we're doing
- do something fun with us during breaks
- remember that we need to get to know each other a little now and then, not just at the start of the school year

Ask who we feel safe with

How adults can find out who we feel safe with:

- ask us who we feel safe with, so we can choose which adult we want to talk to
- tell us that you won't be sad or upset, no matter which adult we choose
- tell us that all you want is for us to talk to an adult who we feel safe with
- do everything you can to ensure that we can talk to this adult, at a time that works for both us and the adult

Give us feedback warmly

How adults can give feedback in a warm way, even when something strict has to be said:

- be clear and warm when you give us feedback
- explain that you're giving us feedback because you want us to make it in the best way possible, and that you're rooting for us
- give us feedback in a kind way
- talk to us about why it can become unsafe in the classroom if we do bad things
- ask us why we did something bad, with a kind voice and kind eyes
- say that you know we don't want to do bad things, and that you're talking to us to find a solution together with us
- say nice things about us, even when you have to be strict, or give feedback

Listen to understand

How adults can show that they need to know pupils' thoughts and opinions:

- show with your eyes, voice and questions that you need to know what each of our opinions are
- show that it's important for you to know, even when you're short on time
- tell us that we are brave and that you will listen when we come to you with something important to tell
- don't think badly of us if we say something difficult, hurtful, or something you don't agree with
- be careful not to try to make us think something different, if you disagree
- let us finish talking before you say anything
- ask questions if there's something you don't understand
- tell us how you understood what we said, to make sure you haven't misunderstood anything

Show emotions

Repeated answers to how adults can show feelings:

- tell us what you feel when we tell you things and feel free to show emotions
- if you get upset by something we say - explain to us that you get upset when we are in pain, because you care about us and want us to be well
- if something we say makes you happy - explain that this is because it's important to you that we thrive

EXPERIENCES

60% often experience that it's not safe enough to talk to the homeroom teacher about difficult things

75% have felt that adults influence them to say or think something

Summarised experiences

When adults feel safe

Why adults can feel safe:

- adults have taken the time to get to know the pupils well, and told them things about themselves such as what they're happy about, what's happening in their lives at the moment, and what they like to do in their spare time
- adults have dared to tell about their own bad experiences, and haven't been afraid of making a fool of themselves or getting embarrassed
- adults have had warm smiles and kind body language, even when something bad has happened
- adults have given the pupil a hug and told them that they believe in them
- adults have said that they care about pupils and want to help them so that they can thrive
- different adults have felt safe, such as a teacher, public health nurse, social worker, environmental therapist, janitor or librarian

How it has turned out for pupils:

- it has felt safe to talk to adults about difficult things pupils feel inside
- they've found the courage to come to the classroom, even when things are difficult
- they've been given more space to learn

When adults don't feel safe

Why adults don't feel safe:

- pupils don't feel they know the adult well enough
- pupils have felt that adults try to influence them when the adult talks to them alone, for example by saying why the adult's solution is best for the pupil
- pupils have felt that adults don't think pupils' problems are important
- adults have threatened to call home
- pupils have felt that adults have thought badly about them, when adults are very strict, shout, give demerits or say bad things about a pupil in front of the class

How it has turned out for pupils:

- it has not felt safe to talk honestly
- it has not felt safe to talk to adults about difficult things pupils have felt inside
- it has not felt safe to be at school

QUOTES ABOUT ADULTS WHO FEEL SAFE

If there is something difficult you want to tell, it can be difficult telling someone who grades you. Some adults give you a lower grade if you have done something wrong.

I can tell more when I talk to someone I trust.

When I feel bad inside, I can tell my teacher. Then it's easier to learn.

Some teachers may try to get me to tell, by threatening a bit. Then it feels like they're using power over me.

Some of the adults at school often make my opinion seem less valuable. I don't know if they know that.

I have a teacher who is cool. He taught me to skate. He shares things with me, what happened to him. I can be open with him and share.

They're strict with me almost all the time. Then I can't say anything important to them.

Our teacher knows us very well, and she is also very open. She often talks about how she feels. That's why I feel very safe with her.

Many times I don't want to share my opinion. I don't want to bother anyone with it.

The teacher asks in the middle of maths class how things are going with piano, tennis and horse riding. Then I feel safe with him.

I don't really like telling my opinion to the adults. I'm afraid they won't care.

I can only speak my mind when I know it'll be received in a nice way.

I have someone I can talk to about what I want, because she asks what I want and how I feel, and that's very good.

PLACES THAT FEEL SAFE

Talking in a place that feels safe can make it easier to tell important things. Different places can feel safe to different pupils, and a place that has felt safe once may not do so another time. Adults must find out together with pupils where it's safe enough to talk.

From children's rights

Convention on the Rights of the Child art. 12 gives children the right to express themselves freely. The UN Children's Committee says that in order for children to be able to express themselves freely, it must also be safe to express themselves. This involves providing a safe environment, which is positive and encouraging for the child (General comment no. 12 par. 23).

ADVICE

Repeated answers from the pupils, about how to find a place that feels safe:

Ask us which place feels safe to us

How adults can ask pupils which place feels safe to them:

- ask where it's safe for the pupil to talk
- tell us that it's important to you that we can talk in a place that feels safe to us
- ask when we are alone and no one else can hear us, if this is difficult you can send us a text message
- tell us we can make more suggestions if we want
- try not to choose for us or to make us choose a place that works best for you

Give us examples if we wish

Which places adults can suggest:

- a place where no one hears - for example a room that is soundproof, that can be locked, where not many people see us or almost no one walks past
- a place that feels cosy - for example with soft furniture, such as a sofa or bean bag, nice colours, nice lighting or cushions
- a place with snacks - for example hot cocoa, biscuits or juice
- a place with activities - for example drawing equipment or games, which we can do while we talk
- somewhere outside the school grounds - for example out in nature, by a campfire or going for a short walk while we talk

EXPERIENCES

69% have often not felt that the place they spoke was safe

87% haven't been asked often enough where they want to talk

Summarised experiences

When pupils are able to talk in a safe place

How pupils have been allowed to talk in a safe place:

- they've been able to talk to the adult alone
- they've been able to talk in a place where no one could hear them
- they've been able to talk in a place that feels comfortable for them
- adults have asked them where they want to talk

How it has turned out for pupils:

- it has felt safer to tell important things
- it has felt less scary
- it has felt less serious

When pupils aren't able to talk in a safe place

How pupils haven't been able to speak in a safe place:

- they haven't been asked where it's safest for them to speak
- adults haven't given examples of where it's possible to talk
- adults have decided where the conversation should be
- adults have brought up private matters with pupils in the classroom, while others have sat around and heard what they've talked about
- they've previously overheard other conversations, for example in the hallway or in the classroom, and have become afraid that this will happen to them too

How it has turned out for pupils:

- they haven't dared to tell anything important
- they've felt that it was not safe to talk

QUOTES ABOUT PLACES THAT FEEL SAFE

When we talk in the hallway, I get scared that someone else will hear it. Then it feels a little uncomfortable.

The adults can start talking about private things with me in the classroom with everyone else around.

I rarely get to choose a place where I feel safe. Sometimes I feel quite unsafe where we speak.

When the teachers want to talk to us, we usually have no choice. They can take us out into the hallway to talk, even if people walk by. And it's not very private. Some of the teachers don't care about people passing by, they just keep talking.

I don't know of any safe place at school to talk.

It's very cool to have a cosy group room. We get some private time with the teachers. I feel safe there.

I feel safe when I'm in the public health nurse's office, because there are posters on the wall and I get hot cocoa when I come in.

I'm talking to the public health nurse in her office, no one can actually hear what we're talking about. It feels safe there.

Adults who ask where we should talk, think a little further.

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SAFE DECISION- MAKING



SAFE DECISION-MAKING

In order for what the adults at school decide to be safe and useful for pupils, adults must collaborate with pupils on the decisions they're going to make. Then pupils can have the opportunity to tell what's important to them, and why it's important. Pupils themselves know best what's needed in order for them to learn as much as possible, in the best possible way. If pupils can help decide how they learn, it can be easier to enjoy school.

From children's rights

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that the child's best interests must be a fundamental consideration in actions and decisions affecting a child. This means that what's best for the child must be considered in all matters and decisions, and that consideration of the child's best interests must be given great weight. The child's opinion must be a central element in the assessment of what's best for the child (BK art. 3, GrI. § 104).

ADVICE

Repeated answers from the pupils, about how they want to help decide:

Let us help decide important things

What pupils want to help decide:

- how much homework we should have
- that we should be allowed to be inside during breaks
- how the breaks should be - when they should be, how long they should last, and what we can do
- what we will learn about in class
- which ways each pupil can work, so we learn better
- which learning methods the teacher should use to teach in the lessons

Ask us before anything is decided

How adults can talk to pupils before anything about them is decided:

- ask us what we think about what's to be decided
- let us think for a little while, and ask again
- tell us and show that you think it's important to decide something that can help us
- ask questions if there is something you don't understand, so we can explain what we mean

Take what we say seriously

How adults can take what pupils say seriously:

- use what we've said as a starting point when you decide something about us
- try to find a solution that is as good as possible for us
- explain to us why, if something can't turn out the way we wanted

Keep asking, after something is decided

How adults can keep the pupils' trust after something has been decided:

- ask us how it feels
- tell us that we're allowed to change our mind
- ask us if you could have done something differently

Make it safe to speak honestly

How adults can make it safe for pupils to speak honestly when they are going to help decide something:

- be honest, patient and show that we can trust you
- ask what we want
- be kind in your voice when you ask
- tell us that you will try to do something about what we propose
- listen carefully and believe that what we say is how it feels for us
- try to understand us, even if it may be difficult
- don't treat us differently, but show everyone equal respect
- say clearly and show in different ways that you want us to help decide in the lessons
- maintain confidentiality

Understand why we must be allowed to help decide

Why it's important that pupils get to help decide:

- we get a better everyday school life
- it becomes easier and more fun to learn
- we become more committed and motivated
- we are the ones who know how we learn best
- we can feel safer
- the class environment may get better
- we have the right to
- the teachers get to know more about how we think
- it's us who are supposed to learn at school
- so that we feel seen, heard and included
- for more people to feel that we learn enough and get enough challenges
- so that we can thrive better at school
- for us to feel that we can influence something
- our thoughts and opinions can make the school even better

Motivation to learn

What can give pupils motivation at school:

- games and activity in classes
- not having homework or having less homework
- social things at school or after school
- to help decide how the teaching should be
- to help decide how the timetable should be
- to help decide which learning methods the teacher will use
- to help decide which work methods we want to use

We learn in different ways

Repeated answers to how pupils can learn:

- when we get to work in groups
- when we do something practical - for example experiments, are outside, go to a museum or bake something
- when we get to learn through play - for example make plays, films or gaming
- when we make things - for example posters, podcasts or films where we can show what we've learned
- when the teacher gives us time in the middle of class to do something fun

Activities we want to do more of

Repeated answers to which activities pupils want more of:

- go for a walk together
- do something creative with the whole school, for example creating a festival, play or documentary
- do something together with other classes or grades

Subjects we want to change

Repeated answers to which subjects pupils think are important to change:

- mathematics
- Norwegian
- PE
- KRLE (Christianity, religions, life views, and ethics)

Repeated answers to why pupils want to change these subjects:

- they are boring
- they are difficult

Repeated answers to what pupils want to change in these subjects:

- the way we are assessed
- the way we will learn
- what we will learn

Parent-teacher-pupil conference

Repeated answers to what can be done before the parent-teacher-pupil conference:

- tell us what you think should be covered in the conversation
- let us help decide what's okay and what's not, to be said in the conversation
- let us choose which of our parents will take part in the conversation
- let us choose which adult at the school should be part of the conversation, if we don't want it to be our homeroom teacher

Repeated answers to what can be done in the parent-teacher-pupil conference:

- talk about how we are doing in the subjects
- talk about how we feel in class
- talk about what we think is going well/not so well at school
- talk about how we feel with friends or other pupils at school
- find out together with us what goals we should have going forward

EXPERIENCES

74% haven't been given the opportunity to express their opinion often enough about important things that are decided about them at school
40% of primary school pupils and 74% of secondary school pupils believe that the most important thing that can cause motivation to be at school is how the teaching is done

Summarised experiences

When adults collaborate with pupils

What adults have done so that pupils feel they're being collaborated with:

- says they need to know what pupils think
- explains that they don't want to do anything that could be wrong or bad for pupils
- checks with pupils how things have turned out for them, and what the adult could have done better, after something has been decided or shared further

When pupils have had a say in decision-making:

- in the pupil council
- when the teacher asks
- when the teacher makes suggestions for something the pupils can vote on
- when the class has to change places
- in PE classes
- in parent-teacher-pupil conference

What decisions pupils have been allowed to help decide:

- in what way they will work to learn well
- what information adults are allowed to share, about what pupils have said or done
- to be inside during breaks
- how the classroom should look
- which ways the teacher should teach in class
- who the pupils will work together with
- class rules

When adults don't collaborate with pupils

What adults do so that pupils don't feel that they're being collaborated with:

- don't say or show that they need to know what pupils think and mean
- decide something without talking to pupils first
- decide something without it having become safe enough for pupils to tell the most important thing the adult should know before they decide something
- ask for pupils' opinions, but pupils feel that what the adult or other adults have said becomes more important when something is decided
- pupils don't feel that adults think pupils have important knowledge about what will be best for them
- does not explain why something was determined differently than what the pupil said they needed
- decide something that does not feel safe or that feels pointless

QUOTES ABOUT SAFE DECISION-MAKING

He asks me what I think, that's how I know we play as a team. We will get the ball into the goal together and find extra help that will work well together.

They don't know how wrong it can be when they just decide together, but then I don't trust them anymore, so I don't let them know that it doesn't work.

We vote on what we should do in PE class and which rewards to have.

Some teachers ask how they should assess us and in what way we should present our knowledge in the best possible way

When the teacher gives out assignments and says that the assignment should be presented in a certain way, there are many times when we suggest something else. Then we get the opportunity to influence and decide a little.

If they don't do anything about what you say, then you feel that it doesn't help talking to them. Then there's no point.

It'll be much easier for the adults if they just listen to me first, because then they get solutions straight away.

She's not that haughty. She is good at asking me what I want and how it has to be.

They say that if there is something you're wondering about, just speak up, but when we speak up, they won't do anything about it.

It's so unfair that only they can decide because they think they know best or what I need.

When she agrees to trying what I think can be good, I feel that she trusts me.

If they don't ask me what's important, I'm just quiet.

If I'm going to say anything to them, I have to feel that they actually want to know.

CHANGEFACTORY

KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Why knowledge directly from children?

Children and young people have to feel that the school, kindergarten, support services, police and legal system are safe and useful for them. Children and young people all over Norway have experiences from meeting these systems and advice on how they can be the best possible. Authorities, professionals and students often lack this knowledge from children and young people, when frameworks and what constitutes good practice are to be determined, nationally and locally. Therefore, it must be brought in to a much greater extent and, together with other knowledge, be part of the knowledge base, in order to develop and ensure the quality of good systems for children and young people.

More than 10 years of collecting knowledge

For more than 10 years, Changefactory (CF) has systematically collected experiences and advice from children and young people about how they experience school, kindergarten, support services, the police and the legal system. In 2017, the Prime Minister opened Changefactory Knowledge Centre, to collect knowledge from children and young people about the public systems. As far as we know, there are few knowledge centres in Europe whose main purpose is to gather and disseminate knowledge directly from children and young people about the systems they are in. CF seeks collaboration with similar organisations.

Participatory and practice-oriented method

In order to collect, systematise and disseminate summarised experiences and advice from children and young people, a participatory and practice-oriented method is used. CF has called it the Changemethod. The Changemethod has been developed in close collaboration with children and young people. It greatly considers that children have the right to express their opinion, in ways that feel safe for them. The method consists of process descriptions and tools that help many diverse children and young people to participate. It's based closely on a participatory method used in action research, called Participatory Learning and Action (PLA).

Safety is most important

The experiences and advice are collected directly from children and young people in sessions or interviews. The sessions are organised with an emphasis on ensuring that they are experienced as safely as possible for the children and young people who participate. The adults who facilitate are, among other things, trained by children to meet children and young people with openness and human warmth. This is based on the main findings from children about what adults have to be like, in order for children to be able to tell honestly.

Experiences and advice are summarised

Experiences and advice from the sessions are documented in transcripts and other written and visual documentation. The data is summarised and systematised. No links are made to theory. Experiences and advice that are repeated by many children and young people in many places in the country, become the main answers. We call this knowledge directly from children.

Children and young people present

The knowledge from children is presented in reports, films, podcasts, books and online. Participants in the qualitative surveys can also be invited, as pros, in communication and professional development. The pros present knowledge directly from children to politicians, national authorities, professionals and students.

Selected publications



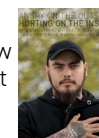
Ask us, and you'll find out

Advice from 201 children on how to decide extra help in ways that feel helpful



Safe in class

Tools for a safe and good learning environment in grade 1.-10.



Angry on the outside, hurting on the inside

Advice from 101 children on how to meet children and young people who are angry and use violence



Life skills

Tools for the class LIFE SKILLS, a talking-class where children and young people get to practice putting feelings into words



CHANGE FACTORY