

The Student Voice, Sutton Grammar School: THE CONSTITUTION

Part 1: Purpose.

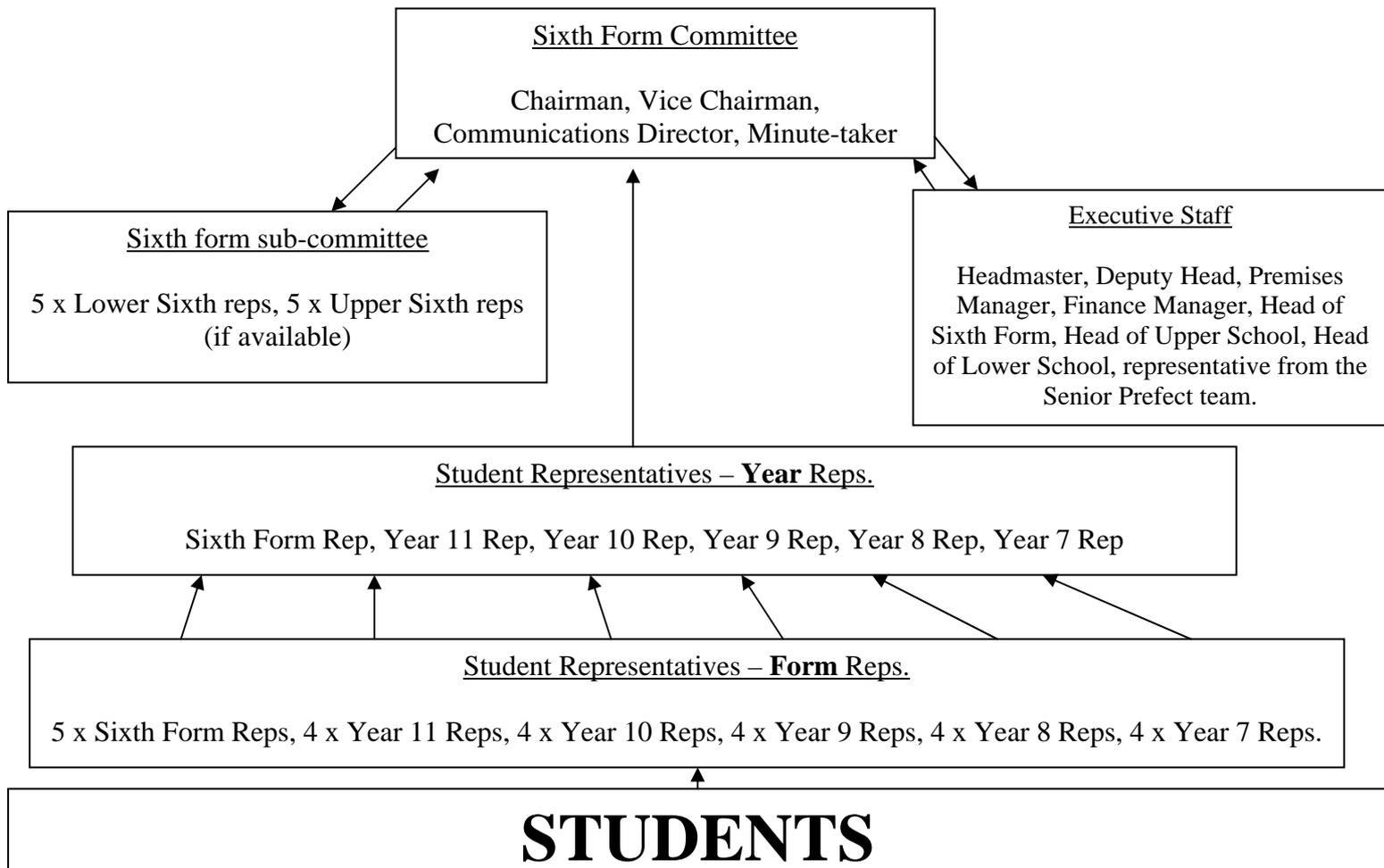
The Student Voice (SV) is a democratic system run by the students of the school as a means to voice student opinion, and as a formal body for communication between the students and staff.

Its meetings are a place where issues concerning the students can be openly discussed, in a professional manner, between the representatives (reps) and executive staff, where action can be planned, and where feedback and review can take place.

The main aspect of the SV is communication. The students who elect their reps must receive feedback as to what happens at meetings, what will affect them, and as to how successful their suggestions have been. The purpose of this constitution is to formalise SV procedures, expectantly leading to a transition from a relaxed to a more recognised, credible and structured system.

Part 2: Structure of the Student Voice.

To maintain democratic sincerity, it is vital that each student representative is elected by their peers. Working from the bottom to the top, there is a pyramid of communication among students:



The SV is led by students who start their Lower Sixth year in September, and end their service with the SV during a transition process at the end of the year where management is passed on to the next Lower Sixth body (who will at that point be in Year 11).

Sixth Form Sub-Committee:

The purpose of the sixth form sub-committee is to meet regularly and discuss purely sixth form issues. This is because general meetings should be appropriate for an audience of all years, and often sixth form issues are very niche and have no effect on the rest of the school.

Roles Explained:

Chairman: The Chairman should ensure that both the staff and students can have their say. He must summarise discussion at the end of every proposal. Management is co-ordinated by the Chairman, as are meetings, overseeing communications work, liaising with both the student reps and the executive staff, publishing the agenda, and supervising the SV electoral process that is held at the beginning of each year. The Chairman is accountable for any specific schemes/changes implemented by the SV.

Vice-Chairman: It is his responsibility to aid the Chairman with any tasks listed above, and also must take the place of the Chairman if he can not attend a meeting.

Secretary: Due to the extensive communication work of the SV, a separate role has been created specifically for this work. The secretary must seek to best represent what happens at any meeting conducted by the SV. Minutes must be written, typed-up, published and stored for record. A summary must also be published. Both must be distributed to all reps and staff that attended the meeting in question. Responsibilities vary, and can include any form of action decided at a meeting (e.g. Designing and distributing information leaflets, putting up posters around school, managing the notice board, e-mailing Sutton Council, creating signs, etc.) He must seek to best represent and advertise any decisions/schemes/facilities resulting from a meeting. He is appointed by the Chairman.

Executive Staff: At any formal meeting of the SV, at least one member of the following four roles **must** be present: Headmaster, Deputy-Head, Finance Manager, Premises Manager. This is to maintain a quorum of staff, and to ensure at least a limited amount of jurisdiction is present, that may be required if a decision is to be reached. The chairman may also invite staff from specific departments and/or the canteen if they are required.

Year Rep: Elected by the Form Reps of that year, (e.g. all four Year 7 form reps elect one of the four to represent them as a year rep). Year reps must also be form reps, and are responsible for collating all their year's suggestions, prioritising the most important ones, and presenting them at SV meetings. Year reps must attend any sub-meetings organised by the Chairman, to help construct the agenda for the formal Council meeting. Here the Chairman will ask the Year reps to present suggestions, and will help the Year rep to prioritise items for them to present at the Council meeting. Once the agenda is set, the Year rep must prepare a brief explanation of their

suggestion/s that will be presented to the executive staff at the SV meeting. It is important for each Year rep to represent not just their form's opinion, but to frequently talk to the other form reps in their year, to gain a broader sense of peer opinion of that whole year. Deputy Year reps are also elected (see Part 3), and aid the main rep with his duties, as well as taking his place in event of absence.

Form Rep: Each form must elect a rep who will represent the views of their form. Their role is to hold suggestion "surgeries" during form-time, gather suggestions, pass these on to the Year rep, and feedback a summary of everything that occurred at the meetings. (Every form rep must attend every SV meeting, even if form suggestions have been put forward to the Year rep). If the form rep cannot attend the meeting, his deputy must attend instead. Every Form rep has the right to stand as a candidate for Year rep, and this is organised by all four Form reps of that year (see Part 3). The Form rep election procedure is also covered in Part 3. If the rep fails to turn up to two meetings (be them general or sub-) without good reason, the Chairman must make his form aware and they should hold another election.

Part 3: Election Procedure.

In September of each year, a new body of representatives must be elected by the students. In the case of the SV committee, this vote is held in May despite the fact that they do not take over until September.

Form Representative Procedure: Each form elects their own Form Rep and Deputy Rep (who aides the main rep and takes over if the other is absent). Any member of the form can stand as a candidate, and must give a short speech to the form as to why they think they should be the Form Rep. After every candidate has spoken, the form tutor must supervise the election to ensure its secrecy, and count the number of paper votes that should be folded and collected. The candidate with the largest number of votes is Form Rep, and the candidate with the second largest number of votes becomes his Deputy. No other positions should be allocated at Form level. It is important that the form tutor takes an active role in supervising the election process, to ensure legitimacy and order. The Chairman of the SV decides when elections should take place, and should notify every form tutor in advance.

Year Representative Procedure: After the four Form Reps of each year have been elected, it is now time for a Year rep to be elected to represent their year's general opinion and put forward their year's suggestions at SV meetings. (See Part 2). Any Form rep can stand for candidacy as a Year rep. The four Form reps of each year meet and elect one of themselves to become the Year rep for one academic year. Here, the Form rep can not vote for himself, and the person with the largest number of votes becomes Year Rep, and the person with the second largest number of votes becomes Deputy Year Rep. If there is an election tie, it is up to the Chairman of the SV to take appropriate democratic action (this could include consulting the entire year group for a re-vote, or simply negotiation).

Student Voice Committee Procedure: On the 1 May, a note should go out to all Year 11 forms calling for anyone interested in being a part of the committee in the following academic year. This is done so that the SV can start running as soon as the following academic year arrives. The interested parties should meet, along with the

current Chairman. If they cannot agree positions amongst themselves, they should hold a vote between them. In the event of a tie, the parties concerned must go to a ballot amongst their Year 11 peers. This is done because their counterparts will know them best. It will be handled by the Chairman.

Part 4: Meetings.

All of the year's SV meetings should be arranged by the Chairman as soon as possible in September. It is advisable this is arranged with the Deputy-Head, and with consultation of the Headmaster and other Executive Staff. Once dates are confirmed, they should be published to the school either via the website or the SV notice board.

Meetings should be held every 2 months, to ensure consistency. Obviously, if urgent matters need to be discussed, the Chairman can attempt to find time for an extra meeting. In addition, there should be monthly sub-meetings solely with reps to discuss the work of the SV.

It is vital that the Chairman sets himself deadlines for:

- reminding reps when they should consult their forms for suggestions;
- for when Form Reps meet with their Year Reps;
- for when he meets with all Year Reps to arrange the agenda.

The Chairman is also responsible for informing the executive staff about any SV meetings. The following needs to be done before any meeting of the SV:

- Agenda constructed and distributed to all Reps, 6th form members and, if possible, other staff attending the meeting.
- Meeting advertised to the entire school, to ensure everyone is notified.
- Any subject-specific staff is invited (e.g. discussion concerning the canteen would require the presence of the canteen manager, or suggestions regarding I.T usage would require the presence of the Head of I.T.).
- Every rep that is required to speak has been notified of this in advance, encouraging brief preparation for opinion presentation and possible counter-arguments.

This is all to ensure a smooth running of the meeting, where everyone who needs to be there is notified, and knows their purpose. It also enables further action to be taken on an issue, especially if specific members of staff are present to offer information to the SV.

After each meeting, the Chairman must ensure minutes and a summary are distributed, and appropriate action is taken to resolve each issue that was discussed. This involves fairly extensive co-ordination with members of staff, pupils and possibly non-SGS persons.

Part 5: Communication.

Suggested methods of communication:

- E-mail. The Chairman must have a list of all the Reps e-mail addresses.
- Student Council notice board. Currently (as of October 2010), outside premises office near Rm.4.
- Form-file notices.
- Posters in corridors/stairwells.
- Via a social networking site (however this should not be a reliable and completely dependent source of input and a medium of communication, and should be confidential to SGS pupils ONLY).
- SGS website.
- Sub-meetings organised and publicised by Chairman.
- Informal briefs between executive staff and Sixth Form Management.
- Committee members talking to reps in registration. For this and for other reasons, it is necessary that the Chairman has a list of form rooms.

Part 6: Conclusion.

Sutton Grammar School's Student Voice has seen increased interest and input, due to various promotional campaigns over the last few years. This "Constitution" provides overall direction for Chairmen of the future, and for any staff member or pupil concerned about the workings of the SV.

It is vital for the SV to be maintained as a healthy, democratic and representative system, which gives a formal voice to the students', heard by the executive staff of the school and higher authorities such as Sutton Local Council, Ofsted, catering companies and other establishments that require student opinion.

The Council provides a fair ground for debate, and seeks to support every student and member of staff in their everyday wellbeing at Sutton Grammar School.

Produced by Chris Schofield (Chairman) in January 2010.

Revised by Will Obeney (Chairman) in October 2010.

Revised by Will Obeney (Chairman) in January 2011.

Revised by Qasim Afzal (Chairman) in November 2011.