



**Falkirk Council  
Educational Psychology Service**

**Factors That Promote Engagement With  
Learning In Falkirk Secondary Schools**

**September 2007**



## Executive Summary

This research, carried out by the Educational Psychology Service (EPS), took place in 2006/07 and involved 661 pupils (S1-S6) in all eight mainstream secondary schools in Falkirk Council. Pupils contributed to the design of the research and provided questionnaires and focus groups data.

Findings showed the pupils viewed themselves as generally well motivated and were able to give full explanations of what is helpful to their learning. There was a dip in perceived motivation in S2 and there were no significant differences between the schools or between the genders. Older pupils were more likely to be concerned about the quality of teachers and teaching, while younger pupils focused upon more practical aspects of school. The following factors, in order of importance, were found to be crucial for motivation to learn:

- Intrinsic motivation – e.g. wanting to get a good job.
- Teaching styles – variety, including group learning and fun, practical activities.
- Teachers themselves – fair, interested and engaging communicators.
- Social aspects of school – sense of belonging, relationships with both peers and adults.
- School and classroom environment - including a concern that discipline impacts upon motivation.

Pupils who ranked themselves as relatively low in motivation valued breaks in their learning as important while those who ranked themselves high in motivation rated having confidence in their learning as important. At the same time a related finding was that when asked for explanations of disaffection pupils felt this occurred when pupils stopped believing that they could achieve. Bullying was also viewed as contributing to disaffection.

These results are supported by the literature. In particular that high quality teaching is itself more motivating than reward systems and the significant role that self-belief has to play. Recommendations are given based on the report findings and the literature evidence base where applicable. The recommendations include:

- There should be a focus upon reviewing teaching strategies to support self belief and intrinsic motivation, as well as adaptations for lower achievers.
- It is important that discipline systems do not detract from intrinsic motivation and that teachers are seen to be fair.
- There should be mechanisms to ensure that classroom opportunities are maximised for variety, practical activity and group learning.
- Supporting motivation to learn in S2 should be comprehensively reviewed, including potential links with Careers Scotland to examine the effect on motivation of careers input at this earlier stage.

Pupils respond to teachers who are interested in them and enthusiastic. Teacher recruitment procedures should take this into account. To encourage and maintain these attitudes teaching staff need to feel valued themselves and believe that their well-being at work is supported. Structures to support staff well-being should be reviewed.

Finally, it is recommended that schools and teachers engage in open dialogue with pupils who can so readily discuss what is helpful to their learning.

The conclusions and recommendations are presented in full on pages 17 and 18.

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1** As part of the drive to raise standards of attendance and attainment in Falkirk Council secondary schools, Education Services commissioned the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) to investigate the factors that promote engagement in learning for secondary school pupils.
- 1.2** Following a review of the literature a research project group of four Educational Psychologists (EPs) concentrated primarily on areas amenable to change within education, and in particular on factors that help engage pupils in learning at secondary level. The question of why some pupils become disaffected was addressed directly in the second stage of the work.
- 1.3** A relevant questionnaire on motivation in secondary schools was not available and a new questionnaire was designed, in partnership with two groups of pupils from two secondary schools.
- 1.4** In working with pupils on this research project, both in designing the questionnaire and in consulting with them during stage two it became clear that pupils know what makes a difference to their motivation to learn.

This report consists of:

- A brief overview of the literature
- An explanation of the method
- A presentation of the results
- A discussion of the emergent themes
- A summary of the findings
- Recommendations

## 2.0 Overview of Literature

The literature shows that both the learning environment and pupils' self-perceptions are important when considering factors likely to promote engagement with learning.

- 2.1 There is recognition in the literature of both within-child and contextual factors when investigating disaffection and planning interventions to address it. Many authors stress the importance of looking at disaffection within the context that the disaffection takes place. Elliot et al. (2002) suggest that disaffection in school can be viewed as a "rational response on the part of the pupils to particular conditions in the classroom rather than simply a general disposition to deviate from acceptable norms of behaviour." (p.47) They further state that disaffection as a phenomenon is "indicative of poor learning environments in which the needs of individuals as learners are not being catered for". (p47)
- 2.2 Research needs to look at what it is in the school environment (classrooms, corridors, playgrounds, community, peers, teachers etc) that creates disaffection, or alternatively promotes engagement with learning.
- 2.3 Other research focuses on the causes of disaffection from a child-centred view of the problem which can lead to a view by those charged with educating these children that trying to intervene is futile.
- 2.4 Literature that focuses on what engages pupils with learning demonstrates that good teaching (relevant curriculum, focused on individual learning needs, appropriate mix of whole class, group and individual tasks, formative feedback and praises, self-directed learning, teacher qualities, good relationship between staff and pupils) motivates pupils and can help manage their behaviour far more than extrinsic reward systems either at a class or whole school level.
- 2.5 When looking at within-child factors Elliot et al. (2002) make a distinction between overt disaffection and covert disaffection. The overt variety (acting out, disruptive behaviour) is more noticeable and perhaps more problematic to schools, however covert disaffection (not completing work, boredom) can lead to similar under-achievement and negative outcomes for pupils, and is therefore of equal importance.
- 2.6 Keys (1995) compared the views of disaffected and non disaffected pupils. They found that pupils who dislike school were more likely to be bored in lessons; think that the work they did in lessons was a waste of time; think that school was a waste of time; dislike their teachers. They also found that this group was less likely to say: that they worked hard at school; that they obtained good marks for their work; that they behaved well in school; and that they believed homework was important.
- 2.7 McLean (2003) views the main cause of disaffection as pupils' attributions about themselves and their abilities. Those likely to be disaffected have fixed negative views of themselves as learners and don't see themselves as having the control to change things that happen to them. He suggests that good teaching focuses on challenging these views within the everyday context of the classroom. Again it seems that good teaching that taps into, understands and gently challenges (e.g. formative feedback, conditional praise), these perceptions is far more effective than any measures that solely focus on external motivation.

- 2.8** Peter Blatchford (in Woods, 1990) looked at patterns of disaffection and found that it increased with age but was not a stable concept and would change over time (even within a school day) and indeed in relation to numerous factors including the subject being taught, the influence of peers, teaching styles etc. Actual achievement did not seem to have an influence over engagement/disaffection levels. Interestingly, pupils explained their attitudes to learning more in terms of internal factors over which they had control, such as the amount of effort that they put in. They put more emphasis on intrinsic motivation than they do on the context in which they learn.
- 2.9** In summary, the literature indicates that this current research needed to consider factors related to both the individual, including the attributions that they have about learning, and the environment in which they learn, including learning and teacher factors.

### **3.0 Methodology**

The methodology followed a four stage procedure.

- 3.1** The first phase of the research consisted of setting up advisory groups of pupils from two secondary schools. The purpose of these groups was to find out what issues were important to pupils in relation to engagement and disaffection with learning.
- 3.2** A pilot questionnaire was designed using information gathered from the advisory groups and from the literature review. The pilot questionnaire was then presented to the two groups and they were asked to comment on both the format and content.
- 3.3** Subsequently a final draft of the questionnaire was created. This was then sent to all eight mainstream secondary schools in Falkirk Council. Schools were asked to return 100 completed copies of the questionnaire. Guidelines for administration advised selecting a stratified sample of pupils.
- 3.4** Follow-up focus groups were employed to investigate themes from the questionnaire data in more detail.

The data collected during this four stage process was analysed and is presented in the next section of this report

## 4.0 Results

The results showed that most pupils thought that they were motivated to learn and identified factors which supported this. These can be grouped into internal motivation, teaching style, teacher characteristics, the learning environment and the social experience of learning.

### 4.1 Quantitative Analysis of Questionnaire Data

The results from all schools were analysed together giving a total number of respondents of 661 (N=661). The gender breakdown is shown below:

**Table 1: Breakdown of Respondents by Gender**

	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Not specified</b>
<b>N</b>	293	326	42
<b>%</b>	44.3	49.3	6.4

Responses were received from pupils in all stages, as shown below:

**Table 2: Breakdown of Respondents by Stage**

	<b>S1</b>	<b>S2</b>	<b>S3</b>	<b>S4</b>	<b>S5</b>	<b>S6</b>	<b>Not specified</b>
<b>N</b>	200	93	127	91	50	28	72
<b>%</b>	30.2	14.1	19.2	13.8	7.6	4.2	10.9

#### 4.1.1 Question 1: How Much Do Pupils Want to Learn in School?

Question 1 (Q1) was an overarching question asking, 'Most of the time how much do you want to learn in school?', which pupils answered on a scale of one to ten, with one representing 'really don't want to learn' and ten representing 'really want to learn'. The results from this question were analysed to get a crude measure of motivation for learning and/or disaffection from learning for each pupil. This data was then analysed further to investigate possible differences by individual schools, gender and stage.

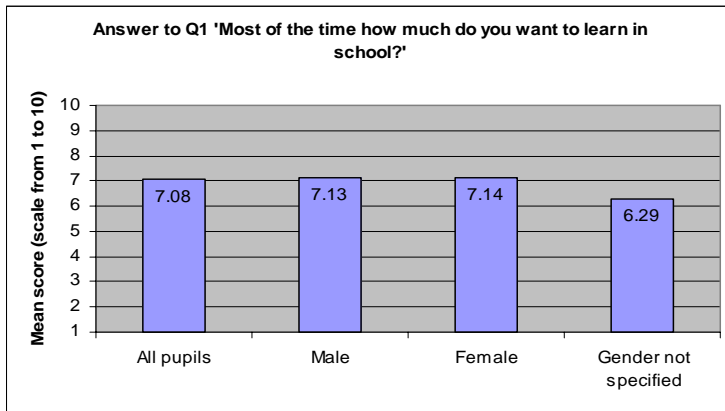
##### 4.1.1.1 Individual schools

No statistically significant differences were found between schools on pupils' average responses to Q1. This means that, although there were differences between schools, none of these differences were greater than would be expected by chance.

##### 4.1.1.2 Gender

When the data was combined for all schools, there were no statistically significant differences between male and female average ratings. In other words, there was no greater difference between male and female responses than could be expected by chance. Figure 1 shows the average answers to Q1 by gender.

**Figure 1: How Much Pupils Want to Learn in School by Gender**

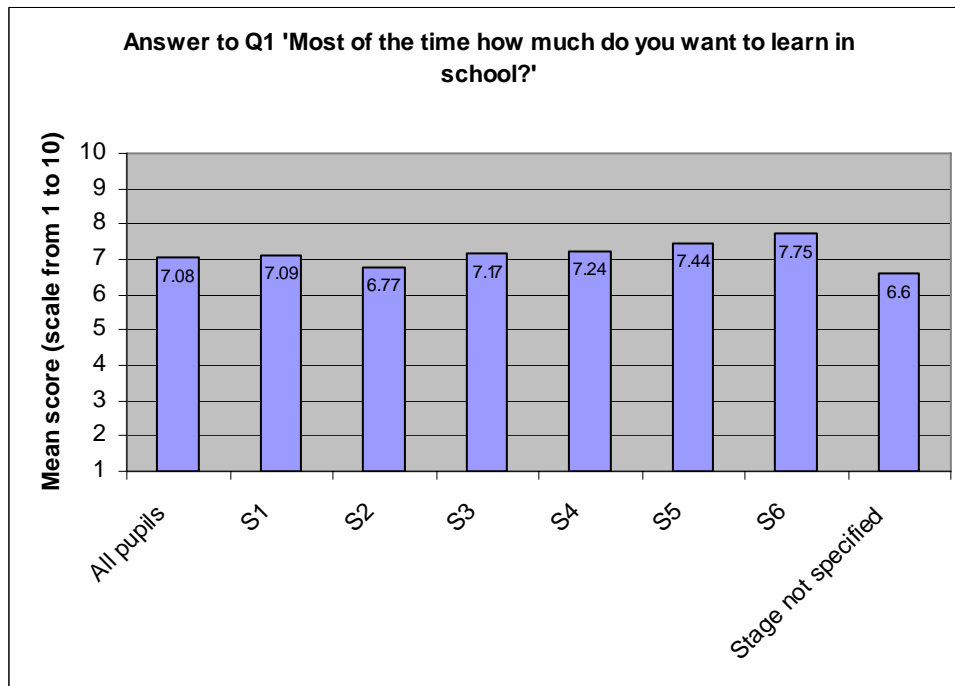


In each school, there was a difference between male and female pupil responses. Interestingly, the direction of this difference was not consistent between schools. In other words, there was no consistent relationship between how males and females perceive their motivation for school across the authority.

#### 4.1.1.3 Stage

When the combined data was looked at by stage, a general trend was seen whereby there was a dip in perceived motivation for school at S2. Mean ratings then increased gradually from S3 to S6. The difference between S2 and S6 was found to be the only statistically significant difference ( $p=0.02$ ). Although there were differences between stages in how much pupils felt they wanted to learn in school, only the difference between S2s (low) and S6s (high) was more than one would expect in normal variations in the population. Figure 2 shows the average answers to Q1 by stage.

Figure 2: How Much Pupils Want to Learn in School by Gender



#### 4.1.2 Individual Statements about Learning and School

The individual statements referred to specific aspects of learning and school. Pupils were asked to respond to 33 statements on a scale of one to five, where one

represented 'really not important' and five represented 'very important'. In order to identify which statements were felt by pupils to be most relevant, mean ratings were obtained for all pupils, and then for each gender and stage. The five statements rated most positively were then ranked to gain an idea of what was most relevant to each group of pupils.

Although notable differences between the groups were found, there was an overwhelming agreement across almost all groups that the three most important factors influencing how much they want to learn in school are:

- having teachers who are fair;
- having friends in class; and
- classes being fun.

Table 3 below shows the statements rated most highly by each group. The table shows the statements which are ranked first, second and third on average by each group of pupils. Each statement that any group ranked in the top three is included in the table, with the rankings in grey denoting how other groups ranked those statements. Full details of the mean ratings, top five statements for each group, and complete ranked statements can be found in Appendix A.

#### **4.1.2.1 Gender**

Although the top-ranked three items were the same for males and females, the next few items differed, as follows:

Males:

- lessons with practical work, like experiments in science
- activity days, schools trips and away events

Females:

- stress-free learning
- feeling confident about what they could achieve.

#### **4.1.2.2 Stage**

Younger pupils tended to rate highly the more practical aspects of school (e.g. school trips and events) whereas older pupils focused more on teacher qualities (e.g. being enthusiastic about what they are teaching, being in control of the class). Older pupils also rated as important personal learning aspects such as feeling confident about what they can achieve, and stress-free learning. Of all the stages, S1 pupils were the only group for whom 'Feeling safe from bullying' was ranked in the top five statements.

#### **4.1.2.3 High and Low Motivation for Learning**

Two sub-sets of pupils were then identified to get an idea of what is important to those who rate highly on Q1 (hereafter referred to as 'high motivation' group) and those who rate less highly (hereafter referred to as 'low motivation' group). Pupils at each end of the spectrum were grouped together and their average ratings examined. In addition to the three statements common to all groups (above), both of these groups rated 'Stress-free learning' as important. The notable difference between these two groups was that pupils in the low motivation group felt that having breaks in learning during a class was important, whereas those in the high motivation group felt that feeling confident about what they could achieve was important.

### **Table 3: Ranking of Statements by Each Group**

	Males	Females	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Low motivation	High motivation
Teachers who are fair	1	1	2	3	1	2	2	1	3	1
Having friends in class with me	2	2	3	1	2	1	1	9	1	2
Classes that are fun	3	3	7	5	3	6	5	8	2	5
Activity days, school trips and away events	5	7	1	2	6	4	14	13	6	6
Stress free learning	7	4	10	7	4	5	3	5	5	4
Teachers who are enthusiastic about what they are teaching	13	11	15	13	13	9	11	2	18	8
The teacher being in control of the class	17	15	16	18	12	13	12	3	19	10
Feeling confident about what I can achieve	6	5	6	8	5	3	4	4	8	3

## 4.2 Qualitative Analysis

### 4.2.1 Qualitative Questionnaire Questions

A random sample of questionnaires was taken from each school (n=233) to look at the responses to the two open response questions:

- *What helps you want to learn in school?*
- *If there is anything else you'd like to tell us please write it below.*

Table 4 shows the 11 categories of comment which were found in the answers.

**Table 4: Categories of Pupil Responses to Open-ended Questionnaire Items**

	Categories (followed by sub-categories in brackets)	Total times mentioned
1	<b>Internal motivation</b> (ambition, the desire to be smart; to get good exam results; to get a job; to earn money; for good quality of life)	149
2	<b>Teaching styles</b> (fun learning activities, practical lessons, giving thinking time, giving learning guidance, use of technologies)	115
3	<b>Teachers</b> (enthusiasm for their job, approachability, friendly, fun, taking an interest in pupils, not having favourites)	98
4	<b>Environment</b> (breaks, amount of light, noise levels and interruptions)	38
5	<b>Socialising</b> (seeing friends, group learning)	34
6	<b>Uniform</b> (dislike of, utility)	24
7	<b>Subjects</b>	18

8	<b>External motivation</b> (pressure or support from adults, school rewards)	17
9	<b>Fairness of school reward systems</b>	4
10	<b>School structures</b> (breaks between lessons, double periods)	3
11	<b>Volume of homework</b>	2

**Figure 4 : What Helps Pupils Want to Learn in School?**

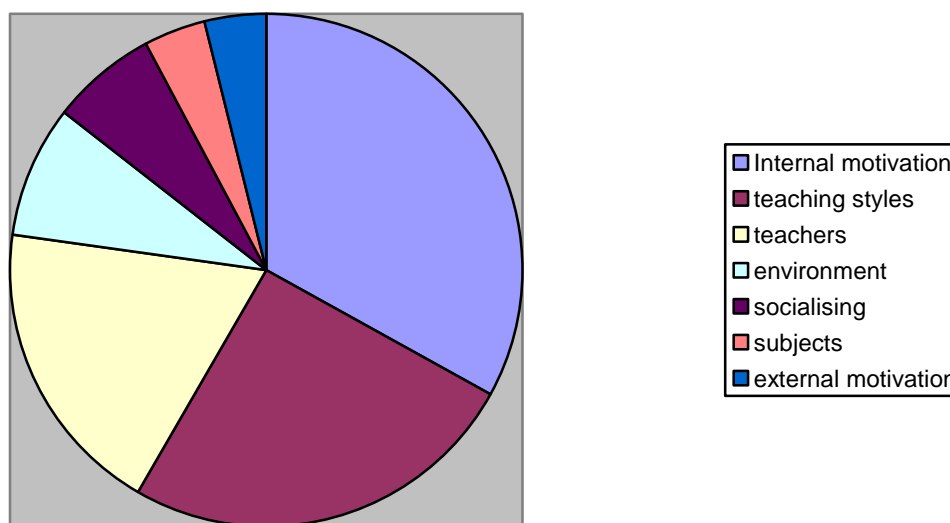


Figure 4 indicates that in general, internal motivation, teaching styles and teachers were considered the three most important factors to promote motivation. More detailed analysis highlights seven sub-categories as the most important to pupils. The seven sub-categories are shown in Table 5, in order of importance related to the three most important overall categories.

**Table 5: Closer Analysis of What Helps Pupils Want to Learn in School**

Sub-category	Category	Total times mentioned
Teacher characteristics (often included good, enthusiastic, encouraging and fair)	Teachers	68
Desire for a job	Internal motivation	58

Practical lessons	Teaching styles	38
Fun learning activities	Teaching styles	37
Ambition	Internal motivation	32
Exam results	Internal motivation	22
Friends	Socialising	20

In response to the question *If there is anything else you'd like to tell us please write it below* some pupils voiced their dissatisfaction with aspects of school life e.g. *“People who are not interested in school and have the worst behaviour get the most help and attention”* (male S2) or *“Seniors need more freedom, we have no common room and are patronised by remaining on the merit system”* (female S6)

The majority of comments questioned the reason for having school uniform and it's relevance to learning.

#### **4.2.2 Follow-up focus groups**

To investigate areas of interest emerging from the questionnaires in more detail follow-up focus groups were carried out in four secondary schools with a random sample of pupils from a cross section of stages. They may not have completed the questionnaire. Since there were a relatively small number of participants their views are not necessarily representative of the whole pupil population. Four questions were asked using a variety of group consultation techniques. A full summary of the focus group responses is given in Appendix C.

When pupils were asked to explain what helps them engage with learning and school three factors emerged as being of key importance: Internal Motivation, Teaching Styles and Teachers.

##### **4.2.2.1 Internal motivation**

In 233 questionnaires internal motivation was mentioned 149 times promoting engagement with learning. This included pupils' desire for knowledge and success, ambition and the hope that they could achieve a good quality of life.

##### **4.2.2.2 Teaching style**

There were 115 comments about teaching style in the sampled questionnaires. Pupils valued fun learning activities, practical lessons, teachers repeating explanations and re-framing them if necessary. A balance of work intensity and type was also important, for example, a mixture of group and individual work and the use of game-based as well as textbook learning.

##### **4.2.2.3 Teachers**

Pupils had strong views about what makes a good teacher. There were 98 mentions of characteristics of teachers that were either helpful or unhelpful.

##### **4.2.2.4 Further Aspects Including The Social Aspects of Learning and the School Environment**

The social aspect of the school experience was of great importance to pupils. This included the use of group learning techniques as well as the value of unstructured opportunities for peer interaction. Many pupils noted the importance of feeling a degree of belongingness to the school organisation. This was often represented by the view that relationships with adults and peers in school can have a significant impact on a pupil's engagement with learning. Discipline emerged as an issue, not just for those on the receiving end of it. Pupils often felt that too much attention and time is given over to disciplinary matters in class. The quality of the school building and environment was also important to pupils.

## 5. Discussion

This piece of research sought to answer the question: 'What factors promote engagement in learning for Falkirk's secondary school pupils?' Some of the methodological issues will be discussed here, followed by a discussion of the emerging themes from the data.

### 5.1 Methodological Issues

When interpreting these findings and drawing conclusions, it is important to bear in mind the following methodological difficulties:

- that these are the views of a random sample of secondary pupils, and may not represent the views of all pupils
- pupils were being asked what helped them engage in learning, or be motivated to learn, rather than what they liked or disliked about school.
- the findings reveal pupils' own perceptions of what helps them engage in learning, rather than what actually engages them in practice.

Two of the groups of pupils (one particular school and S6 overall) were particularly small groups (N=28 and N=43 respectively). Any results or conclusions drawn from these groups should therefore consider this.

### 5.2 Emerging themes

Pupils' responses to being asked to explain what helps them engage with learning and school resulted in five main themes, each of which are discussed below.

1. Internal Motivation
2. Teaching Style
3. Teacher Characteristics
4. The Social Experience of Learning
5. The Learning Environment

#### 5.2.1 Internal Motivation

As well as teacher characteristics and teaching style, pupils' own attitudes and characteristics were found to be extremely important for pupils' motivation for learning, so much so that it was mentioned 149 times out of 233 responses. The majority of pupils mentioned some form of internal motivation by way of reference to a desire to better themselves, quality of life, jobs, money, knowledge and success. This finding is of interest in that it reflects a drive at an individual level. This suggests that any intervention should consider the development of intrinsic motivation and how it may be encouraged.

Feeling confident about what they can achieve was also an important factor for many pupils. This was ranked as important by the high motivation group, females more so than males and those in S3 and above.

#### 5.2.2 Teaching Style

Teaching style was mentioned 115 times out of 233 responses, with a preference for varied, active and practical teaching (especially for younger pupils and males), with explanations which could be adapted to suit individual needs. Pupils also mentioned the importance of teachers demonstrating enthusiasm for education. It is notable that teachers' enthusiasm for their subject was more important to S6s than to any other group, reflecting perhaps an enhanced enthusiasm themselves for the subjects that they have taken to this level.

Another important aspect which arose here was classes being fun. It was found to be important for most groups of pupils, and was in the top eight ranked statements for all groups. The S3 and the low motivation groups ranked it as more important than the other groups. This may show a trend at this age, or at this level of motivation, for feeling that school is no longer fun and that were it to be more fun, they would feel more inclined to engage, or re-engage.

### **5.2.3 Teacher Characteristics**

Pupils' views on what makes a good teacher focused not just on how they teach, but on how they are as people. The most common feature of a teacher that encourages pupils to want to engage in learning was found to be fairness. This was ranked in the top three statements for *all* groups (all ages, genders and low / high motivation). Clearly any behaviour reward systems need to support teachers in distributing their attention fairly. Teachers may well require opportunities to engage in reflective practice and team teaching to review issues of classroom fairness. This could be important because many pupils also felt that excessive time spent on discipline in the classroom had a negative impact on their motivation for learning.

In addition to fairness, typically pupils wanted teachers to be enthusiastic, encouraging and have good communication and interaction skills. According to pupils, the ideal teacher has excellent communication skills and a genuine interest in young people and education. This was felt to be more important than knowing everything about their subject.

Many pupils expressed the view that the relationship they have with adults in school has a significant impact on their engagement with learning. Important factors in this relationship were felt to be the teacher showing a personal interest in pupils and treating them as individuals.

What is emerging here then is a picture of teachers who ideally are interested and interesting. Pupils believe this aids their engagement. Strategies need to consider how to ensure that staff are satisfied and happy with their jobs and enjoy working with young people. They themselves need a sense of belonging and to be respected as professionals.

### **5.2.4 The Social Experience of Learning**

Pupils frequently mentioned the social aspects of the school experience, with comments including features such as unstructured opportunities for peer interaction, a feeling of belongingness to the school organisation, and the importance of friends. Having friends in their classes was ranked in the top three statements for all groups other than S6 pupils (for whom the small number in the year presumably prevents this from happening). The fact that all other groups felt this to be of such importance is noteworthy here, and if this truly is a factor which helps pupils to engage, or prevents them from disengaging, then it is something which should be considered when planning and monitoring pupil progress.

Working in a group rather than individually was mentioned by many pupils and was found to be most motivating for S2 pupils and those in the low motivation group. In thinking about how to maintain, or renew, motivation for learning for these pupils, group learning experiences would be an important factor in the planning for their learning.

### **5.2.5 The Learning Environment:**

The quality of the school building and environment was also important to pupils, with key aspects including the quality of the building, light, heat, air, music, and seating.

Stress-free learning was also a factor which was reported as important, particularly by older pupils (S3 and above) and females. It was ranked in the top ten statements for all groups, however, and is therefore an important feature for all pupils. The differences between what pupils perceive as stress-free learning may be an interesting aspect for future investigation of the learning environment.

### **5.3 Factors Which Stop Pupils Wanting to Learn**

In addition to finding out what makes pupils want to learn, a part of the research also focused on perceived factors which make pupils stop wanting to learn. Pupils felt that these included being written off, feeling stupid, work not being differentiated or attractive enough, poor relationships and bullying. As it was clear that self-belief aids those with high levels of motivation so the corollary appears to be true; pupils stop wanting to learn when they think they cannot do it. Thinking in this way seems to be as a result of the context they are in, how they are made to feel either through others or the nature of the work. It may well be timely to consider a review of teaching and learning strategies for low achievers.

Feeling safe from bullying was ranked as the 9<sup>th</sup> most important statement (for all pupils together), pupils in S1 and S3 also felt it important in helping them want to learn (5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> ranked statement respectively), as did the low motivation group compared to the high motivation group (10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> ranked statement respectively). It is important here to take note of the link pupils report between feeling safe from bullying and feeling motivated to learn. This should be noted in any review of current anti-bullying policies.

## **6.0 Summary Conclusions**

- 6.1** Pupils in Falkirk Schools rate themselves as well motivated.
- 6.2** Pupils themselves are clear on what is helpful to their engagement and can readily provide full details and explanations.
- 6.3** Pupils report being positively motivated by:
1. Internal drives – e.g. wanting to get a good job
  2. Teaching styles they experienced – variety, group learning, fun and practical activities
  3. Teachers who are fair, interested in their pupils and engaging communicators
  4. Social aspects of school – having a sense of belonging, relationships with peers and adults
  5. The school and classroom environment, including a concern that discipline impacts upon motivation
- 6.4** There were no major differences between male and female pupils. Small differences arise only in motivating factors that are not considered important by either gender.
- 6.5** There is a dip in perceived motivation at S2.
- 6.6** There is a tendency for older pupils to be more concerned with teaching qualities and for young pupils to be more concerned with more practical aspects such as school trips.
- 6.7** Pupils who are highly motivated cite factors such as having confidence in themselves as important in creating and maintaining this motivation, while those who ranked their motivation as low highlight having breaks in learning as important.
- 6.8** Pupils report that disengagement can occur for a variety of reasons but can occur when pupils were 'written off', work was too hard and when pupils stopped believing that they could achieve.
- 6.9** Pupils perceive a relationship between disengagement and bullying with feeling safe from bullying being important in supporting motivation to learn.
- 6.10** These results are supported by the literature. Particularly that teaching is itself more motivating than reward systems and the significant role that self-belief has to play.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

- 7.1** Discipline and reward systems should be reviewed to ensure that they:
- Support teachers in distributing their attention fairly (6.3)
  - Do not obscure intrinsic motivation such as effort (6.7, 6.8 and 6.10)
- 7.2** Consideration needs to be given to ways of supporting teaching that:
- Maximises opportunities for variety, practical activity and group learning activities (6.3)
  - Fosters self-belief and confidence through the employment of formative assessment and attunement strategy techniques (6.4, 6.7, 6.8, and 6.10). This may be particularly relevant to reviewing teaching strategies for low-achievers (6.7)
  - Adapts to the needs of low achievers (6.7 and 6.8)
- 7.3** Policies at council and school level should be reviewed to ensure that as much as possible is being done to support the well-being of teachers and their work-place morale, happiness and well-being. Recruitment processes should pay particular consideration the communication skills and levels of enthusiasm of applicants, and CPD opportunities could also focus on these key areas (6.3, 6.10).
- 7.4** More creative thought is required at an S2 level to engage pupils. This is stage that can be neglected after a lot of focus on P7/S1 transition, e.g. refreshed PSE curriculum focused on planning for the future, more engaged in the running of the school or community initiatives, input of careers guidance should be reviewed for pupils in S2. This would be to augment internal motivation which appears to keep pupils focused upon achieving at school. (6.5)
- 7.5** Schools should consider how to use the information that pupils readily give about what engages them. This may be different from existing forums that look at practical issues. Such discussions could involve two way discussions on good teaching and learning and inform staff CPD and School Improvement Plans (6.2)
- 7.6** Further research could investigate how samples of pupils who are defined as 'disaffected' perceive what has impacted upon their engagement, perhaps with a focus on S2 pupils. (6.8, 6.9)

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**Appendix A: The Five Most Highly Rated Statements for Each Group of Pupils**

**All pupils**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1	Teachers who are fair	4.49
2	Having friends in class with me	4.46
3	Classes that are fun	4.34
4	Activity days, school trips and away events	4.32
5	Stress free learning	4.30

**Male**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1	Teachers who are fair	4.49
2	Having friends in class with me	4.45
3	Classes that are fun	4.35
4	Lessons with practical work, like experiments in science	4.35
5	Feeling confident about what I can achieve	4.32

**Female**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1	Teachers who are fair	4.52
2	Having friends in class with me	4.49
3	Classes that are fun	4.38
4	Stress free learning	4.38
5	Feeling confident about what I can achieve	4.37

**S1**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1	Activity days, school trips and away events	4.54
2	Teachers who are fair	4.53
3	Having friends in class with me	4.43
4	Lessons with practical work, like experiments in science	4.41
5	Feeling safe from bullying	4.41

**S2**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1	Having friends in class with me	4.47
2	Activity days, school trips and away events	4.43
3	Teachers who are fair	4.40
4	Lessons with practical work, like experiments in science	4.40
5	Classes that are fun	4.39

**S3**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1	Teachers who are fair	4.58
2	Having friends in class with me	4.50
3	Classes that are fun	4.45
4	Stress free learning	4.40
5	Feeling confident about what I can achieve	4.23

**S4**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1	Having friends in class with me	4.63
2	Teachers who are fair	4.53
3	Feeling confident about what I can achieve	4.46
4	Activity days, school trips and away events	4.43
5	Stress free learning	4.37

**S5**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1	Having friends in class with me	4.42
2	Teachers who are fair	4.40
3	Stress free learning	4.26
4	Feeling confident about what I can achieve	4.22
5	Classes that are fun	4.14

**S6**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1	Teachers who are fair	4.75
2	Teachers who are enthusiastic about what they are teaching	4.71
3	The teacher being in control of the class	4.71
4	Feeling confident about what I can achieve	4.68
5	Stress free learning	4.50

**Low answer to Q1**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1	Having friends in class with me	4.42
2	Classes that are fun	4.35
3	Teachers who are fair	4.31
4	Having breaks in learning during a class	4.25
5	Stress free learning	4.18

**High answer to Q1**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1	Teachers who are fair	4.45
2	Having friends in class with me	4.41
3	Feeling confident about what I can achieve	4.39
4	Stress free learning	4.34
5	Classes that are fun	4.32

**Appendix B: Ranking of All Statements by Group (In Order of Importance for 'All' Group)**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Statement no.</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>S1</b>	<b>S2</b>	<b>S3</b>	<b>S4</b>	<b>S5</b>	<b>S6</b>	<b>high mot</b>	<b>low mot</b>
Teachers who are fair	14	1	1	1	2	3	1	2	2	1	1	3
Having friends in class with me	5	2	2	2	3	1	2	1	1	9	2	1
Classes that are fun	18	3	3	3	7	5	3	6	5	8	5	2
Activity days, schools trips and away events	30	4	5	7	1	2	6	4	14	13	6	6
Stress free learning	15	5	7	4	10	7	4	5	3	5	4	5
Feeling confident about what I can achieve	32	6	6	5	6	8	5	3	4	4	3	8
Lessons with practical work, like experiments in science	20	7	4	14	4	4	8	11	19	14	7	7
My teachers having a sense of humour	6	8	8	17	17	6	9	8	6	15	16	9
Feeling safe from bullying	24	9	15	6	5	15	7	18	15	11	15	10
Having a teacher who cares about me and how well I do	33	10	10	9	9	17	11	7	8	6	9	16
Having breaks in learning during a class	31	11	9	16	14	12	10	10	7	17	19	4
Having good support at home to do well in school	8	12	11	10	11	11	14	14	9	7	11	14
Having a teacher in the school that I know I can talk to	25	13	16	8	12	16	15	12	10	12	13	15
Teachers who are enthusiastic about what they are teaching	26	14	13	11	15	13	13	9	11	2	8	18
Tests and exams	27	15	12	12	8	14	18	15	13	10	14	17
Rewards for good behaviour	9	16	18	13	13	9	16	16	8	22	12	13
The teacher being in control of the class	29	17	17	15	16	18	12	13	12	3	10	19
Working in a group of other pupils	28	18	14	18	18	10	17	17	17	23	21	12
Feeling as if I belong in school	1	19	19	20	19	21	22	22	23	21	17	21
Being asked for my opinions about changes to school life	7	20	20	19	20	22	20	23	28	16	18	20
Having background music playing in the classroom	13	21	21	22	26	19	19	19	22	28	26	11
Having my own targets for learning	23	22	22	21	22	24	23	21	16	19	20	23
A bit of pressure to do well	10	23	24	24	25	23	28	24	20	18	22	28
People noticing if I'm absent	3	24	25	23	21	20	29	29	27	32	24	24
Keeping the same teacher	16	25	23	27	31	25	21	20	18	24	27	22
Classrooms with lots of daylight	21	26	26	25	23	27	24	27	29	25	25	27
Having 1:1 time with a teacher	4	27	27	26	24	29	26	26	26	20	23	29
Teachers who let me know a bit about themselves	11	28	28	29	28	26	25	28	30	27	29	26
Teachers who are not sarcastic	19	29	29	28	27	28	27	30	24	29	30	25
Going to supported study classes after school or at lunchtime	22	30	30	30	32	30	30	25	25	26	28	31
'Buddying' systems in school	12	31	33	31	29	31	31	31	32	30	33	30
Having uniform that everyone wears	17	32	31	32	30	32	33	33	31	31	31	32
School clubs at lunchtime or after school	2	33	32	33	33	33	32	32	33	33	32	33

## Appendix C: Summary Responses from Follow-up Focus Groups

1) How can we make school or learning as good as it can be?

- teachers need to include everyone in lessons and not show if there are favourites
- lessons should combine quiet individual work and group, discussion work
- teachers need to be encouraging and give positive feedback to increase positive belief in yourself
- games help learning
- teachers should enjoy their work
- teachers need to give better explanations and adapt them if it is not clear first time
- allow music to help cut out distractions and help focus
- decrease the amount of time spent on discipline in class
- improve classroom conditions are often substandard (e.g. smelly, temperature, natural light levels)
- encourage use of coloured pens to help learning
- promote relaxed atmosphere in class
- smaller class sizes with u-shaped seating
- use more smart-boards and IT

2) Why do you think some people stop wanting to learn?

- they fail, feel stupid and give up
- work is too hard, boring, repetitive or too easy
- when teachers: don't help enough; write-off pupils; don't like you; don't listen; lack commitment
- bad relationships with other pupils or bullying
- not enough project-style teaching like at primary
- when discipline is poor, inconsistent and takes up time
- poor quality resources and building

3) What do you think makes a good teacher?

- is not too strict
- is empathetic to the lives of young people today
- is approachable and a good listener
- is respectful to pupils
- is fun, funny and good sense of humour
- is fair
- is helpful and encouraging
- is kind, caring and welcoming
- is friendly
- is understanding
- is young
- is enthusiastic and enjoys their work
- is energetic
- is relaxed and calm

- takes individual aside instead of shouting at them
- takes an interest in your work and you as a person
- treats pupils like human beings
- uses a variety of teaching methods
- explains things well
- gives everyone an equal chance
- recognises effort and achievement

4) How do things like jobs/college/career make you want to keep doing well in school?

- narrowing subject choices is motivating
- discussions with teachers without pressure is motivating
- support from family and teachers is motivating
- vocational subjects is motivating
- representations of people with good jobs in the media
- more information about a wider range of post-school options is needed