



# Who has power in a school?

## Purpose

To explore the power that people have in a given organisation or group. To explore the concept of power as relationship.

## Time

30 minutes

## Materials

Flipchart, various coloured pens

## Related tools

Why do we obey?  
Sweety-bag

## Description

Explain the purpose of the activity.

Ask people for definitions of power, and write them up. You might get phrases like 'control of others', 'the ability to have an effect', 'making things happen'. Facilitate a short discussion of the definitions. Some people make the distinction between 'power over' (domination, threats, rewards), 'power with' (cooperation or collaboration), or 'power from' (inner qualities like insight, confidence, inspiration).

On a flipsheet draw a vertical line to make two columns. Ask the group to call out all the people or groups who have power in a school and write them in the left column. You will quickly get a list of pretty well everyone involved. Add in any important group or person that's missing (Education Minister, caretaker).

Go through the list. Ask: Why does 'X' have power? Where does the power come from? What is its source? Why do people do what 'X' says?





Time may not allow you to work through the whole list, but make sure you cover a good range, e.g. headteacher, pupils, caretaker, school secretary, parents, board and Minister for Education. Capture the responses in the second column in another colour.

## Debrief

Ask the group:

What is this telling us?

Capture the main points from the responses in a third colour on another sheet.

Try to draw out a core point or two from the discussion, e.g. that the power of some comes from the compliance or obedience of others. People gain positions of authority and power because consciously or subconsciously others have given their own power over to them.

