

# VOTESFORSCHOOLS & INSPECTION BODIES

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Guidance for Education & Teaching Staff | England



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This document outlines how VotesforSchools supports educational settings in obtaining a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating, as per the 2023 School Inspection Handbook. Use the contents below to explore the Ofsted inspection areas.

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For the purposes of this document, “students” is used as a catch-all term for pupils/children or learners/young people; “staff” is used to denote any group of educational professionals (e.g. teachers, tutors etc), and “schools” is used to refer to any type of educational setting.

Find out more about the curriculum policies referenced in this document using the links below:

- Ofsted (via GOV.UK) | [School Inspection Handbook](#)
- Independent Schools Inspectorate | [Framework for the inspection of association independent schools, including residential \(boarding\) schools and registered early years settings](#)

# OFSTED | SUPPORTING QUALITY OF EDUCATION

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“The school’s curriculum intent and implementation are embedded securely and consistently across the school. It is evident from what teachers do that they have a firm and common understanding of the school’s curriculum intent and what it means for their practice. Across all parts of the school, a series of lessons contribute well to delivering the curriculum intent.”

As VotesforSchools is a whole-school solution, it enables staff and students to engage with the same topical issues simultaneously. Resources are provided every week during term-time, thus providing consistent opportunities for all students to have parallel discussions, and for all staff to be able to reflect on the conversations had across classrooms.

VotesforSchools’ weekly materials are also mapped to SMSC, British Values and Prevent, meaning that schools can be secure in the knowledge these responsibilities are being met across all year groups. Throughout their school journey, students will have ample opportunity to reinforce these values and to reflect on them.

“Leaders adopt or construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils (including pupils with SEND), the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. This is either the national curriculum or a curriculum of comparable breadth and ambition.”

VotesforSchools seeks to engage all students, no matter their

background or ability. The weekly conversations actively encourage everyone to participate and make their voices heard. The resources include prompts and differentiated activities, as well as giving space to discuss the key issues affecting society today. By expanding their cultural awareness through VotesforSchools, students can feel confident in their knowledge of and place in the wider world beyond the classroom.

**“Teachers present subject matter clearly, promoting appropriate discussion about the subject matter being taught. They check pupils’ understanding systematically, identify misconceptions accurately and provide clear, direct feedback. In so doing, they respond and adapt their teaching as necessary without unnecessarily elaborate or individualised approaches.”**

Resources from VotesforSchools are designed to be zero-prep, meaning staff can confidently initiate conversations on a wide range of topics, from climate change to COVID-19, pop stars to prejudice. These topics are always covered in an age-appropriate way, with resources designed by teachers with extensive experience in the relevant setting. All references in the resources are also extensively fact-checked, so staff can feel confident that any existing misconceptions amongst students will be brought to light and can thus be discussed openly.

Within the lessons themselves, the activities are designed to give all students an opportunity to share their thoughts and ensure that understanding of a topic has both breadth and depth. Focused largely on discussion, activities also allow students to hone their skills in giving constructive feedback and/or in showing respect for alternative viewpoints.

**“Teachers create an environment that focuses on pupils. The textbooks and other teaching materials that teachers select – in a way that does not create unnecessary workload for staff – reflect the school’s ambitious intentions for the course of study. These materials clearly support the intent of a coherently planned curriculum, sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment.”**

Inspiring youth voice is at the heart of VotesforSchools’ mission, and all sessions are designed to put students at the centre. The resources reflect this in several ways:

- Giving students an opportunity to vote and leave comments using the VotesforSchools platform
- Sharing the results of previous votes with students, to show that they are at the heart of a national conversation
- Providing feedback from external agencies and experts on students’ vote results, reinforcing the importance of what they have to say to the wider world.

From a staff point of view, the resources are designed to minimise workload by being zero-prep and giving staff the confidence to initiate ambitious and challenging conversations with their students. By the end of any given academic year, schools using VotesforSchools will see a significant improvement in students’ knowledge of the world.

**“Reading is prioritised to allow pupils to access the full curriculum offer.”**

While VotesforSchools resources endeavour to keep reading to a minimum (instead using facts, statistics, and quotes to impart information for discussion), reading with a critical eye and with an awareness of how what they are reading contributes to the wider

conversation is integral to accessing the topic at hand.

Additionally, VotesforSchools provides a weekly news bulletin for all schools, which includes a reading task for students to use outside the classroom. This is designed to increase their understanding of a topic while also building crucial reading and comprehension skills.

# OFSTED | SUPPORTING BEHAVIOUR & ATTITUDES

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“Pupils behave with consistently high levels of respect for others. They play a highly positive role in creating a school environment in which commonalities are identified and celebrated, difference is valued and nurtured, and bullying, harassment and violence are never tolerated.”

Respect for others is promoted in a variety of ways through VotesforSchools, namely:

- Showcasing a wide range of opinions and alternative behaviours
- Celebrating different backgrounds, cultures, and customs
- Highlighting the importance of finding common ground and collective action
- Providing tools to combat bullying, hate speech, and violence towards others
- Promoting the open discussion of harassment and hate crime, and the personal, emotional and legal implications of these.

“Pupils consistently have highly positive attitudes and commitment to their education. They are highly motivated and persistent in the face of difficulties. Pupils make a highly positive, tangible contribution to the life of the school and/or the wider community. Pupils actively support the well-being of other pupils.”

VotesforSchools is designed to be an engaging resource that empowers students to be inquisitive and courageous in their convictions. As such, the sessions seek to make learning about the wider world fun and accessible so that students feel they have a



valid and significant stake in it. For many students, the sessions have been described as the highlight of their week, while for many staff, the sessions are amongst their favourite to teach.

As well as this, VotesforSchools encourages students to take an active role in their school and local communities by participating in weekly voting and feedback on a wide range of topics affecting them and their peers. What's more, they are also given ideas and inspiration for how they can take this further and make their voices heard at national and even international levels.

Lastly, student wellbeing is a consistent theme throughout all that VotesforSchools do, but is also the focus of many specific sessions throughout the year. Whether they are discussing eco-anxiety, bereavement, or exam pressure, students are encouraged to look out for the signs of poor wellbeing in themselves and others, and to find solutions to these issues that are sustainable and tangible for their own school environment.

**“Pupils behave consistently well, demonstrating high levels of self-control and consistently positive attitudes to their education. If pupils struggle with this, the school takes intelligent, fair and highly effective action to support them to succeed in their education.”**

VotesforSchools advocate for active learning, so activities that involve hand/ facial gestures, standing up and sitting down, or moving around the classroom feature heavily in the weekly resources. While this could initially prove to be a test of behaviour on the part of students, and behaviour management on behalf of staff, the aim is for students to recognise the benefits of these kinds of activities for aiding their learning and understanding of complex and challenging topics.

Nevertheless, for the occasions or circumstances in which these

activities are not appropriate, it is easy for staff to modify the resources to accommodate their own or students' needs without compromising the learning opportunities presented.

**“Leaders, staff and pupils create a positive environment in which bullying is not tolerated. If bullying, aggression, discrimination and derogatory language occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively and are not allowed to spread.”**

By promoting alternative views and consistently sharing ways to challenge discriminatory behaviour, VotesforSchools enables staff and students to create - and successfully sustain - a positive learning environment, with the hope that this permeates other areas of the school too.

In sessions focusing specifically on equality, identity, and challenging prejudice, students are also informed of the kinds of attitudes and behaviours that are not tolerated, both in their school community and in the wider world.

**“Relationships among pupils and staff reflect a positive and respectful culture; pupils are safe and they feel safe.”**

VotesforSchools directly supports staff in developing a positive relationship with students. It does so by supporting them with discussions surrounding moral dilemmas and challenging subjects in a sensitive and age-appropriate way. This could include topics such as knife crime, county lines, or FGM, all of which have been covered by VotesforSchools. As a result, schools regularly report that the sessions support a positive rapport between staff and students.

VotesforSchools is also designed to empower students and give them an opportunity to be heard; being able to self-safeguard and use their voices as a means of speaking out are central to

VotesforSchools' aims. Consequently, students feel progressively more confident to say if they see/hear something that they believe is not acceptable, or if they themselves are at risk or being mistreated.

# OFSTED | SUPPORTING PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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“The school consistently promotes the extensive personal development of pupils. The school goes beyond the expected, so that pupils have access to a wide, rich set of experiences. Opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests are of exceptional quality.”

However, the personal development opportunities afforded by VotesforSchools do not stop with the resources: there are also several other ways for students to gain other experience as part of the VotesforSchools community. These include:

- Casting votes and leaving comments weekly via the VotesforSchools platform
- Participating in regular Youth Advisory Board meetings to discuss previous and future topics
- Attending in-person and/or online events to share their insights on topical/youth-focused issues
- Sharing blogs or articles with VotesforSchools to be featured on the platform
- Submitting applications for the annual Student Voice Awards, which celebrate the very best of student/school community action.

“There is strong take-up by pupils of the opportunities provided by the school. Disadvantaged pupils (including those with SEND), consistently benefit from this excellent work.”

The inclusive nature of VotesforSchools means that the opportunity to have their voices heard is open to all students - as such, it becomes a crucial part of school culture. This is especially pertinent

for students with SEND, as they are able to offer their own perspectives and opinions on issues, especially those more pertinent to their life experiences.

**“The school provides these rich experiences in a coherently planned way, in the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities, and they considerably strengthen the school’s offer.”**

Given its status as a weekly resource, staff can be confident that VotesforSchools will provide students with a range of opportunities across the course of the school year. Plus, schools are provided with calendars for the academic year: one that outlines all the pre-planned VotesforSchools resources (Black History Month, Anti-Bullying Week, Safer Internet Day), and one that highlights other events likely to be relevant to schools (World Book Day, British Science Week, Plastic-Free July).

The resources can also be a springboard for internal school conversations about other opportunities students might want made available for them, such as extra-curricular activities (a Debating Club, a Climate Change Champions initiative, or a Pride Group).

**“The way the school goes about developing pupils’ character is exemplary and is worthy of being shared with others.”**

By promoting the importance of being informed, curious, and heard, VotesforSchools helps students to understand how to be active listeners, ask thoughtful questions, and share pertinent insights and experiences. This in turn provides students with the building blocks for becoming engaged and responsible citizens, who are consistently looking out for those who may have quieter voices or are overlooked in society.

**“The curriculum extends beyond the academic, vocational or technical and provides for pupils’ broader development. The school’s work to enhance pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a high quality.”**

VotesforSchools’ weekly current affairs and topical resources allows all students to engage in learning that goes beyond the classroom. The sessions cover predominantly youth-focused topics or areas in which students’ voices have not yet been sufficiently heard. The diversity of topics from the 9 Key Themes ensures all students have ample opportunity to discover an issue or subject that they may not have been introduced to previously.

On a practical level, regular references to relevant careers or suggested ways to “be heard”, VotesforSchools also encourages students to consider how they can foster emerging passions and interests as well as to seek out careers and roles that they may not ordinarily explore.

**“The curriculum and the school’s effective wider work support pupils to be confident, resilient and independent, and to develop strength of character.”**

VotesforSchools’ weekly resources help to support a wide range of skills that contribute to character development in students. These include tolerance, empathy, oracy, confidence & resilience. Through regular debate and discussion, students are given a safe space to explore social & political issues, and build skills of tolerance, respect, compassion, listening to others & hearing views that are opposed to their own or those of their family/friends.

Through relevant topics spread over the course of the academic year, students cover a range of subjects that support their understanding of physical and mental health, from vaping to vaccines, anxiety to alcohol. They also explore the contributing

factors in society that impact their holistic health, such as money worries, loneliness, and food banks.

**“The school provides high-quality pastoral support. Pupils know how to eat healthily, maintain an active lifestyle and keep physically and mentally healthy. They have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships and of the protected characteristics.”**

Students are also regularly reminded of the importance of healthy, positive relationships both with their peers and adults in their VotesforSchools resources. The materials consistently signpost them towards the trusted adults in their lives if and when they are feeling uncomfortable, unsafe, or unhappy about something they have seen or experienced.

Furthermore, the protected characteristics are highlighted in their resources through the imagery and terminology used in the resources, and resources regularly cover issues around prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination. This reinforces their understanding of what protected characteristics are and the laws that are in place to keep them and others safe from discriminatory treatment.

**“The school provides a wide range of opportunities to nurture, develop and stretch pupils’ talents and interests. Pupils appreciate these and make good use of them.”**

VotesforSchools cover a new VoteTopic every week. This breadth of topic coverage allows students with a diverse range of interests to discuss something about which they are passionate and/or discover other issues that matter to them. Whether their sessions are 15 minutes each week or a full hour, students feel confident that there will be time each week for them to develop their knowledge, question their existing opinions or ideas, and have their say.

**“The school prepares pupils for life in modern Britain effectively, developing their understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.”**

VotesforSchools’ mission is to directly provide schools with the tools to allow all staff, regardless of experience or subject specialism, to confidently deliver a consistent and quality approach to British Values for every student.

The topics regularly allow staff to sensitively facilitate discussions that expose students to a range of views and opinions, thus exhibiting what it means to have autonomy over your own views and choices (within the bounds of the law). These discussions also support students’ understanding and appreciation of diversity within their school, local, national and international communities. This then reinforces their understanding of what it means to be tolerant and exhibit mutual respect towards others.

As part of the weekly sessions, students also have the chance to vote at the end of the debate. This vote is then shared with key decision-makers with a view that it eventually feeds into national policy. This in turn provides students with the understanding that their contribution to society is important, both within their school and as a citizen of a wider community.

The weekly opportunity to exercise their right to vote that VotesforSchools provides allows students to model good democratic practice and empowers them to use their voice and vote in future. It breaks down some of the psychological barriers that stop younger generations engaging in politics and community action, and allows them to see (and be) democracy in action.



“The school promotes equality of opportunity and diversity effectively. As a result, pupils understand, appreciate and respect difference in the world and its people, celebrating the things we share in common across cultural, religious, ethnic and socio-economic communities.”

In terms of opportunity, VotesforSchools provides all students with the chance to vote on a range of different issues and to participate more broadly in Student Voice initiatives.

Within the resources themselves, students are consistently presented with information that show the benefits of equality of opportunity and diversity. Below are just some of the ways this is achieved:

- Topic coverage: Through the specific theme of Equalities & identity, students are able to gain a deeper understanding of the injustices still facing communities in the UK and worldwide, and what can be done to mitigate these
- Imagery: VotesforSchools resources are thoroughly checked to ensure that the people and places portrayed are diverse and expose students to different cultures and customs
- Insights: Lived experiences are crucial to understanding the topical issues of the day, so VotesforSchools resources ensure that real insights are used as much as possible in order to paint a realistic picture of the issue at hand
- Role models: Wherever possible, resources showcase the mould-breaking individuals and their change-making work so that students can feel empowered to make a difference themselves, no matter their background. In addition, feedback on topics is often provided by individuals from a range of sectors, helping to introduce students to different career paths
- Awareness Days: By marking different events - such as LGBT History Month or Refugee Week - VotesforSchools resources reinforce the role raising awareness has in tackling injustices

worldwide. They also provide an opportunity for collective celebration that can break down any perceived borders between communities.

**“Pupils engage with views, beliefs and opinions that are different from their own in considered ways. They show respect for the different protected characteristics as defined in law and no forms of discrimination are tolerated.”**

Every week, VotesforSchools resources facilitate conversations around a Yes/No question. This means there are always (at least) two sides of an argument presented to students, thereby contributing to a more holistic understanding of the topic at hand. Neither side of the debate is presented as having more or less value than the other, and information provided to support each argument is always conveyed in an impartial way\*.

Promoting understanding of and respect for protected characteristics is also a lynchpin of the VotesforSchools mission. Throughout all resources, students are informed of the consequences of discrimination on a personal, professional, and legal level. Celebrating differences is intrinsic to all discussions facilitated by the VotesforSchools lessons, whether this is celebrating diversity of opinion, diversity of experience, or diversity of heritage & culture.

*\*For more on this, please see VotesforSchools' Political Impartiality in Schools Guidance document.*

**“The school provides pupils with meaningful opportunities to understand how to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society. Pupils know how to discuss and debate issues and ideas in a considered way.”**

VotesforSchools is designed to support schools to provide students with the chance to navigate their place in society and to recognise the importance of their role as a citizen. On a practical level,

weekly voting helps students to be active members of their school community and helps them to prepare for when they can go to the polling stations in later life. On a pedagogical level, the benefits of being seen as responsible, respectful, and proactive are consistently reinforced, and the ways in which these qualities will benefit them in adulthood are also highlighted.

Debate and discussion is of course intrinsic to VotesforSchools, but so too is the information and insights with which students are equipped. The sessions highlight the importance of seeking reliable information and having an openness to new perspectives when discussing challenging topics - everyone in the classroom reaps the benefits when these two guiding principles are followed. These principles can then be applied by students throughout their lives, such as in their further education or in their careers.

# OFSTED | SUPPORTING LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

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“Leaders ensure that teachers receive focused and highly effective professional development. Teachers’ subject, pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge consistently build and develop over time. This consistently translates into improvements in the teaching of the curriculum.”

In any given term, staff will cover topics from across VotesforSchools’ 9 Key Themes\*:

- Health & wellbeing
- Equalities & identity
- Environment & climate change
- Global issues & politics
- Science & technology
- Community & charity
- Crime, justice & extremism
- Jobs, economy & education
- Culture, media & the arts

As a result, staff - along with students - are consistently learning about new and emerging topics over time, which only serves to enhance other areas of teaching practice and general awareness of the issues affecting students and schools today.

Additionally, VotesforSchools regularly provides signposting for staff on where to find help and support when discussing (or encountering) challenging issues in the classroom. As such, staff feel confident that they can find guidance for themselves or others.

*\*For more on these themes, please see our 9 Key Themes document.*

**“Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality education to all pupils. This is realised through strong, shared values, policies and practice.”**

VotesforSchools has an ambitious aim for education as a whole: to ensure all students are informed, curious, and heard on the issues that matter.

As an often nebulous concept, student voice can be challenging to implement on a school-wide basis. However, consistent use of VotesforSchools resources shows the school community that there is a commitment from staff to place the engagement and empowerment of students at the heart of the learning environment. It also provides a springboard for further implementation of student voice-based initiatives, such as school councils, youth advisory boards, or community projects.

**“Leaders engage with their staff and are aware and take account of the main pressures on them. They are realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff, including their workload.”**

The value of staff time is something that underpins the resources that VotesforSchools provide; by giving schools assemblies, a range of lesson options, and pre-prepared curriculum evidence, preparation time is significantly reduced for staff across the school on a weekly basis.

What’s more, VotesforSchools also maps to all SMSC, British Values & Prevent criteria across the academic year, so can be used to evidence complete coverage of these areas (or in conjunction with other school-wide policies or programmes).

**“Governors or trustees ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties, for example under the Equality Act 2010, and other duties, for example in relation to the ‘Prevent’ duty and safeguarding.”**

VotesforSchools directly aligns with the Government’s Prevent duty by providing weekly content that enables voters to engage with controversial topics and discuss moral dilemmas. This supports them in building the skills that will enable them to be resilient in their communities. By directly addressing topics around equality - such as LGBTQ+ inclusion and racism - as well as topics directly linked to extremism, voters are also developing the skills to understand these issues in an unbiased and objective way, often challenging views held by other influences in their lives.

VotesforSchools’ mission is to empower voters and give them a voice within their schools, local communities and nationally. Empowering voters and allowing them to be heard is a powerful self-safeguarding tool which will help with keeping them safe both now and in the future.

# OFSTED | SUPPORTING SIXTH-FORM PROVISION IN SCHOOLS

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“The work that sixth-form students do over time embodies consistently demanding curriculum goals. It matches the aims of the curriculum in being coherently planned and sequenced towards building sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and destinations.”

Through its 16+/College provision, VotesforSchools gives sixth-form students the opportunity to engage in the same conversations as their younger counterparts, but with an emphasis on more advanced language, questions, and concepts. Through weekly discussions, students can see their awareness of the world expanding, allowing them to envisage new and motivating pathways for themselves.

“Sixth-form students demonstrate consistently highly positive attitudes and commitment to their education. They have consistently high levels of respect for others.”

When respect underpins the learning environment, students are more likely to feel positively about themselves and their education. Respect for others is intrinsic to VotesforSchools, and is promoted throughout all resources. As a result, this permeates the discussions being had and therefore the wider learning environment. A culture of respect for others is then cultivated, whether this is for their opinions, their life experiences, or their choices.

**“The sixth form consistently and extensively promotes learners’ personal development. The sixth form goes beyond the expected, so that learners have access to a wide, rich set of experiences that teach learners why it is important to contribute actively to society. This is achieved through activities that strengthen considerably the sixth form’s offer.”**

As they approach voting age, it is vital that sixth-form students understand the links between a sound awareness of issues in the wider world, and their ability to make sound decisions for their futures (such as voting in elections). They are regularly presented with headline topics that are likely to be dominating the press and/or social media, and they are encouraged to have a stake in these conversations or debates as the voters of tomorrow. Being shown the results of previous VotesforSchools debates and feedback from sector experts also helps to reinforce the importance of their voices and opinions.

**“Teachers have expert knowledge of the subject(s) and courses they teach. Leaders provide effective support for those teaching outside their main areas of expertise. When relevant, teachers have extensive and up-to-date vocational expertise.”**

VotesforSchools resources give staff the confidence to deliver sessions on issues that may not be directly in their area of expertise, such as the online world or youth trends. However, all the information provided has been fact-checked and quality-assured, so that staff and students alike know that they are being given impartial ideas and insights. Over time, staff feel more literate in the issues affecting young people today.

Not only this, but the sessions can be used at sixth-form level to help break down the student-staff barrier that (necessarily) exists



amongst younger year groups. Discussing areas about which students are more aware than staff can help to engender a sense of mutual exchange of knowledge between staff and students, enhancing the learning experience for everyone in the classroom.

**“The work that teachers give to sixth-form students is demanding. It ensures that students build knowledge and acquire skills, improving and extending what they already know and can do.”**

By the time they reach sixth form, students should have a solid skills foundation on which to continue building, and VotesforSchools supports them in this. Tolerance, empathy, oracy, confidence & resilience remain at the heart of all resources and sessions, but sixth form students are also given ample opportunities to increase their critical thinking, media literacy, and political knowledge.

What’s more, the questions and activities included in the 16+ VotesforSchools resources are challenging, asking students to think deeply about the question at hand, while simultaneously making connections and/or drawing parallels between the specific topic and wider issues in the world around them.

**“Teachers encourage students to use subject-specific, professional and technical vocabulary well.”**

Every week, VotesforSchools resources feature key words and definitions that are pertinent to the topic at hand, such as breaking down the definitions in the LGBTQ+ initialism. This allows students to familiarise themselves with vocabulary that they are likely to encounter in the wider world, whether discussing these issues directly or otherwise.

“Teachers create an environment that allows sixth-form students to focus on learning. The resources and materials that teachers select and produce – in a way that does not create unnecessary workload for staff – reflect the school’s ambitious intentions for the course of study. These materials clearly support the intent of a coherently planned curriculum, sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning, independent living and employment.”

Students develop a respect for learning through VotesforSchools, as they gain knowledge and insight into today’s world while simultaneously actively building democratic habits through weekly voting. The resources, which are zero-prep, do not create any unnecessary workload for staff, thus allowing them to use this time elsewhere or find out more about the topic.

“The sixth form prepares its students for future success in education, employment or training. It does this through providing: unbiased information to all about potential next steps; high-quality, up-to-date and locally relevant careers guidance; and opportunities for good-quality, meaningful encounters with the world of work.”

The aforementioned “soft skills” that VotesforSchools helps to hone in sixth-form students are crucial to succeeding in the world of work. Having students be active listeners, compassionate communicators, and proactive in their approach will allow them to feel confident when seeking employment or further opportunities.

Additionally, VotesforSchools resources give equal weight to different career paths, and encourage students to pursue the right option for them. They are also exposed to different careers through the weekly feedback, which often comes from industry experts

working in sectors as diverse as food manufacture, climate policy, and the police.

**“Leaders and other staff create an environment in which students feel safe because staff and learners do not accept bullying, harassment or discrimination or child-on-child abuse – online or offline. Staff deal with any issues quickly, consistently and effectively.”**

By promoting alternative views and consistently sharing ways to challenge discriminatory behaviour, VotesforSchools enables staff and students to create - and successfully sustain - a positive learning environment, with the hope that this permeates other areas of the school too. The principles established through these conversations also empower students to feel confident in how to tackle similar issues online or outside of the classroom.

In sessions focusing specifically on equality, identity, and challenging prejudice, students are also informed of the kinds of attitudes and behaviours that are not tolerated, both in their school community and in the wider world. They are also informed about how to report these problems in a digital context, such as on social media platforms.

**“Students develop an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships through appropriate relationship and sex education.”**

VotesforSchools resources regularly discuss issues around relationships, such as abuse, misogyny, and peer pressure. Such conversations are vital to building a strong foundation for students regarding right and wrong, both on behalf of themselves and others. All resources are developed with the specific age group in mind, but also with a realistic awareness of the kinds of issues that those aged 16+ will be facing in their own lives.

# ISI | SUPPORTING LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE

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“Leadership must ensure that the school’s aims and ethos (including any religious ethos and/or boarding principles) are available in writing to parents and staff, and are known to pupils, and are seen to work well in practice.”

Every week, VotesforSchools provides staff with a Home Bulletin, which outlines the results of the previous vote, and the questions up for discussion in the next session. This resource is aimed at parents and carers (particularly at Primary level), to further their understanding of what students are discussing at school and to help them participate in the wider conversation.

“Leadership must ensure effective and consistent implementation of all policies and documents required by standards applicable to the school, and that policies comply with relevant legislation, have regard to applicable guidance, and are understood by staff and pupils. Leadership must ensure that the school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.”

VotesforSchools closely follows any guidance issued by the DfE, particularly Political Impartiality in Schools (2022). Additionally, all resources make clear that any form of discrimination will not be tolerated and must be tackled accordingly. As part of a VotesforSchools subscription, staff can also access protected characteristics display materials to help schools be fully transparent about what these are and what is expected of them.

“The proprietor must ensure that leaders and managers have the skills, knowledge and understanding to actively promote the wellbeing of all pupils through taking a strategic, comprehensive and inclusive approach to identifying and managing the risk of harm to pupils’ wellbeing. As a result, leadership must safeguard and promote the wellbeing of pupils through effectively identifying risk of harm and take appropriate action to reduce risks that are identified. Pupils’ (including any boarders’) health needs must be met, and their physical and emotional wellbeing actively promoted.”

VotesforSchools regularly covers issues that pose a threat to students, including knife crime, vaping, or county lines. These kinds of lessons provide students with a safe space to discuss issues that are affecting them or people they know, and equip them with the knowledge and skills to self-safeguard.

More broadly, VotesforSchools also encourages open conversations about all issues. This not only gives students the confidence to speak up when they are worried, but also reassures them that their thoughts and opinions are valid, irrespective of subject matter.

“This may include adapting existing risk strategies as necessary to identify and manage the risk to pupils’ wellbeing of pupils experiencing harmful behaviours and attitudes. In some cases, these risks may be harder to spot, and less obvious to existing risk mitigation strategies. Therefore, leadership should have the appropriate skills and knowledge to ensure that they appreciate and understand the prevalence of potentially harmful behaviours, and therefore do not consider avoidable harms unavoidable. Leaders and

managers should understand their own influence and role in risk management and the prevention of harm(s) which may negatively impact pupils' wellbeing.”

By having regular open conversations about risky behaviours and dangerous attitudes during VotesforSchools sessions, staff are able to better indicate to students that they are open to non-judgmental discussions either on a one-to-one or class-wide basis. This may then, in turn, encourage vulnerable students to speak up should they need to.

From a safeguarding point of view, having these open conversations can also help to identify vulnerable students; by seeking the opinions of all students during VotesforSchools session, it is easier for members of staff to identify patterns of behaviour or attitudes that could pose a risk to the individual student or their peers.

Lastly, VotesforSchools also maps all VoteTopics to the Government's Prevent Strategy, meaning the resources are specifically designed to bolster existing safeguarding and counter-extremism provision.

**“In fulfilling their responsibilities effectively and consistently, leadership should be aware that positive feedback from the majority of pupils can mask smaller groups of pupils, or individual pupils who have harmful, but hidden, negative experiences. Leaders and managers should take a proactive approach, as indicated by the wording of the Standards, to promote the wellbeing of all pupils.”**

Crucially, VotesforSchools gives all students an opportunity to have their say on the issues that matter. The regular sessions make clear to students the importance of being viewed as an individual and why it is important that everyone shares their experiences as part of these discussions. All students are encouraged to listen carefully to

one another and to look out for those for whom some issues may be sensitive or have negative connotations.

# ISI | SUPPORTING PUPILS' EDUCATION, TRAINING & RECREATION

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“The quality of education, training and recreation, which includes pupil progress, is fundamental to the evaluation of a school’s provision for pupils. It is central in both the Standards and the statutory definition of pupil wellbeing. Therefore, it forms a prominent part of the evaluation during the inspection and reporting process.”

VotesforSchools provides schools with a range of resources to help track student progress:

- An individual VoteDiary allows each student to monitor their own progress and evaluate the ways in which they have developed in skills such as critical thinking, speaking & listening, and persuasive writing
- Weekly curriculum guides give teachers a vital snapshot of the areas that are being covered by each topic
- Termly curriculum overviews collate all the areas that have been covered by the VoteTopics each term.

“Leadership must ensure that all pupils’ education and experience of the school’s curriculum results from leaders’ effective implementation of appropriate plans, schemes of work, and programmes of activities that are appropriate to pupils’ needs in the following areas: Linguistic; Mathematical; Scientific; Technological; Human & Social; Physical; Aesthetic & Creative; Speaking, Listening, Literacy & Numeracy, so that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress.”



VotesforSchools helps to support students' holistic education and development. It does so in the following ways:

- **Linguistic:** All unfamiliar or new vocabulary used in each resource is defined for students to see. For students aged 5-7/in KS1, there are also regular opportunities to look at phonics in greater detail.
- **Mathematical & Scientific:** Each week, students are shown the outcome of the previous vote through a pie chart that breaks down the Yes/No vote and details how many students voted overall. There is also regular reference to other data and statistics, as well as links to the Maths and Science curriculum through topics aligned to the VotesforSchools key themes of Science & Technology and Jobs, Economy & Education.
- **Technological:** Given the rapid advancements in technology, this is a topic regularly discussed with students, thereby improving their awareness of how to use technology and the ways in which it can both enhance and be detrimental to our daily lives. On a practical level, the VotesforSchools platform also helps familiarise students with another digital service and reinforces their knowledge of how to communicate digitally.
- **Human & Social:** Human and social issues are central to the discussions prompted by VotesforSchools, so students are given regular opportunities to speak about how different issues are affecting the world and society of which they are a part. These discussions also help them to build their own social skills and to recognise the rights and responsibilities they have as human beings.
- **Physical:** Resources on the VotesforSchools Key Theme of Health & Wellbeing always promote the benefits of physical activity and sport. Within the sessions themselves, students are regularly asked to stand up and move around the room, which builds an appreciation for active learning in a very literal sense.

- **Aesthetic & Creative:** From making posters to speed-debating, VotesforSchools offers a range of creative activities to students. It also promotes creative problem-solving and highlights the importance of getting your message across clearly and convincingly.
- **Speaking, Listening, Literacy & Numeracy:** The development of all of these skills is central to VotesforSchools sessions. Students are given ample opportunity to share their views and to actively listen to the thoughts and ideas of others - be that their peers or individuals/groups cited in the resources. They are also encouraged to reflect on the information given to them, and to critically evaluate this to answer questions and reach an informed opinion on an issue.

**“Leadership must ensure that pupils’ experience of the curriculum takes into account pupils’ ages, aptitudes and needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.”**

VotesforSchools provides resources for students aged 5 through to 18, with each level differentiated according to key stages/age groups. Aesthetically speaking, the imagery used is representative of the age group for whom the resources are intended, allowing students to feel seen.

Pedagogically, in all the resources, elements are added that provide additional support to those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (such as keyword definitions), and that provide stimuli for those with high attainment (such as challenge boxes). Plus, VotesforSchools resources are issued in PowerPoint format, making them easily editable for staff. Many existing subscribers use them in conjunction with other software (such as Widgit Symbols) or edit font sizes and colours to accommodate students’ specific needs.

“Leadership must ensure that:

- Teaching -
  - enables all pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability and does not discriminate against pupils or promote partisan political views
  - does not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- A framework is in place to evaluate pupils’ work and performance regularly and thoroughly, which refers to:
  - the school’s aims as provided to parents, and/or
  - national norms
- Particulars of the school’s academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations, are made available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils.”

With regards to Teaching, VotesforSchools:

- Allows staff to observe students’ development in public speaking/oracy, critical thinking, and political & media literacy
- Encourages students to share their views openly, without fear of judgement; there is no “right” or “wrong” response
- Does not support or campaign for any political issue or candidate - it allows students to reach their own opinion based on objective and balanced facts\*
- Specifically maps each VoteTopic to British Values, so staff can be confident that these are being covered thoroughly and on a regular basis
- Promotes fundamental British Values and consistently highlights the importance of these to students.

## Concerning Framework, VotesforSchools:

- Has aims of nurturing informed and curious students who actively want to be heard which are in keeping with the broader national aims outlined in a range of curriculum areas, such as Citizenship, PSHE, RSE, British Values and Prevent
- Allows students and staff to evaluate their progress using VoteDiaries.

While VotesforSchools cannot speak directly to the “particulars of the school’s academic performance”, it is possible to share what students thought of a particular topic with parents and carers or other stakeholders via the Home Bulletin. Alternatively, results specific to a school or group of schools can be found on the platform; this helps build a clear picture of students’ attitudes towards different issues (like climate change, consent, or careers).

*\*For more on this, please see VotesforSchools’ Political Impartiality in Schools Guidance document.*

## “Leadership must ensure that teachers at the school:

- plan lessons well
  - demonstrating good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught, and
  - with understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of pupils, gained from regular and thorough assessment of pupils’ work
- use effective teaching methods and activities
- manage class time and pupils’ behaviour well
- use a range of good quality classroom resources well

so that all pupils acquire new knowledge, increase their understanding, and develop their skills (make good progress) according to their ability in the subjects taught, and

- are interested in their work
- apply intellectual, physical and creative effort
- act responsibly
- are self-motivated, thinking and learning for themselves.”

With regards to **Planning**, VotesforSchools:

- Provides staff with pre-planned, zero-prep lessons that save them time on a weekly basis, thereby reducing workload. All the information provided has been fact-checked and quality-assured, so that staff and students alike know that they are being given impartial ideas and insights
- Empowers staff with all the necessary contextual knowledge needed to discuss a topic openly and effectively. The resources give staff the confidence to deliver sessions on issues that may not be directly in their area of expertise, such as the online world or youth trends. Over time, staff feel more literate in the issues affecting young people today
- Allows staff to edit the resources at their discretion; they can make any necessary modifications based on their class' existing awareness and/or ability.

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- Allows staff to edit the resources at their discretion; they can make any necessary modifications based on their class' existing awareness and/or ability
- Maps all resources to key areas of the curriculum, thereby enriching the school's offering.

Concerning **Teaching Methods**, VotesforSchools:

- Promotes active questioning from both staff and students
- Provides a wide range of activities to help students remain engaged and interested
- Encourages open and honest communication in the classroom
- Allows students to model active democracy and citizenship through the voting process at the end of each session.

VotesforSchools helps with **Class Time & Behaviour Management** by:

- Issuing lessons that follow a consistent time limit each week
- Providing realistic timescales for individual activities
- Using a range of activities that help to maintain engagement (such as moving around the classroom or using hand signals to indicate answers)
- Encouraging all students to participate in discussions, which helps to build cohesion and harmony in the classroom.

All of the above also contributes to the ways in which staff are assessed in their effective usage of **Quality Resources**.

VotesforSchools is supportive of **Students' Development and Progression** in the following ways:

- The different topics covered mean that students are all interested in the topic at hand and enjoy taking part in the discussions and subsequent voting
- Every week, students experience being informed, curious, and heard. They recognise the effort required to embody these qualities or actions, but also see the positive outcomes of this
- By taking turns to listen to others' opinions and ideas, students learn to be patient and open-minded. They are aware of the impact their views might have on others and the responsibility that comes with making decisions and being an active citizen

- The resources encourage students to continue the conversation beyond the classroom and to explore the topic further in their own time. This is done largely through the Home Bulletin, but has also been seen through playground conversations and assemblies too.

**“Leadership must ensure that pupils are not discriminated against, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010, and must proactively consider the need to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with a disability.”**

The pedagogical and aesthetic choices made in developing VotesforSchools resources aim to be as inclusive as possible and to allow all students to feel empowered to learn and contribute. Plus, the editability of the resources helps to ensure that they can be made accessible to specific needs as and when required.

Staff can also access protected characteristics display materials as part of their subscription to help schools be fully transparent about what these are and what is expected of them.

**“Leadership should ensure that pupils develop their emotional, intellectual, social, creative and physical skills through the accessible and stimulating environment created by the school.”**

VotesforSchools sessions create an environment that:

- Promotes open-mindedness
- Raises awareness of students' wellbeing
- Models how to have respectful discussions and debates in a group
- Highlights the benefits of being an active participant in activities and conversations.

# ISI | SUPPORTING PUPILS' PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH & EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

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“Leadership must ensure that the school’s curriculum policy is implemented effectively through appropriate plans and schemes of work which:

- reflect the school’s aims and ethos, and
- encourage mutual trust and respect for other people, particularly those with protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation), and
- develop pupils’ spiritual and moral knowledge and understanding
- actively promote development of pupils’ self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence.”

VotesforSchools resources encourage students to see the value - for themselves and others - in understanding, respecting and valuing a variety of experiences. Whether this is building their skills in oracy or public speaking, or finding creative ways to share an issue they care about with their communities, the weekly sessions help to facilitate these opportunities in the classroom and beyond.

Respect for others is also explicitly promoted in a variety of ways through VotesforSchools, namely:

- Showcasing a wide range of opinions and alternative behaviours
- Celebrating different backgrounds, cultures, and customs



- Highlighting the importance of finding common ground and collective action
- Providing tools to combat bullying, hate speech, and violence towards others
- Promoting the open discussion of harassment and hate crime, and the personal, emotional and legal implications of these.

VotesforSchools is designed to be an engaging resource that empowers students to be inquisitive and courageous in their convictions. As such, the sessions make learning about the wider world fun and accessible so that students feel they have a valid and significant stake in it. A positive by-product of this engagement is that students improve their knowledge and understanding of moral dilemmas, spiritual practices and awareness of the main questions facing society today. This allows them to feel more confident in their ability to navigate their transition into (young) adulthood.

**“Leadership must ensure that pupils receive either relationships education or relationships and sex education (as applicable) and the latest statutory guidance relating to relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education as set out in the Standards and other relevant legislation is followed.”**

VotesforSchools resources regularly discuss issues around relationships, such as abuse, boundaries/consent, and peer pressure. Such conversations are vital to building a strong foundation for students regarding right and wrong, both on behalf of themselves and others. All resources are developed with the specific age group in mind, but also with an awareness of the kinds of issues that they will realistically be facing in their own lives.

The materials consistently signpost them towards the trusted adults in their lives if and when they are feeling uncomfortable,

unsafe, or unhappy about something they have seen or experienced. There are also additional resources available that promote “Healthy Conversations” and “Challenging Conversations”\*.

\*These resources are available on the VotesforSchools platform. You can find out more about how VotesforSchools supports the PSHE & RSE curricula through the relevant Primary and Secondary guidance documents.

**“Leadership must ensure that an effective anti-bullying strategy is in place which actively prevents and minimises bullying at the school. They should ensure that any instances of bullying are dealt with effectively, and staff help children to overcome the impact of bullying. All staff must be trained to recognise and deal with bullying.”**

By promoting alternative views and consistently sharing ways to challenge discriminatory behaviour, VotesforSchools enables staff and students to create - and successfully sustain - a positive learning environment, with the hope that this permeates other areas of the school too. The principles established through these conversations also empower students to feel confident in how to tackle similar issues online or outside of the classroom.

In sessions focusing specifically on equality, identity, and challenging prejudice, students are informed of the kinds of attitudes and behaviours that are not tolerated, both in their school community and in the wider world. They are also equipped with the tools to report these problems in a digital context, such as on social media platforms.

# ISI | SUPPORTING PUPILS' SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING & CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY

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“Leadership must ensure that the school’s curriculum policy is implemented effectively through appropriate plans and schemes of work so that pupils experience human, social and economic education which:

- reflects the school’s aims and ethos
- encourages respect for other people, particularly those with protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation)
- actively promotes fundamental British values
- develops pupils’ social and cultural knowledge and understanding
- gives pupils of secondary age (11+) access to accurate, up-to-date, impartial careers guidance so that they are able to make informed choices about a broad range of careers options and which helps them to fulfil their potential.”

VotesforSchools’ ethos is in line with that of all schools, in that it:

- Promotes inclusion
- Celebrates diversity
- Models respect for others

On a practical level, all resources are mapped to fundamental British Values and to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC)

criteria. And, though not a specific careers programme, careers education can be enhanced through use of VotesforSchools as:

- The resources make regular reference to relevant careers or suggested ways to “be heard”. VotesforSchools also encourages students to consider how they can foster emerging passions and interests as well as to seek out careers and roles that they may not ordinarily explore.
- The resources give equal weight to different career paths, and encourage students to pursue the right option(s) for them. They are also exposed to different careers through the weekly feedback, which often comes from industry experts working in sectors as diverse as food manufacture, climate policy, and the police.
- Debate and discussion is of course intrinsic to VotesforSchools, but so too is the information and insights with which students are equipped. The sessions highlight the importance of seeking reliable information and having an openness to new perspectives when discussing challenging topics - everyone in the classroom reaps the benefits when these two guiding principles are followed. These principles can then be applied by students throughout their lives, such as in their further education or in their careers.

**“Leadership must ensure that pupils are effectively prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.”**

VotesforSchools exists to help nurture informed, active, and curious future citizens who are open-minded, culturally aware, and democratically engaged. By engaging with issues that affect both UK society and the wider world, students build their cultural capital and ability to build relationships with members of their communities.

“Leadership must actively promote principles at the school which:

- Enable pupils to
  - distinguish right from wrong
  - respect the civil and criminal law of England
  - acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England
- Encourage pupils to:
  - accept responsibility for their behaviour
  - respect other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics
  - show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated, and to society more widely
  - acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures which furthers and promotes tolerance and respect between different cultural traditions
  - respect democracy and support participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.”

VotesforSchools enables students to:

- Regularly reflect on moral dilemmas and questions through the VoteTopic question and other questions posed as part of the session
- Recognise the rule of law by highlighting topical examples of wrongdoing in the resources
- Understand the legality of different behaviours (e.g. drug use, knife crime, hate speech) and the consequences of participating in this kind of behaviour, often through scenario-based learning
- Discuss public services such as the NHS, schools, and the emergency services and reflect on what they mean in today’s society and how they should be used and/or changed.

VotesforSchools encourages students to:

- Understand the positive outcomes of their behaviour by seeing the impact that their votes have had and how this is driving decision-making in the wider world (as is shown through the weekly feedback on previous VoteTopics)
- Understand the potential negative outcomes of their behaviour by encountering fictional scenarios in which wrongdoing has taken place; they must consider what the consequences should be and how this might apply to future situations they find themselves in
- Respect others by giving space for a diversity of opinions and experiences and encouraging them to be active and supportive listeners
- Show initiative by learning about the opportunities available for them to use their voices. A “call to action” is often central to activities in VotesforSchools resources, which could include setting up groups at school, arranging an event or initiative, or writing to a decision-maker
- Gain insight into the cultures that differ from their own by highlighting a range of cultural events in the resources and regularly asking students to consider what they know about these and how they might further their awareness
- Respect and participate in democracy by voting. The weekly opportunity to exercise their right to vote that VotesforSchools provides allows students to model good democratic practice and empowers them to use their voice and vote in future. It breaks down some of the psychological barriers that stop younger generations engaging in politics and community action, and allows them to see (and be) democracy in action. That this vote is then shared with key decision-makers provides students with the understanding that their contribution to society is important, both within their school and as a citizen of a wider community.

**“Where political issues are brought to pupils’ attention, including in the promotion at the school and/or during extra-curricular activities, pupils are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views of political issues, and the promotion of partisan political views is precluded.”**

Every week, VotesforSchools resources facilitate conversations around a Yes/No question. This means there are always (at least) two sides of an argument presented to students, thereby contributing to a more holistic understanding of the topic at hand. Neither side of the debate is presented as having more or less value than the other, and information provided to support each argument is always conveyed in an impartial way\*.

\*For more on this, please see VotesforSchools’ Political Impartiality in Schools Guidance document.

**“Leadership must ensure that the schools’ curriculum and teaching does not undermine fundamental British values.”**

VotesforSchools’ mission is to directly provide schools with the tools to allow all staff, regardless of experience or subject specialism, to confidently deliver a consistent and quality approach to British Values for every student.

VotesforSchools’ weekly materials are mapped to British Values (as well as to SMSC and Prevent), meaning that schools can be secure in the knowledge these responsibilities are being met across all year groups. Throughout their school journey, students will have ample opportunity to reinforce these values and to reflect on them.

# OTHER CURRICULUM AREAS SUPPORTED BY VOTESFORSCHOOLS

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*Below are links to information about other areas of the curriculum that VotesforSchools supports (England only).*

## CURRICULUM GUIDE CRITERIA

- [SMSC, British Values & Prevent](#)
- [UNCRC & UN SDGs](#)
- [VotesforSchools' 9 Key Themes](#)

## CURRICULUM OVERVIEWS

- [VotesforSchools & SMSC, British Values & Prevent](#)
- [VotesforSchools & Primary PSHE and RSE & Health Education Guidance](#)
- [VotesforSchools & Secondary PSHE and RSE & Health Education Guidance](#)

*Below are links to information about how VotesforSchools can further support you with inspections and/or audits (England only).*

## POLICY GUIDANCE

- [Political Impartiality in Schools](#)
- [LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Schools](#)
- [SEND Accessibility & Inclusion in Schools](#)

## EXTRACURRICULAR GUIDANCE

- [VotesforSchools & Unicef's Rights Respecting Schools Award](#)