

VOTESFORSCHOOLS & THE SCOTTISH CURRICULUM

Guidance for Education & Teaching Staff | Scotland

CONTENTS

This document outlines how VotesforSchools supports the Scottish curriculum and students' wellbeing. Use the contents below to explore each curriculum area. For the full list of criteria used for weekly VoteTopic mapping, see the Appendix.

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.

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HOW VOTESFORSCHOOLS SUPPORTS THE FOUR CAPACITIES

There is strong alignment between the ambitions of the Curriculum for Excellence and the mission of VotesforSchools. The information in this document will highlight VotesforSchools' aims to help children & young people to become:

- successful learners
- confident individuals
- responsible citizens
- effective contributors.

We do this by:

- building a respect for insight & knowledge
- nurturing curiosity about the world
- empowering children and young people to share their views.

All of these aims and outcomes are achieved through consistent use of VotesforSchools in the classroom, and across year groups. Doing so pays dividends, as students feel able to self-safeguard, while staff can observe and measure progress across a range of subject and curriculum areas.

HOW VOTESFORSCHOOLS SUPPORTS THE SHANARRI WELLBEING INDICATORS

Central to the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach is the belief that every child and young person should be Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included (SHANARRI).

This belief also underpins the core mission of VotesforSchools, which is for students to be informed, curious and heard.

Each week, our VoteTopics are mapped to four of the SHANARRI Wellbeing Indicators; over the course of the academic year, a broad range of - if not all - Indicators will have been supported by the resources.

We have developed a list of criteria aligned with these Indicators to provide staff with clear evidence of how VotesforSchools opens up important discussions with students, thus empowering them to self-safeguard and seek out help when they need it. This ensures that they have the best start in life. You can find this list in [Appendix 1](#).

HOW VOTESFORSCHOOLS SUPPORTS CHILDREN'S RIGHTS EDUCATION (UNCRC)

For students to reach their full potential, it is vital that they are familiar with their rights and responsibilities in the wider world. This is why we map each of our weekly VoteTopics to an article from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Over the course of the academic year, students will be (re)introduced to the rights they have as under-18s, and explore how topical issues can provide opportunities for them to examine these rights more closely. The right most relevant to their current VoteTopic is listed as part of the weekly VotePack so that it might be shared with students. Including this each week emphasises the interplay between children's rights and current affairs. In some cases, rights and responsibilities will be the basis of the VoteTopic questions themselves, especially when discussing moral and ethical dilemmas.

We also encourage all students to use their voices to make positive change, whether they are advocating for themselves or someone else. By showcasing the impact their voices can have through weekly impact-focused assembly resources, students' stake in their community and wider world is strengthened, and they become more conscious of their right to be heard.

The use of the UNCRC in VotesforSchools in turn supports schools in their duty to uphold the UNCRC, as per The UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act. Additionally, many schools use VotesforSchools to support applications for Unicef's Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA). Find all Articles in [Appendix 2](#).

HOW VOTESFORSCHOOLS SUPPORTS LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY (UN SDGS)

Learning for Sustainability is a vital component of the Curriculum for Excellence. The principles that underpin this approach also align closely with VotesforSchools'.

As with the UNCRC, students become familiarised with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) as part of their learning each week; the goal most closely aligned with their VoteTopic is listed as part of the weekly VotePack. This builds greater understanding of the interdependence between the issue at hand, their education, and the collective ambition of building a more sustainable world. It also supports schools in promoting the SDGs across all year groups. There is a list of all the Goals in [Appendix 3](#).

More specifically, issues related to climate change and/or sustainability are the basis of many VoteTopics throughout the year. During these sessions, students are asked to question the status quo when it comes to achieving climate goals. They also have ample opportunity to reflect on their own role as a global citizen in making a positive impact.

HOW VOTESFORSCHOOLS SUPPORTS CURRICULUM THEMES (CFE)

VotesforSchools maps all VoteTopics to one of 9 Key Themes, which are as follows:

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

All of these themes contribute to a holistic learning experience for students, that help them to hone vital skills and knowledge. They also naturally interlink with the curriculum themes outlined as part of the Curriculum for Excellence.

POLITICAL LITERACY

“Political literacy enables children and young people to critically examine sources to inform their views and express them confidently.”

VotesforSchools is wholeheartedly committed to political literacy, and is at the heart of all the resources. The weekly VoteTopics encourage and empower students to actively question current events and discuss pressing issues, before sharing their views and votes.

There is a significant focus on the sources used as part of reporting, including social media platforms and news outlets. Through weekly conversations, students become more confident in their ability to make informed and objective decisions, and to self-safeguard against fake news, misinformation and conspiracy theories.

VotesforSchools is also committed to political impartiality, meaning that all points of view are presented in a balanced way, enabling those with differing perspectives to share their opinions confidently without fear of stigma or conflict.

This theme is evidenced most clearly through VotesforSchools topics focused on Equalities & identity, Environment & climate change, Global issues & politics, Science & technology, Crime, justice & extremism, and Culture, media & the arts.

COMMUNITY LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

“Community Learning and Development (CLD) supports primarily disadvantaged or vulnerable groups and individuals of all ages to engage in learning, with a focus on bringing about change in their lives and communities.”

VotesforSchools endeavours to reach all students, irrespective of background, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), or other contributing factors. By creating topical and engaging resources that are relevant to young people as a broad demographic, all students can have a stake in the issue being discussed. The resources also focus heavily on promoting equality, challenging discrimination, and spotting the signs of radicalisation or other vulnerabilities.

Supporting and engaging with the community is central to the resources, in large part due to the voting process in which students engage weekly: they are able to feel part of their class, their school,

and a wider national youth movement. This in turn builds cohesion and breaks down perceived barriers.

Although all of VotesforSchools' 9 Key Themes support this curriculum theme, it is seen most clearly in topics on Health & wellbeing, Equalities & identity, Global issues & politics, Community & charity and Crime, justice & extremism.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

“Community Resilience as a context for learning supports young people, their families and communities to develop an understanding of the causes and effects of emergencies.”

By helping students to articulate their worries, as well as empower them to be proactive, VotesforSchools supports students for and through challenging situations. The aforementioned SHANARRI Wellbeing Indicators, children's rights, and Learning for Sustainability contribute significantly to this aim.

So too do resources that always put the safety and wellbeing of students first. When covering especially challenging topics, students are always given signposts towards trusted adults and relevant third-party resources to help them if they have been affected by a particular issue.

On a broader level, the resources and programme as a whole have youth voice at their heart, meaning students can be confident that their ideas, views, and concerns matter and are making a difference. The resources, particularly the weekly Data Reports, can be shared with their parents, carers, and peers, meaning these important conversations can go beyond the school gates, thereby building stronger communities.

Community resilience as a curriculum theme appears most clearly in VoteTopics on the Key Themes of Health & wellbeing,

Environment & climate change, Global issues & politics, Science & technology, Community & charity, and Crime, justice & extremism.

APPENDIX 1: SHANARRI WELLBEING INDICATORS CRITERIA

Below are the individual SHANARRI Wellbeing Indicators criteria used by VotesforSchools for weekly mapping purposes. These are aligned with GIRFEC: Child & Adolescent Health & Wellbeing Evidence Review (Scottish Government, 2018).

SHANARRI WELLBEING INDICATORS: SAFE

Care & protection: Voters explore techniques for self-safeguarding across a range of different situations and scenarios, including Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

Care & protection: Voters are provided with signposting for where to seek help, advice and support.

Bullying & fighting: Voters are exposed to a range of opinions to enable them to respect other opinions and to promote open-mindedness and tolerance of alternative views.

Bullying & fighting: Voters consider intervention strategies to reduce bullying and discriminatory behaviour.

Bullying & fighting: Voters are encouraged to develop communication skills that will enable them to manage conflict effectively.

Neighbourhood safety: Voters learn about a range of issues in communities that can lead to feelings of danger or insecurity (e.g. knife crime, drug use etc).

Neighbourhood safety: Voters are encouraged to provide solutions to help make their communities safer and more secure.

SHANARRI WELLBEING INDICATORS: HEALTHY

Child health outcomes: Voters explore the links between good mental health and positive life outcomes.

Child health outcomes: Voters are provided with the relevant information to make informed choices about their health.

Child health outcomes: Voters have the opportunity to learn the vocabulary they need to discuss mental wellbeing.

Child health outcomes: Voters are introduced to strategies to help them manage their own (and others') mental health.

SHANARRI WELLBEING INDICATORS: ACHIEVING

Attitudes to school: Voters are encouraged to engage in a range of extra-curricular and social activities.

Attitudes to school: Voters are supported in developing personal skills, confidence, and self-esteem, and are encouraged to use these in a range of different settings.

Youth employment: Voters are exposed to a range of careers and vocations.

SHANARRI WELLBEING INDICATORS: NURTURED

Family relationships: Voters are exposed to what positive relationships look like, both between family members and elsewhere.

Family relationships: Voters encounter a range of different family types, and learn that these should be respected and celebrated.

Family relationships: Voters are provided with strategies for how to effectively communicate with family members/other trusted adults.

SHANARRI WELLBEING INDICATORS: ACTIVE

Area factors: Voters consider the benefits of looking after their local environment in order to use it for physical & recreational activities (e.g. active travel or use of greenspace).

Physical activity & exercise: Voters learn about a wide range of activities that contribute to healthy growth & development (e.g. sport).

SHANARRI WELLBEING INDICATORS: RESPECTED

Public attitudes: Voters are given the opportunity to share their views with their peers, as well as with policymakers and other influential bodies.

Public attitudes: Voters understand the importance of being respected and being viewed as an individual.

Public attitudes: Voters gain insight into and respect for the others' views, identities, and individual characteristics.

Participation in decision-making: Voters learn about the opportunities available to make their voices heard in the wider world (e.g. petitions, demonstrations or community activity).

Participation in decision-making: Voters recognise the impact of youth voice and the importance of contributing to the wider conversation.

Participation in decision-making: Voters are provided with a safe space in which they can confidently voice their opinions and ask questions.

Participation in decision-making: Voters encounter a range of organisations which are working towards larger social goals (e.g. tackling climate change or raising awareness of social injustice).

SHANARRI WELLBEING INDICATORS: RESPONSIBLE

Positive activities: Voters participate in UK-wide conversations and voting, encouraging regular civil engagement and developing positive attitudes towards democracy.

Positive activities: Voters are exposed to positive role models and ways in which they can get involved with their local and national communities in contributing to decisions that affect them.

Positive activities: Voters are encouraged to consider their role in making a difference in local, national and international communities.

Positive activities: Voters participate in activities that build their skills and confidence to become active members of their schools and communities (e.g. effective questioning, oracy, listening skills, empathy).

Substance abuse: Voters participate in conversations about risky behaviours, and are given tools to self-safeguard.

Violence/offending: Voters are encouraged to have a dialogue about a range of risky behaviours that can affect them and their peers (e.g. drugs, consent, alcohol, county lines).

Violence/offending: Voters are informed on issues relating to the Youth Criminal Justice system.

SHANARRI WELLBEING INDICATORS: INCLUDED

Economic inclusion: Voters discuss issues related to economic inequalities and how these impact different groups of people (e.g. cost of living, free school meals).

Economic inclusion: Voters are engaged in conversations that develop their skills of empathy, tolerance and acceptance, which in turn supports building cohesive communities.

SHANARRI WELLBEING INDICATORS: INCLUDED (CONT'D)

Peer relations: Voters participate in activities that encourage respectful debate with peers.

Peer relations: Voters are given the skills to challenge alternative views in a constructive manner through a range of activities.

Peer relations: Voters participate in activities and discussions that consistently offer a range of alternative attitudes or norms and behaviours.

Peer relations: Voters are empowered to have their voices heard and feel included in the local and national conversation.

Neighbourhood relationships: Voters are encouraged to engage with their school and local communities to develop their sense of belonging.

Neighbourhood relationships: Through understanding a variety of viewpoints, voters develop their self-efficacy to improve their relationships both in school and beyond.

Neighbourhood relationships: Voters are exposed to a range of topical issues and perspectives, which build their respect and tolerance of difference.

APPENDIX 2: UNCRC CRITERIA

Below are the individual UNCRC articles used by VotesforSchools for weekly mapping purposes. These help to support children's rights education. For more information on the UNCRC, visit [UNICEF's website](#).

UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC)

Art 1 **Definition of a Child:** "A child is any person under the age of 18."

Art 2 **No Discrimination:** "All children have all these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what language they speak, what their religion is, what they think, what they look like, if they are a boy or girl, if they have a disability, if they are rich or poor, and no matter who their parents or families are or what their parents or families believe or do. No child should be treated unfairly for any reason."

Art 3 **Best Interests of the Child:** "When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. All adults should do what is best for children. Governments should make sure children are protected and looked after by their parents, or by other people when this is needed. Governments should make sure that people and places responsible for looking after children are doing a good job."

Art 4 **Making Rights Real:** "Governments must do all they can to make sure that every child in their countries can enjoy all the rights in this Convention."

- Art 5** **Family Guidance as Children Develop:** “Governments should let families and communities guide their children so that, as they grow up, they learn to use their rights in the best way. The more children grow, the less guidance they will need.”
- Art 6** **Life, Survival & Development:** “Every child has the right to be alive. Governments must make sure that children survive and develop in the best possible way.”
- Art 7** **Name & Nationality:** “Children must be registered when they are born and given a name which is officially recognized by the Government. Children must have a nationality (belong to a country). Whenever possible, children should know their parents and be looked after by them.”
- Art 8** **Identity:** “Children have the right to their own identity – an official record of who they are which includes their name, nationality and family relations. No one should take this away from them, but if this happens, Governments must help children to quickly get their identity back.”
- Art 9** **Keeping Families Together:** “Children should not be separated from their parents unless they are not being properly looked after – for example, if a parent hurts or does not take care of a child. Children whose parents don’t live together should stay in contact with both parents unless this might harm the child.”
- Art 10** **Contact with Parents Across Countries:** “If a child lives in a different country than their parents, Governments must let the child and parents travel so that they can stay in contact and be together.”

- Art 11** **Protection from Kidnapping:** “Governments must stop children being taken out of the country when this is against the law – for example, being kidnapped by someone or held abroad by a parent when the other parent does not agree.”
- Art 12** **Respect for Children’s Views:** “Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children seriously.”
- Art 13** **Sharing Thoughts Freely:** “Children have the right to share freely with others what they learn, think and feel, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms other people.”
- Art 14** **Freedom of Thought & Religion:** “Children can choose their own thoughts, opinions and religion, but this should not stop other people from enjoying their rights. Parents can guide children so that as they grow up, they learn to properly use this right.”
- Art 15** **Setting Up or Joining Groups:** “Children can join or set up groups or organisations, and they can meet with others, as long as this does not harm other people.”
- Art 16** **Protection of Privacy:** “Every child has the right to privacy. The law must protect children’s privacy, family, home, communications and reputation (or good name) from any attack.”

Art
17

Access to Information: “Children have the right to get information from the Internet, radio, television, newspapers, books and other sources. Adults should make sure the information they are getting is not harmful. Governments should encourage the media to share information from lots of different sources, in languages that all children can understand.”

Art
18

Responsibility of Parents: “Parents are the main people responsible for bringing up a child. When the child does not have any parents, another adult will have this responsibility and they are called a “guardian”. Parents and guardians should always consider what is best for that child. Governments should help them. Where a child has both parents, both of them should be responsible for bringing up the child.”

Art
19

Protection from Violence: “Governments must protect children from violence, abuse and being neglected by anyone who looks after them.”

Art
20

Children Without Families: “Every child who cannot be looked after by their own family has the right to be looked after properly by people who respect the child’s religion, culture, language and other aspects of their life.”

Art
21

Children Who are Adopted: “When children are adopted, the most important thing is to do what is best for them. If a child cannot be properly looked after in their own country – such as living with another family – then they might be adopted in another country.”

- Art 22** **Refugee Children:** “Children who move from their home country to another country as refugees (because it was not safe for them to stay there) should get help and protection and have the same rights as children born in that country.”
- Art 23** **Children with Disabilities:** “Every child with a disability should enjoy the best possible life in society. Governments should remove all obstacles for children with disabilities to become independent and to participate actively in the community.”
- Art 24** **Health, Water, Food, Environment:** “Children have the right to the best health care possible, clean water to drink, healthy food and a clean and safe environment to live in. All adults and children should have information about how to stay safe and healthy.”
- Art 25** **Review of a Child’s Placement:** “Every child who has been placed somewhere away from home - for their care, protection or health – should have their situation checked regularly to see if everything is going well and if this is still the best place for the child to be.”
- Art 26** **Social & Economic Help:** “Governments should provide money or other support to help children from poor families.”
- Art 27** **Food, Clothing, a Safe Home:** “Children have the right to food, clothing and a safe place to live so they can develop in the best possible way. The Government should help families and children who cannot afford this.”

Art 28 **Access to Education:** “Every child has the right to an education. Primary education should be free. Secondary and higher education should be available to every child. Children should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level possible. Discipline in schools should respect children’s rights and never use violence.”

Art 29 **Aims of Education:** “Children’s education should help them fully develop their personalities, talents and abilities. It should teach them to understand their own rights, and to respect other people’s rights, cultures and differences. It should help them to live peacefully and protect the environment.”

Art 30 **Minority Culture, Language & Religion:** “Children have the right to use their own language, culture and religion - even if these are not shared by most people in the country where they live.”

Art 31 **Rest, Play, Culture, Arts:** “Every child has the right to rest, relax, play and to take part in cultural and creative activities.”

Art 32 **Protection from Harmful Work:** “Children have the right to be protected from doing work that is dangerous or bad for their education, health or development. If children work, they have the right to be safe and paid fairly.”

Art 33 **Protection from Harmful Drugs:** “Governments must protect children from taking, making, carrying or selling harmful drugs.”

- Art 34** **Protection from Sexual Abuse:** “The Government should protect children from sexual exploitation (being taken advantage of) and sexual abuse, including by people forcing children to have sex for money, or making sexual pictures or films of them.”
- Art 35** **Prevention of Sale & Trafficking:** “Governments must make sure that children are not kidnapped or sold, or taken to other countries or places to be exploited (taken advantage of).”
- Art 36** **Protection from Exploitation:** “Children have the right to be protected from all other kinds of exploitation (being taken advantage of), even if these are not specifically mentioned in this Convention.”
- Art 37** **Children in Detention:** “Children who are accused of breaking the law should not be killed, tortured, treated cruelly, put in prison forever, or put in prison with adults. Prison should always be the last choice and only for the shortest possible time. Children in prison should have legal help and be able to stay in contact with their family.”
- Art 38** **Protection in War:** “Children have the right to be protected during war. No child under 15 can join the army or take part in war.”
- Art 39** **Recovery & Integration:** “Children have the right to get help if they have been hurt, neglected, treated badly or affected by war, so they can get back their health and dignity.”

Art 40 **Children Who Break the Law:** “Children accused of breaking the law have the right to legal help and fair treatment. There should be lots of solutions to help these children become good members of their communities. Prison should only be the last choice.”

Art 41 **Best Law for Children Applies:** “If the laws of a country protect children’s rights better than this Convention, then those laws should be used.”

Art 42 **Everyone Must Know Children’s Rights:** “Governments should actively tell children and adults about this Convention so that everyone knows about children’s rights.”

Art 43+ **How the Convention Works:** “These articles explain how Governments, the United Nations – including the Committee on the Rights of the Child and UNICEF - and other organisations work to make sure all children enjoy all their rights.”

APPENDIX 3: UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

Below are the individual UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) criteria used by VotesforSchools for weekly mapping purposes. These help to support learning for sustainability. For more information on the UN SDGs, visit the [UN's website](#).

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (UN SDGS)

- 1 **No Poverty:** “End poverty in all its forms, everywhere.”
- 2 **Zero Hunger:** “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.”
- 3 **Good Health & Wellbeing:** “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.”
- 4 **Quality Education:** “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”
- 5 **Gender Equality:** “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.”
- 6 **Clean Water & Sanitation:** “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water & sanitation for all.”
- 7 **Affordable & Clean Energy:** “Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.”

- 8 Decent Work & Economic Growth:** “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full productive employment and decent work for all.”
- 9 Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure:** “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.”
- 10 Reduced Inequalities:** “Reduce inequality within and among countries.”
- 11 Sustainable Cities & Communities:** “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.”
- 12 Responsible Consumption & Production:** “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.”
- 13 Climate Action:** “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.”
- 14 Life Below Water:** “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.”
- 15 Life On Land:** “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.”
- 16 Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions:** “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”
- 17 Partnerships for the Goals:** “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.”