POLITICAL IMPARTIALITY IN SCHOOLS

Guidance for Education & Teaching Staff | England

www.votesforschools.com
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VOTESFORSCHOOLS

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In February 2022, the Government issued further guidance for schools on their legal duties regarding political impartiality. This document outlines how VotesforSchools can support teachers in providing effective learning opportunities in line with this guidance.

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WHAT WE MEAN

We know that impartiality can seem like the enemy of impassioned debate, especially when it comes to political issues. However, we seek to challenge this assumption.

While impartiality means not promoting partisan political views and ensuring balance in presenting opposing political views, it doesn't mean that timely and important political discussions shouldn't take place; it's vital that they do. We instead take impartiality as an opportunity to foster considered and insightful opinions in the classroom and beyond.

WHAT WE DO

VotesforSchools exists to provide children and young people with a voice on the issues they care about. Whether 15 minutes in tutor time, or a designated 60-minute PSHE session, we believe that there should always be time for young people to talk about the biggest issues facing the world today in an age-appropriate and relatable way. Through our VoteTopics, voters (and staff) can participate in open, informed and balanced classroom discussions about real-life issues and the impact these may have on them and their communities.

Then, voters decide where they stand on each issue and their reasons why. Their vote results and comments are later passed on to figures and organisations of influence, who in turn provide feedback and insight on how their voices are making a difference to policy, attitudes, and awareness. This empowers voters to speak out and gives them assurance that their voices are being heard.

WHY WE DO IT

We know that being informed and curious about the world is key to having resilient, inquisitive, and proactive citizens of the future, who are equipped with the qualities of empathy and tolerance, and the necessary skills for political, media, information and digital literacy.

For us, doing this successfully is all about balance. We strive to provide the full picture to both voters and staff in all that we do, but also do not shy away from challenging and controversial questions - we represent life today as it is, which drives greater engagement from young people. What's more, all teachers should feel empowered to have big conversations with their school communities, whether about global conflicts, the rise of artificial intelligence, or the action being taken on climate change. VotesforSchools facilitates these exact discussions.

All our topics provide voters with the relevant context to understand these issues and consider how they relate to the world in which they live, so that they can contribute meaningfully to not just their peer groups, but to wider society.

HOW WE DO IT

Every VoteTopic presents a multidimensional perspective on a particular topic, to ensure that voters are aware of and able to respect a range of viewpoints. This shows them that different opinions are valid and worthy of discussion, even if they appear to be considerably removed from their own. Voters are then able to make an informed decision based on a variety of arguments, some of which they may not have encountered or considered before.

In addition to this, each VoteTopic is mapped to specific British Values and SMSC criteria, which allows schools to have confidence that the basic principles underpinning our society are consistently highlighted through VotesforSchools sessions, no matter the topic.

HOW WE DO IT

The process of creating our VoteTopics is thorough, and always has the best interests of voters and staff in mind. We follow a consistent set of steps for each and every resource.

1. **Use** real-life issues to decide topics. The headlines, ideas submitted by voters/staff, or notable events are our guide.

2. **Design** a question on the chosen issue, ensuring it offers a clear opportunity for impartial debate and discussion.

3. **Consider** the range of different views on this issue to create a balanced lesson showcasing a range of opinions or insights. Where required, we also consult with individuals or organisations who are experts on a particular subject. However, VotesforSchools always retains full editorial control and does not promote any political causes.

4. **Curate** age-appropriate activities that inform voters of facts, figures, and opinions relating to the issue. These all come from reputable sources.

5. **Provide** voters with the opportunity to reflect on and critically assess the information they have been given, to help them form their own opinion.

6. **Assess** the resources carefully for any political bias or inference; this applies to both text, imagery, and overall lesson trajectory.

WHO WE WORK WITH

Many of the national and international organisations with whom we have collaborated require us to be impartial, including the likes of the Electoral Commission, UK Parliament Week, and UNICEF UK.

We are past recipients of the **UK Parliament Partner of the Year Award**. This highlighted our commitment to maintaining balance, while also celebrating the democracy in which we live.

We have also contributed to a range of policy proposals on issues such as RSHE education, child poverty and under-16s phones.

WHERE TO FIND US

If you would like to know more about the information outlined above, please contact us:

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