

AN INTRODUCTION TO VOTESFORSCHOOLS

Information for Parents, Carers & Guardians

WHAT IS VOTESFORSCHOOLS?

VotesforSchools is a weekly current affairs-based voting platform designed to engage children & young people in political and social issues. Through weekly discussion and voting, not only are voters learning about the world around them, but they are also becoming active citizens and preparing to participate in democratic processes.

Through our lessons, called VoteTopics, voters can participate in open, informed and balanced discussions about live issues and the impact these may have on them and their communities.

Then, they decide where they stand on each issue and their reasons why. Their vote results and comments are 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 allows voters to feel empowered to speak out and that their voices are being heard.





HOW DOES IT WORK?

Every week during term-time, our schools receive their latest VotePack. This includes lessons, an assembly, and any additional materials needed to teach the current topic.

These additional materials will sometimes include an Advice Sheet, which is designed to be shared with voters and/or their parents & carers. This Sheet includes signposting about where to find more information, or suggestions of who is available to support you or your child with a particular issue.

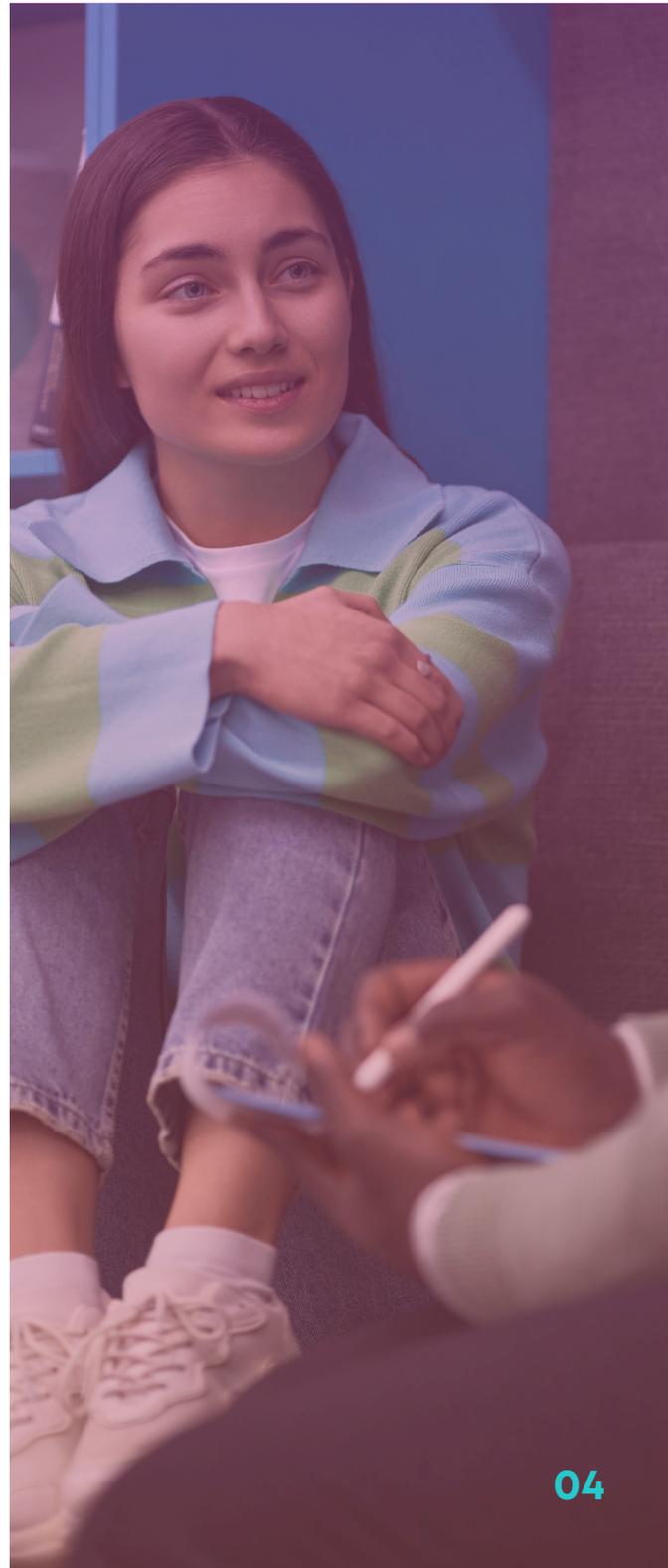
Teachers then have a week to share how the children & young people in their classes have voted. This can include submitting comments based on the discussion they had in the classroom.

WHO CAN GET INVOLVED?

Currently, our resources are available to schools and other educational settings such as further education providers and alternative provision. This is to make sure that the lessons are delivered consistently and in a way that supports children's learning as well as the school's curriculum.

However, there are opportunities for parents & carers to get involved in the conversation. Each week, the VotePacks include a News Bulletin, which is designed for children & young people to use at home. In it, you can find the results of the previous VoteTopic, the current question up for debate, a reading comprehension, and some additional news headlines. This is intended to spark conversation around the dining table, in the car to school, or even at the supermarket!

Lots of schools already share the News Bulletin (or their own versions of it) with parents & carers via email, their website, or on social media. So, make sure you ask to receive it if you don't already.





CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

We encourage parents & carers to get involved in the discussion as much as possible. Below are some top tips to make this happen:

- 1** **Discuss the current topic:** Ask your child to give arguments for each side of the debate to encourage critical thinking.
- 2** **Reflect on previous results:** When you see the results of the latest topic, ask your child how they voted and why.
- 3** **Brush up on your knowledge:** Read up on topics your child is discussing or has discussed to see what your view is on it.
- 4** **Share their ideas:** Consider the topics your child would like to discuss further, and ask their teacher to send them to us.

VOTESFORSCHOOLS & THE CURRICULUM

VotesforSchools is committed to helping children & young people understand the most pressing current issues in a way that is accessible, non-judgmental, balanced and inclusive. All resources are developed by former teachers with extensive classroom experience and in-depth understanding of the UK's education system. They are mapped to various areas of the curriculum too:

- Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural (SMSC) development
- Fundamental British Values
- Prevent Duty
- Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education
- Relationships, Health and Sex Education (RSE)
- SHANARRI Wellbeing Indicators (GIRFEC - Scotland)
- Cross-cutting Themes (Curriculum for Wales)

We are acutely aware of the anxieties felt by parents & carers around the delivery of sensitive topics in schools, and ensure these concerns are acknowledged and accommodated for as much as possible in the lessons. As with any external programme, the use of the resources is entirely at staff & schools' discretion, and there is no obligation for lessons to be delivered if they are not appropriate for a school or local community.

