

AN INTRODUCTION TO VOTESFORSCHOOLS

Information for Parents, Carers & Guardians

WHAT IS VOTESFORSCHOOLS?

VotesforSchools is a weekly, current affairs-based voting platform that gives children and young people the chance to talk about real-life issues in real-time. Through weekly discussion and voting, they are not only engaging with the world around them, but they are becoming active citizens and preparing to participate in democratic processes.

Our lessons, called VoteTopics, allow voters to participate in open, informed and balanced discussions about headline issues and the impact of these on them and their communities.

At the end of each lesson, they decide where they stand on the issue and their reasons why. Their vote results and comments are shared with figures and organisations of influence, who respond by telling voters exactly how their voices are making a difference to policy, attitudes, and awareness. As a result, voters feel empowered to speak out, knowing that their voices are being heard. Click [here](#) to find out more about the impact young people have had.





HOW DOES IT WORK?

Every week during term-time, our schools receive a VotePack. This includes age-appropriate lessons, a whole-school assembly, and any additional materials needed to safely discuss the topic.

In all our materials - but particularly those dealing with more sensitive or challenging issues - there is plenty of signposting for voters, showing them where to find more information and support. They are regularly encouraged to speak to safe adults, which include their parents, carers or guardians. We also share relevant signposting with teachers so that they may refer to this during the session or share it with the wider school community.

For each VoteTopic, teachers have a week to share how the voters in their classes have voted. This can include submitting comments based on their classroom discussions.

WHO CAN GET INVOLVED?

Currently, our resources are available to schools and other educational settings such as further education providers (FE) and alternative provision (AP). 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 also opportunities for parents & carers to get involved in the conversation. Each week, the VotePacks include Data Reports. These reports provide a national overview of the previous VoteTopic, including a vote breakdown across age groups and some key comments from voters themselves. This is intended to spark conversation around the dining table, in the car to school, or even at the supermarket! You can view previous topic outcomes on our [Impact & Results page](#) too; these pages include the feedback from leaders, industry experts and policymakers that was shared with voters during their lessons.

Lots of schools already share the Data Report 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 beyond the classroom, as continuing the conversation helps enrich voters' understanding. Below are some top tips that may help:

- 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 young people understand real-life 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
- Relationships, Health and Sex Education (RSHE)
- Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education

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. Where we can, we will give advanced warning when especially challenging topics are due to be covered. 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 the school community.

