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The
Electoral
Commission

Welcome to your vote

Learning sequence

Suitable for KS3 and KS4

Linked to the curriculum



electoralcommission.org.uk/learning

YOUR VOTE MATTERS

DON'T LOSE IT



01.

Your vote

Pupils will learn about what they can vote for and who represents them

This lesson is an introduction to politics, democracy and voting

Learning intentions

- Display own knowledge of voting and politics
- Identify and categorise how politics is in action at school, local, regional and national level
- Know the difference between direct and indirect democracy, applying this to Northern Ireland and UK politics
- Compare and contrast the different layers and responsibilities of government in Northern Ireland

Time needed

60 minutes

Resources required

Pupil worksheets

PowerPoint presentation

[Your Vote film](#)

Curriculum links:

Key Stage 3 - Learning for Life and Work (Local and Global Citizenship theme)

Key Stage 4 - Learning for Life and Work (Unit 1, Local and Global Citizenship - Democracy and Active Participation)



01.

Starter activity

Introduce ground rules for these sessions using the accompanying PowerPoint presentation.

Gauge pupils' understanding of and attitudes towards politics using a 'washing line'. Pupils stand one side of the classroom if they agree strongly, the opposite side if they disagree strongly, or somewhere in the middle. Read out the following statements and ask pupils why they have chosen their position along the spectrum.

- I am interested in politics
- Politics affects my life
- Everyone should vote

Alternatives for this activity could include 'thumbs up, thumbs down' or paired discussion.

Everyday politics – group activity

Time needed:
15-20 minutes

In pairs or small groups, ask pupils to write out the timetable for their typical day. Using highlighters or coloured pens, ask them to mark or label any activities which are affected by politics.

Feedback as a class to identify the different areas of pupils' lives affected by politics.

Everyday politics examples

7am – get the bus to school

Bus and other transport services are controlled by the Department for Infrastructure, controlled by the Northern Ireland Assembly

4pm – go to the park

Parks and playing fields are managed by local councils

6pm – attend youth club

Community centres are managed by local councils



01

What do you know?

This activity will explore what pupils already know about voting and democracy, and what they would like to find out more about

Show the beginning of the [Your Vote video](#) (up to 25 seconds). This will give some pupils an introduction to voting and politics.

Ask pupils to write down five things they know about voting and politics, and five things they would like to know about voting and politics. This could include: how do elections work? How can I make change? Or how do you become a politician?

Allow pupils to walk around the room sharing what they know and would like to know with others. Once they have done so, there is an opportunity for whole class feedback.

Pupils can also take down the definition of politics and voting to see how close it was to their initial thoughts.

Resources required

[Your Vote film](#)

Time needed

15 minutes

Differentiation

Not all pupils may be able to complete both sides of the table. You can ask them to complete the what they would like to know section.



01

Political bingo

Now that pupils have been able to share their views with others, there will be an opportunity for them to look at how politics works at a school, in Northern Ireland and in the UK

Using the bingo card, pupils have to find other pupils in the room who have fulfilled the statements.

Not all statements may be applicable to each school setting so please edit accordingly.

The first pupil to complete their card is the winner.

Differentiation

If the lesson is being delivered digitally, pupils could be divided into 'break-out rooms' where they can work as a group to try and fill in as many boxes as possible. This could also be delivered as a group discussion.

You can ask pupils, based on their knowledge of voting and politics, what other criteria they could add to the bingo card.

Resources required

Bingo card on PowerPoint presentation or worksheet

Time needed

10 minutes



01

Direct and indirect democracy

In order for pupils to have an understanding of why we vote in elections, it is important for them to have an understanding of the difference between direct and indirect democracy

Using the PowerPoint presentation, read through the overview of direct and indirect democracy.

Pupils will be able to summarise this overview by completing the paragraph on slide 11 of the 'Your vote' lesson slides and filling in the missing words.

The correct answers are below:

Direct democracy is when voters are asked to make a decision that affects the whole country. In the UK this is **not usually** used as the main form of decision making and instead, we use a system of indirect or **representative** democracy.

This is when we **elect** people to represent our views at local, regional and **national** level. There are times however, when alongside our representative democracy, we will use direct democracy to make some **important** decisions. An example of this was the Brexit **referendum** in 2016.

Differentiation

Instead of completing this individually, it could be done in pairs or groups.

Resources required

PowerPoint presentation

Time needed

10 minutes

Vocabulary box

- **Direct democracy**
People make a decision without a representative by voting on issues directly
- **Indirect democracy**
Someone is elected to represent a group of people



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01

Who you can vote for

Now that pupils understand why we use indirect / representative democracy, this is an opportunity for them to compare and contrast who they can vote for to make decisions on their behalf

Pupils should refer to the table on their worksheet, or you can present the table on the PowerPoint presentation.

They should familiarise themselves with the different aspects of each layer of government. The information to fill in the table will come from the [Electoral Commission's Your Vote video](#) (25 seconds - 2 minutes 37 seconds).

You may decide to show the video first, allow the pupils to fill in as much information as possible, then watch the video again.

You can then show the completed table from the PowerPoint presentation so that pupils can fill in the missing information.

Resources required

[Your Vote film](#)

PowerPoint presentation / worksheets

Time needed:

10 minutes



02.

The impact of voting

Pupils will learn about who votes, and who doesn't

This lesson covers voting systems used in Northern Ireland

Learning intentions

- Identify the two voting systems used in Northern Ireland and which elections they are used for
- Understand the differences between systems
- Explore why some people vote, and some people don't

Time needed

60 minutes

Resources required

PowerPoint presentation

Curriculum links

Key Stage 3 - Learning for Life and Work (Local and Global Citizenship

theme)

Key Stage 4 - Learning for Life and Work (Unit 1, Local and Global Citizenship - Democracy and Active Participation)

Vocabulary box

- Devolution is the transfer of power from a central government to local



02.

Starter activity

Use the accompanying statistics to convey who is registered to vote and who isn't.

Explain to your pupils that voting and democracy is about change and propose the following questions to your class:

- why should people vote?
- what is stopping people from voting?

This can be led as a class or group discussion. For those who would like to write their answers, encourage pupils to write on the board or to use post it notes and display them around the room.

To continue this activity discuss why people may not vote.

Time needed

10 minutes

Resources required

PowerPoint presentation

White boards / paper / post it notes

- Voter turnout for the Northern Ireland Assembly Election in 2017 was just under 56%
- Voter turnout for the 2019 Northern Ireland local council elections was just over 50%
- Voter turnout in Northern Ireland for the 2019 UK Parliamentary General election was 62%
- 95% of those aged 65 and over were registered to vote in Northern Ireland in 2022
- 45% of 18 – 19-year-olds were registered to vote in Northern Ireland in 2022



02

Reasons for low turnout

Now that pupils are aware of low turnout, ask them to discuss potential solutions

Pupils can use their thoughts from the previous activity, or they can use the following statements that are on the PowerPoint.

- I don't know enough about politics
- Politics doesn't impact my daily life
- I didn't have enough time to register to vote or go to the polling station
- I don't feel represented

Divide the class into four groups and assign a reason to each. Using a piece of paper they should write down as many potential solutions to combat that issue / opinion. After five minutes, move the paper to the next group so they can continue to add ideas.

Ask each group to report back on potential solutions.

Differentiation

Each reason can be part of a group discussion to start generating ideas.

Resources required

PowerPoint presentation and paper

Time needed

20 minutes



02

Who represents you?

My name is

The date that I will be eligible to vote at an election is

My constituency is

My MLAs are

My MP is

My local council is

Some of my councillors are

Three things I would do if I was an elected representative:

1.

2.

3.



Top tip

The following websites might be helpful:

- MLAs are available to find on the [Northern Ireland Assembly website](#)
- MPs are available to find on the [Parliament website](#)
- Local councillors are available on the relevant local council's website



02.

Voting systems

Discuss that at each election, voters are given a ballot paper and that we use two voting systems in Northern Ireland.

Use further resources from [Northern Ireland Assembly](#) and discuss [Single Transferable Vote](#) and First Past the Post.

First Past the Post (FPTP)

We use a voting system called First Past the Post to elect Members of the UK Parliament (or MPs for short).

When you vote in an election which uses First Past the Post, you'll be given one ballot paper.

At a UK Parliament general election you're allowed to vote for one person. Simply mark an 'X' in the box next to their name. When the votes are counted, the candidate with the most votes is elected and will represent you and your constituency.

Single Transferable Vote (STV)

We use STV to elect Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly, as well as local councillors who look after issues specific to your local area.

The Single Transferable Vote system is a form of proportional representation. Proportional representation means the number of candidates elected for each political party roughly matches the number of votes received.

The instructions on the ballot paper will tell you to rank the candidates in order of preference. Mark a '1' next to your first choice, '2' next to your second, '3' by your third, and so on. You can vote for as few or as many candidates as you like – it's entirely your choice.

Time needed

20 minutes

Resources required

PowerPoint presentation

[Single Transferable Vote film](#)



02.

Voting systems

Option 1

Ask pupils to research the different systems and think about the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Option 2

Ask pupils to write down up to five key differences between STV and FPTP.

Plenary

- In pairs, ask pupils to reflect on the reasons why some people may not register to vote
- Discuss one potential solution that you think would make a difference
- Share with the class

Remind pupils to register to vote at [gov.uk/register-to-vote](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)

Differentiation

Depending on the learning levels of pupils, there are two activities that you can use to discuss voting systems

Time needed (option 1)

20 minutes

Resources required

PowerPoint presentation

[Voting system film](#)

Time needed (option 2)

5-10 minutes

Resources required:

PowerPoint presentation

[Voting system film](#)



03.

How to vote

Pupils will learn how to vote in person, by post and by proxy

This lesson will give pupils an insight into what it will be like when they vote for the first time

Learning intentions

- Describe three ways in which people can vote in elections in Northern Ireland
- Outline the process of voting in person
- Sequence the process from registering to vote to casting your vote on polling day

Time needed

60 minutes

Resources required

Pupil worksheets

PowerPoint presentation

[How to Vote film](#)

Curriculum links:

Key Stage 3 - Learning for Life and Work (Local and Global Citizenship theme)

Key Stage 4 - Learning for Life and Work (Unit 1, Local and Global Citizenship - Democracy and Active Participation)



03.

Mad, bad, sad or glad

Establish ground rules for discussions. Remind pupils that they don't have to agree with each other but they do have to be respectful of each other's opinions.

It might be useful to keep this list of ground rules on a working wall or somewhere visible in the room to refer back to throughout this unit, or build on the first session where we outlined rules.

Place a volunteer pupil at the front of the room and give them four signs: 'mad', 'bad', 'sad' and 'glad'.

Share a range of different statements with the pupils. Ask them to hold up the sign that best describes how they feel about the statement and explain their response.

Statements might include:

- voting should be made compulsory
- young people are not interested in politics
- the voting age should be raised to 21
- voting isn't important
- everyone should have the right to vote

Give other pupils the chance to sit in the hot seat and respond – they may want to respond differently to some of the same statements. Encourage the rest of the class to pose statements about politics.

Alternatively, you could give the whole class the chance to respond using individual whiteboards or label the four corners of the room 'mad', 'bad', 'sad' and 'glad' and ask pupils to move to the corner that describes their response.



03.

Registering to vote

This section will outline how pupils can register to vote for elections in Northern Ireland

Recap what was said in the video using the PowerPoint slides.

Pupils will then complete the short quiz using information provided in the video.

If the pupil thinks the information is false, they have to re-write the statement so that it is true.

Not all of the information may be found in the video so it will be a challenge to the pupils to try and reach a decision on some of questions.

You can show the class the correct answers at the end.

Resources required:

[Your Vote film](#)

PowerPoint presentation

Time needed:

10 minutes



Registering to vote continued

The correct answers are below:

Question	True/False	Correct statement
I do not need to register if I want to vote in elections in Northern Ireland	F	I do need to register if I want to vote in elections in Northern Ireland
I can register to vote at aged 17 in Northern Ireland	T	Yes, so long as you are 17 by 30 November of that year
Once registered, I don't have to re-register ever again	F	I need to re-register if I move house or change my name, or if I'm asked to as part of a canvass of voters
I can be registered to vote at two different addresses	T	But you can only vote once per election
Once registered, it is the law that I must vote in elections	F	You are not required by law to vote in elections - it's your choice!



03.

Voting by numbers

Ask pupils to look at the below statements.

The pupils need to number the statements in the order they will do them.

Share the correct answers with the class.

Resources required:

PowerPoint presentation

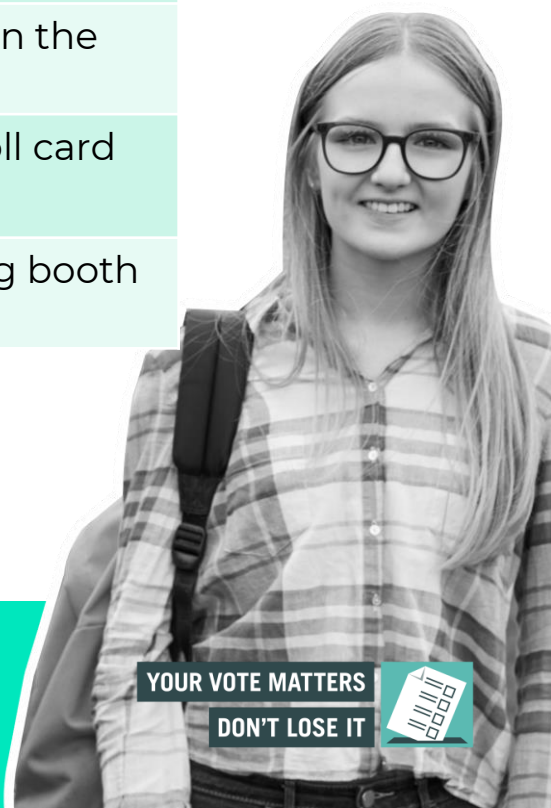
Time needed:

10 minutes

Voting by numbers correct order:

- 3. Head to your polling station
- 1. Register to vote
- 8. Polls close
- 7. Put your ballot in the ballot box
- 6. Mark your ballot paper
- 2. Receive your poll card
- 4. Show your ID and collect your ballot paper
- 5. Go to the polling booth

Head to your polling station	Register to vote
Polls close	Put your ballot in the ballot box
Mark your ballot paper	Receive your poll card
Show your ID and collect your ballot paper	Go to the polling booth



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03.

Plenary quiz

To finish the session, place the quiz questions on the board. Ask pupils to answer them and share their answers.

The quiz can be completed in groups, and each group can share their scores.

Time needed

10 minutes

Resources required

PowerPoint presentation

Questions	Answers
How long are polling stations open for?	15 hours (7am-10pm)
What do you need to take with you to the polling station?	Correct form of photo ID
What do staff give you after they have checked your personal details?	Ballot paper
What happens if you make a mistake on the ballot paper?	Ask a member of staff and they will give you a new ballot paper
Where do you place your ballot paper after you have made your choice?	Ballot box



04.

Campaigning

Pupils will learn about methods of political campaigning and will explore issues they are passionate about

Learning intentions

- Describe different methods of political campaigning which may take place before and election
- Compare and contrast different factors which may influence how people vote
- Start planning their own campaign

Resources required

Pupil worksheets / PowerPoint presentation

What influences? cards

[Political campaigning video](#)

Time needed

60 minutes

Curriculum links

Key Stage 3 - Learning for Life and Work (Local and Global Citizenship theme)

Key Stage 4 - Learning for Life and Work (Unit 1, Local and Global Citizenship - Democracy and Active Participation)



04.

Young people's influence

Even though the voting age in Northern Ireland is 18, there are many ways that young people can get involved

Read out five clues about a person who has had a major impact on the world through their campaigning. The clues will get easier as they continue.

1. I was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2021
2. I was the youngest person to be Time Magazine Person of the Year in 2019
3. I sailed across the Atlantic to attend the United Nations General Assembly rather than take an aeroplane
4. I am very conscious about the environment
5. I was able to do all of these things and have a global impact, even though I was still too young to vote

Answer: I am Greta Thunberg

This will link into the idea of being able to have an impact on decision making outside of the voting process. You can also show the other ways in which pupils too young to vote can have an impact.

Resources required

PowerPoint presentation

Time needed

5 minutes



04.

Campaigning and influences

This activity will introduce political campaigning and what influences voters and supporters

Play the [Electoral Commission's campaign video](#). This will give pupils an overview of campaigning.

In small groups give pupils a set of What influences? cards, or use the PowerPoint presentation to display them.

It may be helpful to start with a class discussion about what influences decision making in our everyday lives. For instance, how do we choose what to watch on television or what we are going to do at the weekend?

In their groups, pupils should imagine that there is an election tomorrow, and they have decided to vote. Ask them to pick the five main things that might influence which candidate or political party they vote for.

Come back together as a class and discuss why they picked particular influences.

Differentiation

Are there any other influences not listed on the cards that might affect their choice?

Make it clear to pupils that politicians and political parties will use these methods to persuade us to vote for them. However, everyone can campaign for things they are passionate about.

Resources required

[Electoral Commission campaigning video](#)

What influences? cards / PowerPoint presentation

Time needed

10-15 minutes



04.

What influences? cards

The views of adults at home	What candidates say they are going to do for young people	Political party leaders	Who is the most popular	The views of my friends
How trustworthy I find a political candidate or political party	What I have seen on TV	My personal experience of political party or candidate	What I have read online and in newspapers	The election campaign
A candidate's former job	My job	Talking to a political party campaigner when they knock on my door	The political parties policies or manifestos	Meeting a candidate
A candidate's age	My age	A candidate's educational background	My gender	Celebrities or influencers
Posters and leaflets	Where a candidates lives	My background	A candidate's background	What a candidate looks like



04.

Campaign planning

Pupils should be put into campaign teams. Introduce the idea that they will be creating their own campaigns to encourage people in their communities to register to vote.

Some possible roles for the team are outlined below. Each team is likely to need a campaign manager and a designer, but the other roles are optional depending on their campaign plan. Pupils might have multiple roles.

Time needed

10 minutes



Campaign manager

Responsibilities include: leadership and making final decisions, ensuring that the planned activity goes ahead, contacting any senior stakeholders, for example local councillor, MLA or MP.

Designer

Decides which colours, images and symbols will be most effective, produces materials like posters, flyers, plans display boards.

Speech writer

Writes speeches or prepares presentations which will be delivered to other students either by themselves or by the campaign manager. Might also write letters to stakeholders, for example form tutors or prefects.

Fixer

Secures the relevant permissions, such as for use of display boards, to hold an information session in the library, for the group to deliver speeches in form time.

Researcher

Tests materials (such as posters or lines from a speech) to check they convey the key message effectively. Talks to pupils during or after campaign events to check whether they have decided to register to vote and collect feedback on the campaign.

Media / social media manager

Writes an article for the school blog or newspaper, plans a takeover of the school Twitter account for a day, writes a letter to a local newspaper that is widely read by pupils to promote the campaign.



04.

What makes a good campaign?

Share the PowerPoint presentation that shows current Electoral Commission campaigns.

Ask pupils to work together in their groups to come up with five things that work well in the campaigns and something they would improve.

The campaigns team at the Electoral Commission have prepared five top tips that can be shared with pupils.

1. Always remember who you are trying to talk to
2. Go where your audience go
3. Try something new – make sure you stand out
4. Be snappy – use language and images that your audience will understand at a glance
5. Meet your deadlines!

Explain that the pupils will be creating their own campaigns to get people in their communities to register to vote.

Time needed

10 minutes

Plenary

- Ask each campaign team to come up with their own slogan using 'Got 5?' as an example
- Share slogans with the wider group

Remind pupils to register to vote at [gov.uk/register-to-vote](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote).



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04.

What makes a good campaign? Campaign images



The Electoral Commission's 'Got 5?' voter registration campaign, 2022

Got 5?

Register **online** to vote

Northern Ireland Assembly election
Register by 14 April
gov.uk/register tovot e

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04.

What makes a good campaign? Campaign images



The Electoral Commission's 'Welcome to Your Vote' campaign, 2021

This campaign encouraged 16 and 17-year-olds to register to vote ahead of the Wales' Senedd elections in 2021 – the first time 16 and 17-year-olds were able to vote in this type of election.



05.

Campaign planning

Students will start to plan their campaigns

Learning intentions

- Plan and develop a campaign that encourages our community to register to vote
- Plan how you will present your campaign

Resources required

PowerPoint presentation

Campaign materials - pens, paper, etc.

Time needed

60 minutes

Curriculum links

Key Stage 3 - Learning for Life and Work (Local and Global Citizenship theme)

Key Stage 4 - Learning for Life and Work (Unit 1, Local and Global Citizenship - Democracy and Active Participation)

Starter activity

In groups of three or more, give pupils paper or whiteboards with the numbers 16, 18 and 21.

Read out the countries listed opposite. Each team should raise the number they think shows the voting age for that country. The PowerPoint slides have been designed to reveal the answer after each country.

Voting age quiz with answers

- UK-wide (18 for UK Parliament elections)
- Tanzania (18)
- France (18)
- Lebanon (21)
- New Zealand (18)
- China (18)
- Nicaragua (16)
- Singapore (21)
- Poland (18)
- Scotland (16 for Scottish Parliament and local elections)



05.

Poster analysis

Present pupils with the posters / campaign materials from the Electoral Commission used in the previous session.

In pairs, ask pupils to look at the examples of campaign posters and analyse how effective they are. The following prompt questions might be helpful:

- Which colours have been used? Why?
- What images or symbols have been used? What message does this give the viewer?
- How does the text appear? What impression does this give the viewer?
- What does the text say? What message does this give the viewer?

Resources required

PowerPoint presentation

Campaign examples

Time needed

15 minutes



05.

Creating our campaign

In groups, pupils should prepare their campaign. We will be asking them to present their ideas so this may take the form of a poster.

They should include the following:

- their slogan
- key messages / instructions
- colour scheme
- where will your audience see the campaign?
- how do you plan on promoting your campaign?

To support their campaigning efforts, you can recap the top tips from the Electoral Commission.

Resources required

PowerPoint presentation

Materials for making posters – sugar paper, felt pens etc.

Time needed

30-40 minutes

Plenary

Pupils will be presenting their campaigns next week.

They should decide who will present on what aspect.

Remind pupils to register to vote at [gov.uk/register-to-vote](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote).



06.

Delivering our campaigns

Students will learn to present their campaign ideas

Learning intentions

- Present your campaign ideas
- Evaluate the success of each campaign

Time needed:

60 minutes

Resources required

PowerPoint presentation

Curriculum links

Key Stage 3 - Learning for Life and Work (Local and Global Citizenship theme)

Key Stage 4 - Learning for Life and Work (Unit 1, Local and Global Citizenship - Democracy and Active Participation)

Starter activity - Ah, um game

A pupil must talk for one full minute without saying any filler words.

Topics may include: your favorite food, dogs, or registering to vote.

The class should monitor when filler words have been used.

Time needed

10 minutes



06.

Reviewing and presenting our campaigns

Reviewing campaigns

- Pupils should prepare to share their campaign ideas.
- They should finish off designing their campaigns
- They should confirm who is speaking and what they are sharing.

Ask pupils to ensure they have covered the following:

- what is your key message?
- what materials did you use? (for example, share posters or an extract from a letter or speech)
- what do you think is really effective about your campaign?
- what didn't work or was more difficult than you expected?

Time needed

10 minutes

Presenting campaigns

Ask each team to present their campaign to the rest of the class.

Vote

As a class, or in groups, discuss which campaigns they think would be effective and if there were similar elements.

As a class, vote for the most successful campaign, using the campaign managers' names on the ballot slips.

Time needed

30-40 minutes



06.

Voting

Ask the class to vote for their favourite campaign. Put the names of the campaign managers or teams in the left-hand column.

Vote for your favourite candidate by putting an 'X' in the box

The winning campaign can be taken forward as a class project, such as posters throughout the school, or a social media campaign.

