



# VOTESFORSCHOOLS & SMSC, BRITISH VALUES & PREVENT

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Guidance for Education & Teaching Staff | England

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This document outlines how VotesforSchools supports schools in delivering consistent SMSC, British Values & Prevent education. Use the contents below to explore each curriculum area.

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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# INTRODUCTION

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Every week, VotesforSchools materials consistently support these three areas of the curriculum, as set out in the Department for Education (DfE)'s statutory guidance. It does so in the following ways:

- Weekly materials (VoteTopics) are mapped to two criteria from each of the Spiritual, Moral, Social & Cultural categories, as well as two Prevent criteria and one of the fundamental British Values. These criteria are shared with staff in the form of a **Curriculum Guide**.
- Each term, staff receive a **Curriculum Overview** document in which all the SMSC, British Values & Prevent criteria covered in the term are detailed.
- Over the course of the academic year, schools can be confident that SMSC, British Values and Prevent will have been consistently covered by VotesforSchools materials. This is evidenced in an **End-of-Year Overview**.
- In addition to this document, VotesforSchools' **Ofsted & ISI guidance documents** can be used by schools to articulate how VotesforSchools supports these areas of the curriculum during an inspection.

Find out more about the curriculum policies referenced in this document using the links below:

- DfE (via GOV.UK) | [Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools](#)
- DfE (via GOV.UK) | [The Independent School Standards](#)
- DfE (via GOV.UK) | [Prevent duty guidance: England & Wales](#)

# VOTESFORSCHOOLS SUPPORTING SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL & CULTURAL (SMSC) DEVELOPMENT

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“The proprietor/school actively promotes the fundamental British Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.”

Using VotesforSchools as a whole-school package means the active and consistent promotion of British Values. The vote centres on (largely British) issues every week, from free school meals to the press, to our attitudes towards the refugee crisis.

VotesforSchools also explicitly promotes British Values in action through the voting itself, which is central to the programme. Schools then receive the results of each vote two weeks later and are provided with a breakdown of the gender and age group votes across the UK as well as specifically in their school.

The weekly Curriculum Guides\* also identify which criteria from the British Values curriculum (as set out in the Government’s Guidance on promoting British Values in schools, November 2014) each VoteTopic has met.

*\*For more on this, please see VotesforSchools’ Curriculum Criteria document for SMSC, British Values & Prevent.*

**“Enable students to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-confidence.”**

VotesforSchools encourages and empowers students to have a voice; the resources give them the tools to “be heard” on personal issues or when they see others in risky situations. The resources’ consistent and quality approach also ensures that every student has access to and can engage in discussion around British Values and can develop their critical thinking. VotesforSchools fosters lifelong skills: engagement in democracy, making your voice heard, articulating your opinion, listening to others and decision-making.

**“Enable students to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England.”**

Through weekly topics, students are given the skills and tools to identify what is right and wrong. Topics on issues such as county lines, alcohol, and extremism allow them, through current and relevant issues, to understand the role of the law in civil society.

*This is also supported by the additional resource packages provided by VotesforSchools that focus specifically on PSHE and RSE & Health Education. These can be found on the VotesforSchools platform.*

**“Encourage students to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely.”**

VotesforSchools exposes students to different scenarios both in the UK and beyond. As a result, they develop a sound understanding of their wider community and global issues, as well as the ways in which they can use their democratic right to make their voices heard and enact positive change.

Using the lessons and assemblies also provides students with safe and suitable ways to make a difference nationally, locally, or within a school setting, and encourages them to be agents of change.

**“Enable students to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England.”**

VotesforSchools regularly works alongside expert organisations in developing weekly resources. These have previously included the likes of UNICEF UK, The Anti-Bullying Alliance, the UK Commission on Bereavement, and the Co-op. Through their participation, students are impacting national policy, understanding that their voice is heard, and witnessing in real-time that voting is an effective way to bring about change in our democratic system.

In addition, for topics about which students may be seeking further support (such as mental health, bullying, or poverty), an Advice Sheet is provided that can be shared with the students directly or with parents, carers and staff.

**“Further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures.”**

VotesforSchools gives staff the confidence to present topics and actively encourage students to have differences of opinions. It also models objective and unbiased arguments, demonstrating to students that any opinion is valid but should be supported with informed evidence. VotesforSchools resources expose students to a diverse range of topics, and within these is an opportunity for them to make ethical and moral decisions. By looking at different sides of any debate, they develop skills of tolerance, empathy and understanding.

**“Encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.”**

A vital part of VotesforSchools’ mission is to embed the skills that, through debate and discussion, provide young people with tolerance, empathy and understanding: these are the skills that they use to respect diversity.

Alongside these skills, VotesforSchools specifically covers topics that align with the Equalities Act 2010, such as Black History Month, International Day of People with Disabilities, and Pride Month.

This is also supported by the additional resource packages provided by VotesforSchools that focus specifically on PSHE and RSE & Health Education. These can be found on the VotesforSchools platform.

**“Precludes the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school.”**

VotesforSchools resources provide staff with objective, fact-based arguments to help them debate and discuss current and topical issues. This puts staff in a confident position to present relevant and unbiased facts on a diverse range of topics. The use of VotesforSchools ensures\* there is an inclusive and unprejudiced approach to discussing sensitive subjects.

\*For more on this, please see VotesforSchools’ Political Impartiality in Schools Guidance document.

**“Takes such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of students - they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views.”**

VotesforSchools resources come with an assurance that all issues are presented in a balanced way\*, with equal breadth and depth given to all sides of the argument. Overtly political issues – such local or general elections – make particular use of insights, information, and ideas from a range of sources across the political

spectrum to ensure students are equipped with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions independently.

\*For more on this, please see VotesforSchools' Political Impartiality in Schools Guidance document.

# VOTESFORSCHOOLS SUPPORTING THE PROMOTION OF FUNDAMENTAL BRITISH VALUES

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*The information below has been drawn from schools' experiences and common questions inspectors may ask about your school's delivery of fundamental British Values.*

**“How do staff engender a fair and unprejudiced approach on the part of the pupils?”**

VotesforSchools resources provide staff with the objective, fact-based arguments to help them debate and discuss current and topical issues. This puts staff in a confident position to present relevant and unbiased facts on a wide range of diverse topics. Use of VotesforSchools ensures there is an inclusive and unprejudiced approach to discussing sensitive subjects\*.

*\*For more on this, please see VotesforSchools' Political Impartiality in Schools Guidance document.*

**“Is there equality of opportunity and appreciation of diversity taught in the school?”**

The VotesforSchools resources' consistent and quality approach also ensures that every student has access to and can engage in discussion around British Values and can develop their critical thinking. Weekly topics reinforce an appreciation for and understanding of issues surrounding diversity, such as equalities, different identities (gender, race, etc) and different backgrounds. The programme also builds a broader appreciation for diversity of opinion.

As part of a VotesforSchools subscription, staff can also access protected characteristics display materials to help schools be fully transparent about what these are and what is expected of them.

**“How does the school assist pupils in combating harassment and bullying? What evidence is there of improvement?”**

VotesforSchools encourages and empowers students to have a voice; the resources give them the tools to “be heard” on any personal issues, or when they see others in risky situations.

Additionally, VotesforSchools provides resources annually for Anti-Bullying Week. In these resources, students are given realistic and contemporary advice for tackling bullying, both in person and online.

*This is also supported by the additional resource packages provided by VotesforSchools that focus specifically on PSHE and RSE & Health Education. These can be found on the VotesforSchools platform.*

**“How do the curriculum and extra-curricular activities promote pupils’ British Values? How do you monitor the impact of this? Where would I be most likely to see examples of this being taught?”**

Using VotesforSchools as a whole-school package means the active and consistent promotion of British Values. The vote centres on (largely British) issues every week, from free school meals to influence of the press & social media, to our attitudes towards the refugee crisis.

VotesforSchools explicitly promotes British Values in action through the voting itself, which is central to the programme. Schools then receive the results of each vote two weeks later and are provided with a breakdown of the gender and age group votes across the UK as well as specifically in their school.

The weekly Curriculum Guides also identify which criteria from the British Values curriculum (as set out in the Government's Guidance on promoting British Values in schools, November 2014) the resources have met.

The VoteDiary provided as part of a subscription allows staff to look at how students are developing the skills associated with British Values such as tolerance, understanding and empathy.

### **“What specific steps have been taken to improve pupils’ behaviour and learning with respect to the development of British Values?”**

VotesforSchools allows staff to facilitate lessons on subject areas and current issues that are relevant and engaging for students. Using VotesforSchools allows staff to develop students’ understanding of the world they live in, in an interactive and stimulating way. It also allows students to participate in democratic practices on a weekly basis. The weekly topics are youth-centred and as a result, students are motivated and want to learn about the topics each week and the core values underpinning these.

### **“How and where does the school monitor and evaluate pupils’ preparation for life in modern Britain? What does this information tell you about how well pupils have developed?”**

VotesforSchools maps which areas of British Values, SMSC, and Prevent are covered each week by the topic, as well as highlighting which criteria from the UNCRC and UN SDGs are being supported\*. When young people vote, staff are given the data, showing what students think and feel about certain issues. The accompanying VoteDiary also allows students to reflect on how their British Values skills have developed and how they would like to hone these in future.

*\*For more on this, please see VotesforSchools’ UNCRC & UN SDGs document.*

## **“How are pupils involved in the life of the school?”**

Using VotesforSchools allows students to consider how they can be heard within their own school. Lessons and assemblies regularly give students ideas about how to make a change nationally, locally, or within the school setting.

Anecdotal evidence from VotesforSchools subscribers suggests that student voice has been catalysed by use of VotesforSchools. Collective action from students has led to changes to school policies, such as the use of glass condiment bottles in the canteen instead of plastic.

## **“Can you show me examples of displays or artwork around the school which promote British Values?”**

VotesforSchools provides display materials for schools to develop tutor display areas, promote the school’s results and encourage development in the skills of being informed, curious and heard. There are also display materials available to subscribed staff that focus specifically on the protected characteristics.

## **“How and where do pupils/staff have the opportunity to discuss different points of view? How do teachers make sure that different viewpoints are valued?”**

VotesforSchools gives teachers the confidence to present a wide range of topics and actively encourage students to have differences of opinions. It also models objective and unbiased arguments\*, demonstrating to students that any opinion is valid but should be supported with informed evidence.

*\*For more on this, please see VotesforSchools’ Political Impartiality in Schools Guidance document.*

**“Can you give examples of how British Values are promoted in the culture and ethos of the school?”**

Using VotesforSchools as part of the weekly timetable demonstrates an absolute belief that British Values are at the heart of the school. VotesforSchools is an inclusive package, meaning every student in every year group can access the weekly debate. As a result, this can bring genuine unity and cohesion to the school community and beyond.

**“How do teachers plan their lessons to include strategies and resources that reflect the diversity of cultural experiences in modern Britain?”**

The VotesforSchools lessons are planned and resourced for teachers, but they can also supplement teaching with additional “Curriculum link” and “Challenge” activities included within the lessons. These demonstrate how staff can use the topic to reinforce other areas of the curriculum.

Staff are also actively encouraged to look at the SMSC, British Values and Prevent document that is downloadable along with their resources every week (also known as the “Curriculum Guide”). This gives the staff a real understanding of how they are contributing to British Values development.

**“How do you ensure that the pupils in this school learn about what it is like to be in different communities, beyond their immediate experience?”**

VotesforSchools resources expose students to a diverse range of topics. Within these is an opportunity for students to make ethical and moral decisions. By looking at the different sides of a wide range of debates, they develop skills of tolerance, empathy and understanding.

**“How does the school help pupils prepare for the next stage of education, training or employment? How effective is this?”**

Though not a specific careers programme, careers education can be enhanced through use of VotesforSchools as:

- The resources make regular reference to relevant careers or suggested ways to “be heard”. VotesforSchools also encourages students to consider how they can foster emerging passions and interests as well as to seek out careers and roles that they may not ordinarily explore.
- The resources give equal weight to different career paths, and encourage students to pursue the right option(s) for them. They are also exposed to different careers via the weekly feedback, which often comes from industry experts working in sectors such as food manufacture, climate policy, and the police.
- Debate and discussion is of course intrinsic to VotesforSchools, but so too is the information and insights with which students are equipped. The sessions highlight the importance of seeking reliable information and having an openness to new perspectives when discussing challenging topics - everyone in the classroom reaps the benefits when these two guiding principles are followed. These principles can then be applied by students throughout their lives, such as in their further education or in their careers.
- The VoteDiary allows students to think about transferable skills and learning gained from participating in VotesforSchools.

**“How does the school help pupils to become active citizens, both in school and in wider society? What is participation in these activities like?”**

Participation in VotesforSchools is expected and required of students when a school subscribes. The platform is educating students about their world and communities, as well as consistently asking them how they can make a difference.

# VOTESFORSCHOOLS SUPPORTING DELIVERY OF THE PREVENT DUTY

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**“Pupils should develop questioning skills and techniques to open debate in a safe way.”**

VotesforSchools is working to develop these skills in every student. Through outstanding content with diverse activities, students are gaining skills of communication and critical thinking. The content also provides staff with materials to ensure the topic engages all students in the discussion in a safe and balanced way.

**“Pupils should feel confident to discuss honestly a plurality of views.”**

The weekly debate allows this to happen within the classroom; alongside the debate itself, students can vote on how they feel. The content is unbiased and objective – all debates are displayed as multidimensional, with information and opinions clearly laid out and explained.

**“Schools should allow pupils to debate fundamental moral and human rights principles.”**

This is exactly why VotesforSchools was set up: the educators who develop the resources all agree that students should be able to engage in moral debates and this should not be governed by whether they have a facilitator in their classroom who believes in that too.

The package is whole-school, so every young person gets the opportunity to have these conversations. The approach to every

debate is youth-focused, so while VoteTopic questions may seem “light-hearted”, this is used to help capture students’ attention before they discuss the issue in more depth.

**“Give pupils a safe place to respond to current events that will challenge their beliefs.”**

VotesforSchools works on a weekly basis, which allows the resources to respond to current events (both national and international). The resources are developed at the beginning of the week and are released on Fridays for teaching the following week. This ensures schools are equipped to discuss current events as they are unfolding, but in a calm and thoughtful manner.

**“Pupils can influence and participate in decision-making on issues affecting them in their society.”**

VotesforSchools gives young people the chance to have a voice on issues that go beyond the classroom. A weekly vote is used to make an impact on policy change, institutional reform and to contribute to research.

In addition, every week students are told how their voices and votes are making a difference. The assemblies and lessons also frequently provide ideas about how students can influence their schools and local communities in a creative and youth-focused way.

**“Demonstrate that your school can provide a safe place to discuss and debate topical and controversial issues affecting young people.”**

VotesforSchools enables any member of the school community, including support staff, to facilitate a debate on a weekly issue. The topic is aligned to the news agenda or to national events, such as Black History Month or Safer Internet Day. The content is unbiased

and objective, going through thorough quality-assurance checks to guarantee it is appropriate and accurate for students.

*This is also supported by the additional resource packages provided by VotesforSchools that focus specifically on PSHE and RSE & Health Education. These can be found on the VotesforSchools platform.*

**“Pupils should know how to challenge extremist narratives and promote universal rights.”**

The weekly Curriculum Guides map the topics to the UNCRC and to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)\*, as well as to our own 9 Key Themes\* that include Equalities & Identity, Global Issues & Politics and Crime, Justice & Extremism.

*\*For more on this, please see VotesforSchools' UNCRC & UN SDGs document.*

*\*\*For more on this, please see VotesforSchools' 9 Key Themes document.*

**“Pupils can express their views and appreciate the impact their views can have on others.”**

Through well-researched content, the lessons build in various opportunities for students to express how they feel about the topic.

Alongside this, a VoteDiary (provided when schools sign up) allows students to self-assess their development in critical thinking, oracy and listening skills. They can also leave comments when voting, and this platform is particularly valuable for those who are less able to vocalise their views in the classroom. These comments are monitored by the VotesforSchools team and later shared on the weekly feedback slides for students around the country to see.

**“Pupils can discuss terrorism and the wider use of violence in a considered and informed way.”**

Using VotesforSchools gives any member of staff the opportunity to discuss terrorism and extremism (as well as other moral and ethical issues) in a coherent and clear way. It allows teachers to feel

confident to discuss the topic without any prior understanding. The most important factor for schools is that VotesforSchools allows for consistent and quality conversation on these topics. The weekly resources ensure the discussions are appropriate and that staff remain objective on these topics throughout the session.

*This is also supported by the additional resource packages provided by VotesforSchools that focus specifically on PSHE and RSE & Health Education. These can be found on the VotesforSchools platform.*

### **“Schools can facilitate understanding of wider societal issues and how we can exercise democracy to influence change.”**

VotesforSchools allows staff to facilitate discussions on subject areas that are relevant to students. VotesforSchools provides an interactive way of building an understanding of the world they live in and promotes further (ideally lifelong) engagement. It also allows students to participate in democratic practices on a weekly basis, thereby developing a respect for voting and making their voice heard.

### **“Pupils should be given the platform to challenge Islamophobia, antisemitism and other prejudices.”**

VotesforSchools regularly introduces debates and discussions on issues of discrimination and prejudice. The ability to challenge all types of prejudice in a calm and considered manner allows students to feel more confident to initiate discussion with those who have differing (or prejudiced) views. The skills developed are transferable to a range of other issues, such as drugs, exploitation and gender-based discrimination or violence.

*This is also supported by the additional resource packages provided by VotesforSchools that focus specifically on PSHE and RSE & Health Education. These can be found on the VotesforSchools platform.*

**“Pupils should use safe-to-learn anti-bullying strategies to minimise hate- and prejudice-based bullying.”**

Specific topics on anti-bullying strategies and hate crime allow students to openly discuss these issues and develop strategies to combat them, both on a personal and institutional level. Each week, students are encouraged to challenge prejudice in its various forms or to consider why people hold different views. The modelling of debate and discussion encourages conflict resolution through effective and considered communication.

*This is also supported by the additional resource packages provided by VotesforSchools that focus specifically on PSHE and RSE & Health Education. These can be found on the VotesforSchools platform.*

# OTHER CURRICULUM AREAS SUPPORTED BY VOTESFORSCHOOLS

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*Below are links to information about other areas of the curriculum that VotesforSchools supports (England only).*

## CURRICULUM GUIDE CRITERIA

- [SMSC, British Values & Prevent](#)
- [UNCRC & UN SDGs](#)
- [VotesforSchools' 9 Key Themes](#)

## CURRICULUM OVERVIEWS

- [VotesforSchools & Primary PSHE and RSE & Health Education Guidance](#)
- [VotesforSchools & Secondary PSHE and RSE & Health Education Guidance](#)

*Below are links to information about how VotesforSchools can support you with inspections and/or audits (England only).*

## INSPECTION GUIDANCE

- [VotesforSchools & Inspection Bodies](#)

## POLICY GUIDANCE

- [Political Impartiality in Schools](#)
- [LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Schools](#)
- [SEND Accessibility & Inclusion in Schools](#)

## EXTRACURRICULAR GUIDANCE

- [VotesforSchools & Unicef's Rights Respecting Schools Award](#)