

Inspection: How does using VotesforSchools support your duty to prevent students being drawn into extremism?

“From 1 July 2015 all schools, registered early years childcare providers and registered later years childcare providers are subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, in the exercise of their functions, to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. Schools and childcare providers can also build pupils’ resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British Values and enabling them to challenge extremist views. It is important to emphasise that the Prevent duty is not intended to stop pupils debating controversial issues. On the contrary, schools should provide a safe space in which children, young people and staff can understand the risks associated with terrorism and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge extremist arguments”.

Department for Education (DfE) Guidance

At the heart of our work is our understanding of the need to be able to demonstrate to external partners how VotesforSchools supports the requirements set by The Prevent Duty. The detailed table on the following pages gives examples of how we support our schools.



Be informed.



Be curious.



Be heard.



Criteria	VotesforSchools commentary
Voters should develop questioning skills and techniques to open debate in a safe way	VotesforSchools is working to develop these skills in every voter. Through outstanding content with diverse activities, voters are gaining skills of communication and critical thinking. The content also provides the teacher with materials to ensure the topic engages the whole class in the discussion in a safe and balanced way.
Voters should feel confident to discuss honestly a plurality of views	The weekly debate allows this to happen within the classroom; alongside the debate itself, voters can have a say on how they feel. The content is unbiased and objective – we always ensure that both sides of any debate are clearly laid out and understood.
Schools should allow voters to debate fundamental moral and human rights principles	This is exactly why VotesforSchools was set up: as teachers ourselves, we all agree that voters should be able to engage in moral debates and this should not be governed by whether they have a teacher who believes in that too. The package is whole-school, so every young person gets the opportunity to have these conversations. Our approach to this debate is youth-focused, so while the questions may often seem “light-hearted”, this is used to help capture their attention before discussing the topic in more depth. A good example of this is “Are the days of cash numbered?”, which gave voters the chance to think about the potential implications for communities if we shift to a cash-free world.
Give voters a safe place to respond to current events that will challenge their beliefs	VotesforSchools works on a weekly basis, which allows us to respond to current events (both national and international). The resources are developed at the beginning of the week and are released on our website on Fridays for teaching the following week. This ensures our schools are equipped to discuss current events as they are unfolding, but also doing so in a calm and thoughtful manner.



Be informed.



Be curious.



Be heard.



Voters can influence and participate in decision-making on issues affecting them in their society	VotesforSchools gives children and young people the chance to have a voice on issues that go beyond the classroom. A weekly vote is used to make impact on policy change, institutional reform and to contribute to research, and voters are told every week how their vote is making a difference. The assemblies and lessons also frequently provide ideas about how voters 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 Anti-Bullying Week or Black History Month. The content is unbiased and objective, going through quality-assurance checks to guarantee it is appropriate and accurate for voters.
Voters should know how to challenge extremist narratives and promote universal rights	VotesforSchools has worked closely with UNICEF in the past to create topics that promote the UNCRC, and frequently consult other organisations to cover issues that relate to human rights, particularly those of children and young people. The weekly Curriculum Guides map the topics to the UNCRC and to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
Voters 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 voters to express how they feel about the topic. Alongside this, a VoteDiary (which is provided when schools sign up) allows voters 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 feedback slide for voters around the country to see.



Be informed.



Be curious.



Be heard.



Voters can discuss terrorism and the wider use of violence in a considered and informed way	Using VotesforSchools gives any teacher 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 teachers remain objective on these topics throughout the session.
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 voters. Using VotesforSchools allows them to develop their understanding of the world they live in as part of an interactive and engaging way. It also allows them to participate in democratic practises on a weekly basis, developing an understanding of the importance of voting and making your voice heard.
Voters should be given the platform to challenge Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and other prejudices	VotesforSchools regularly engages in debate and discussion on all discrimination- and prejudice-based issues. The ability to challenge all types of prejudice in a calm and considered manner allows voters to feel more confident in opening up discussion with those who have differing (or prejudiced) views. The skills developed are transferable to a range of other issues, such as drugs, exploitation, gender-based discrimination and much more. Specific examples include: “Has lockdown made online platforms more dangerous?” and “Is involvement with a criminal gang always a choice?”



Be informed.



Be curious.




Be heard.



Voters 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 voters to openly discuss these issues and develop strategies to combat them, both on a personal and institutional level. Each week, voters 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.

 **Please Note:** See overleaf for endorsements from a range of teachers, experts, and policymakers about our Prevent coverage.



Be informed.



Be curious.



Be heard.



Endorsements from the VotesforSchools community

✔ *"Just a quick email to say thanks for yesterday. It was a real highlight of my career to have you all in and the outcomes were educational gold. We have already received three emails from parents full of praise for the day and how it kick-started conversations around the dinner table."*

Deputy Headteacher – Turing House School

✔ *"Leaders ensure that pupils develop an understanding of democracy, respect and other modern British Values. Pupils regularly vote on different themes to express an opinion. For example, during the recent presidential election in the United States pupils considered the quandary of 'Should celebrities become politicians?' Such debate enables pupils to express their views respectfully and have their voices heard."*

Ofsted Inspection report – The Ashwood Academy

✔ *"Thank you for letting me be involved with VotesforSchools, I'm a firm believer of such engagement is the way forward to Prevent Extremism in all its forms."*

Hanif Qadar – CEO of Active Change Foundation

✔ *"VotesforSchools is a great tool to get young people discussing contemporary issues in an informed way. It is an intuitive and creative platform that facilitates whole school discussion and debate whilst also meeting SMSC and Citizenship requirements. The team at VotesforSchools are very supportive and incorporate feedback into their product development so that it meets the changing needs of schools and young people today."*

Bhawani Daniel – Acland Burghley School



Be informed.



Be curious.



Be heard.



☑ *“One of the biggest challenges faced today by Global Democracies, and it is an existential challenge, is the ability of our population to think critically for themselves, to hear what others say, and to judge their arguments impartially. VotesForSchools provides one of the most practical and excellent resources for teachers throughout the UK to empower the students they teach to do just that. To think critically, impartially and in a balanced way. We are so pleased to have been able to introduce this invaluable resource to the schools we support.”*

Nigel Cohen – Values Based Education

☑ *“Votes for Schools is about highlighting topics that influence our daily lives and leads to an understanding for young people that everyone can have a real voice. For teachers, all curriculum areas are enhanced through the debate provided by this innovative and inclusive resource.”*

Dame Anna Hassan, DBE



Be informed.



Be curious.



Be heard.