

Lesson Plan: Local Politics



Aim

- To engage children in the local politics of their community through an understanding of what is meant by local politics and by distinguishing between the role of the government and the role of a local council.

Objectives

- To research the local council and understand what services a council provides and what a councillor does.
- To consider some of the local problems and issues, and discuss who could help with them.

Additional Resources

- 'What do we mean by Politics?' infosheet



CSV Make a Difference Day 2011

Don't forget to register your chosen project with the CSV team, and we can send you a free Action Pack with T shirts, certificates, balloons, stickers and posters!

Just go to www.csv.org.uk/difference or call 0800 284533.

Suggested Teaching Method

1. What do we mean by 'politics'?

Ask students to brainstorm in regard to everything they can think of linked to politics. Read through the '**What do we mean by Politics?**' infosheet as a class.

2. What does our local council do?

In small groups or pairs, ask students to research the local council by visiting the local council website. They should find out the type of services that are provided and what they are responsible for, who the local councillors are and what they do, how people can get in touch with local councillors and what the councillors can do for the people living in their area. They should also find out what services are provided for young people and whether young people can get involved in any way with their council. Using the information they have found, they should create a leaflet outlining what the council does and how young people can get involved. They need to ensure the leaflet attracts young people and is clear and easy to understand.

3. Should young people be directly involved in local politics?

Go to: www.binvolved.org.uk

Find out about the role of the Lewisham Young Mayor and the Young Advisors. Ask students whether they think it's important for young people to be involved in local politics in this way and the decisions that are made. Why? Why not? What do they think of initiatives such as the young mayor and youth councils?

4. What's it like in my area?

In small groups students brainstorm what their area is like. Ask them to include features such as places to go, things to do, behaviour of others and descriptions of what their area looks like. Each idea should be written onto a post it and stuck around a large sheet of paper with 'Our area' written in a cloud in the middle. They repeat this for 'Our school'.

5. What are the problems in our area?

In the same groups, ask them to now sort their ideas under two headings; 'This is a problem' and 'This is not a problem'. They need to think in terms of what they think of these features within their local area. For example, toilets, playground, school dinners, parks, leisure centres, safe road crossings, transport, play areas, youth clubs, after school clubs, graffiti, litter etc. They can then repeat this for their school.

6. What do I like / dislike about my area?

Give students four 'post it' notes each. They need to think of one thing they like about their school and one thing they like about their local area. Then they need to repeat this but with things they don't like. They can include features that aren't on the original brainstorm. The 'post it's' can be stuck onto a wall or large sheets of paper.

7. Can the problems be solved?

Brainstorm (record all answers on flipchart / board) the following:

- Who might be able to solve the problems?
- Could young people do it? How?

Who would they ask for help? Where would they look for help? Try to record the first things that come into their heads. Once a list is up ask which one they think is the best place / person to go to for help with improving / changing something in the local area or school. Rank their ideas in order of importance to them.

8. Planning action

As a group, a problem area should be chosen, such as the local park or local transport. A vote can be taken on what issue should be chosen.

- Using paper and pencils, students individually map their local park and highlight / label the problems in the park. If something within school is chosen then they could visit the relevant area in order to construct their initial maps.
- They then begin to think about their ideal park and brainstorm what this might look like and what features it will have. They can list or draw a mind map to show their ideas. This could include people's behaviour, eg., that people pick up litter. They share their brainstorms with a larger group and begin to incorporate others ideas into their own, to create a larger picture of what all the students think and feel about the park (the park is only used as an example here).
- Who could help them actually turn their ideas into reality? Where might these people be found? How can they share their ideas with them?
- Ask who else might need to be involved in planning changes? Who else uses the park / playground etc? How might this affect their ideas about an ideal park / playground? How could they involve these other members of the community in their ideas?
- This activity could lead on to students taking action or starting a campaign to improve the issue they have selected.

9. What if change is not achieved?

Explain that even when action is taken to raise awareness about an issue, it does not always lead to the desired result. However, it does show that people are concerned about an issue so could lead to results in the future and also gets people talking about it. Ask students how they think this could help their cause? Use the case studies showing young people making changes to inspire the students to act.

Volunteering Ideas

Start a campaign to achieve change in school or the wider community.

Campaign ideas: campaign, for example, for a local skate park and hold a rally for CSV Make a Difference Day!

- Start a school council to address changes for your school. Hold your first meeting on CSV Make a Difference Day!
- Organise any CSV Make a Difference Day activity you like and invite your local MP/councillor to visit. You can then use the opportunity to talk through issues that you care about.

Once your class has thought about a project for **CSV Make a Difference Day**, register it online at www.csv.org.uk/difference or call freephone **0800 284533**.

The team will then send you a free Action Pack with certificates for the students, balloons, posters, stickers, T shirts and tabards.

Additional Resource:

Local Politics



What do we mean by 'Politics'?

Power and Decisions

Politics is about power and decisions about how the power is used.

For example, the Prime Minister is given the power to make decisions about how the country should be run. These decisions include things such as whether the country should go to war, what should be taught in schools and what sort of laws might be needed.

The Prime Minister doesn't make these decisions by himself but with the help of his government, consisting of Ministers and MPs (Members of Parliament). MPs are voted for by the people in the country and are there to represent the views and opinions of the people in order to ensure that the decisions being made are what the people want. If the government gets it wrong, they might not be selected again in the next general election.

When it comes to decisions about local areas, such as whether a new leisure centre is needed in a town, this is left to councils to decide. Local councils are voted for by the people of a specific area. They represent the local population and ensure the area and its resources are properly managed. Local councils are important as different areas have different needs and types of people living in them.

Summary

The Prime Minister and government make decisions about things that affect the whole country such as whether the country should go to war or how much needs to be spent on hospitals.

Local councils make decisions about local areas such as when dustbins will be collected and what type of leisure facilities are needed.