



What can teachers say and do during a General Election?



Under the Education Act 1996, schools have a legal duty to prohibit the promotion of partisan political views and should take steps to ensure the balanced presentation of opposing views on political issues when they are brought to the attention of pupils. These duties extend into Part Two of the Teachers' Standards which relates to personal and professional conduct both within and outside of school.

Crucially within this context, teachers are expected to uphold the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. They also must ensure that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.

Guidance from the DfE states these legal duties shouldn't mean that that schools avoid teaching about political issues but rather that a reasonable and proportionate regard should be given to them.

But what does this mean in a practical sense?

Here are some common questions answered.

Can I tell pupils who I am voting for if they ask?

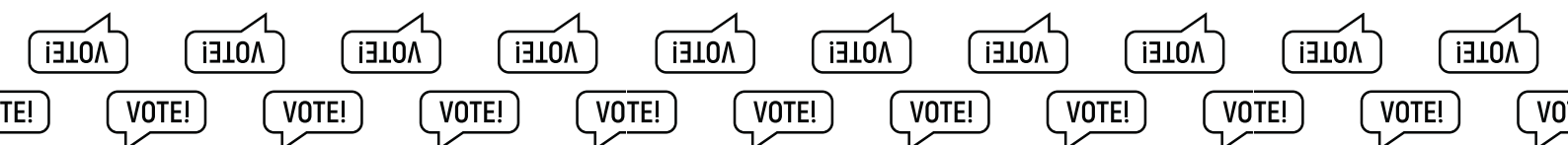
There is no prohibition on expressing your own view on political issues. However, DfE guidance states that *"as a general principle they should avoid expressing their own personal political views to pupils unless they are confident this will not amount to promoting that view to pupils."* Where staff do choose to share their views on political issues they should ensure that this is not presented as fact but note that there are opposing views and present these in a balanced manner.

Can I give my individual views on education policy or other issues?

Yes. Again there is nothing expressly preventing this but consideration should be given to how you are presenting your views and providing balance as to what other perspectives say. For example, a view on increasing school funding could be presented within the context of others having views on prioritising spending in other areas e.g. health, defence, social care etc. The safest option here however is to reverse the question back to pupils and ask about their views and how they have come to reach them.

Can I call out mis/disinformation?

Yes. Providing a balance of views does not mean teaching about unsubstantiated views or theories and as part of their general curriculum schools may have taught pupils how to be critical of knowledge claims. In the context of a general election, teachers may want to remind pupils of the general principles in which they can evaluate these claims. Some claims will be easier to refute than others whilst some claims and theories are still hotly debated academic subjects e.g. schools of economic thought.



Can I campaign for a political candidate?

Yes. Teachers and school staff are free to campaign for political parties and even stand for election if they are chosen. However, political campaigning should not take place in school and should be at the individual's own expense e.g. don't use the school photocopier for political leaflets! Schools should be conscious of the fact that in some instances staff behaviour outside school may become visible to pupils, particularly when social media is used. Most schools will already have policies and advice in place to protect staff and pupils from these risks, and it is important these are applied with sensitivity to political activity.



Can we invite local candidates into our school?

Yes. This is a common practice but try to ensure you get a range of views and in the event of only having a limited number of candidates, ensure that you have briefed them appropriately about the legal duties of schools so that they can pitch their ideas in a more nuanced manner. Where you are concerned about the potential conduct of local candidates, it may be better to avoid a direct interaction with pupils.

Can I take time off to cast my vote?

There is no entitlement to miss school in order to cast your vote. Polling stations are open from 7am to 10pm so there should be time to vote either before or after school depending on your individual circumstances. You can also choose to submit a postal vote or have a proxy vote for you. If you do want to vote, [make sure you have registered by the deadline of 18th June](#) if you are not already registered.

Can we hold mock elections?



Yes although these should be pupil-led without teachers being seen to be campaigning on political issues. It is important to ensure that any activities are age appropriate too and consider how you may address more controversial issues. The legal duties referred to above can help to set the boundaries of what is appropriate within a school context if you find some pupils trying to promote more extreme views. You may find these resources from the [UK Parliament](#) and the [Hansard Society](#) as a useful starting point. Mock elections can provide a useful opportunity for pupils to expend their political energy and engagement in a structured manner.

