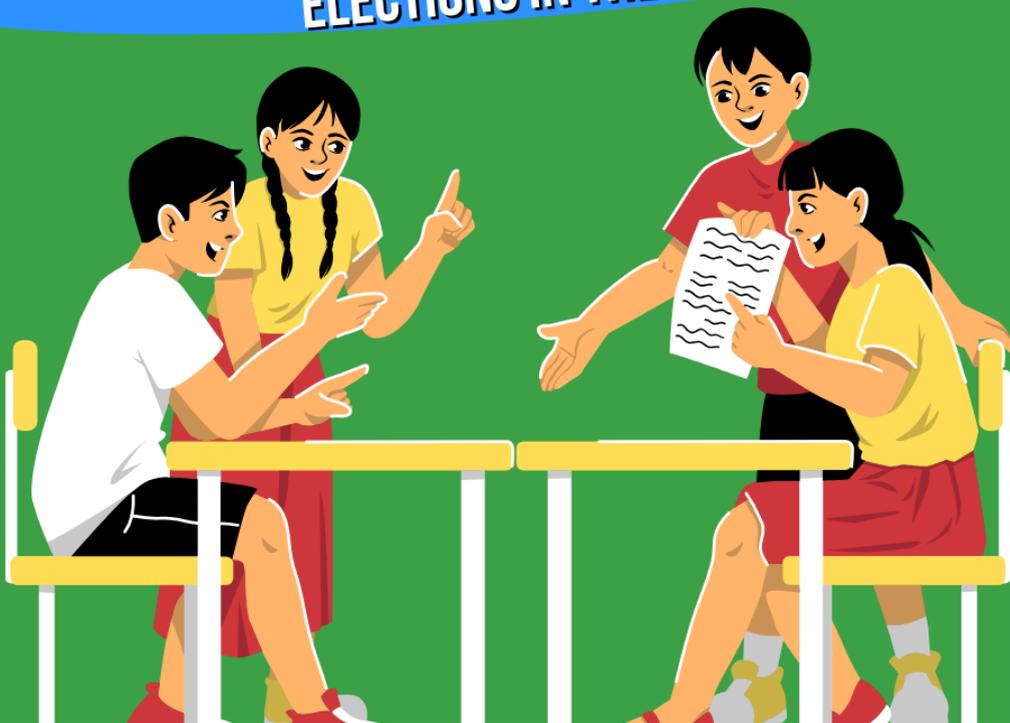BIG DEBATE CLUB

Smart School Councils

DEBATE PACK

Are you passionate about sharpening your critical thinking and speaking skills?

SHOULD WE CHANGE HOW WE VOTE IN ELECTIONS IN THE UK?

How to Use this Debate Pack

Whether you have just a few minutes or a full lesson, this Debate Pack has got you covered. Check out the Certificates at the end too.

How to find the debate video and send to teachers

1. Log in to the [Smart School Councils platform](#) using your school details.
2. Click on the blue Class Meeting Tool button in the dashboard.
3. Click on 'Next Meeting' at the top of the page.
4. To get started, click on 'click here' to browse existing questions and options.
5. If the debate topic is part of this week's question, it will appear there. Otherwise, click 'Search All' and type in the debate topic you're looking for.

Got five minutes?

Play the debate video straight through and dive right into the debate. No need to pause at the prompts. It's a quick, engaging way to get your students thinking.

Got 10/15 minutes?

Pause at the prompts in the video to explore additional ideas your class might have. Use the additional points or Power Facts if you'd like.

Want to extend to 30 minutes or a full lesson?

Check out the lesson plan and writing tasks below. There is also a full Fact Sheet with amazing further reading if your students want to go deeper on the topic.

What do the icons in the pack mean?

This is what the presenter says on the video

This is a Power Fact to explain or prompt debate that's not in the video

This is an additional debate point that's not in the video

Introduction and Brain Gym Question

Introduction

Welcome to Big Debate Club!

My name is Becky and today we are debating the question…

Should we change how we vote in elections in the UK?

It is Welcome to your Vote Week, so we are celebrating democracy by helping you understand how it works and how to get involved. Today we focus on the most important way to take part - voting. In the UK we have the first past the post voting system, where the person or party with the most votes wins even if more people voted against them. It is simple and creates a single strong government who can make decisions quickly.

However, in the 2024 election, Labour won 63% of the seats with only 34% of the votes which seems un-representative. If we changed to a proportional representation system, the votes would be closer to the amount of seats, meaning it is fairer and more voices are heard. But which would you prefer? You decide.

Brain Gym Question

Before we get started with the debate, I have a question for you…

Which voting system is currently used to elect MPs in the UK general election?
a) Ranked Choice Voting
b) First Past the Post
c) Proportional Representation
d) Single Transferable Vote

A strong majority (like Labour's in 2024) can make it easier to pass laws and govern without prolonged coalition negotiations. While other systems like Ranked Choice or PR involve ranking or party lists, which some argue could confuse voters or complicate elections. *(Source: Wikipedia,* LINK*)*

FOR: We should change how we vote in UK elections

We're going to share reasons for both sides of the debate, then it's up to you to think of the rest!

We can make democracy fairer and more representative

You might be thinking that we could make democracy fairer and more representative. In the 2019 general election, the Liberal Democrats got 11.5% of the national vote but only 1.7% of the seats because we use the first past the post system, where the person with the most votes wins, even if more people voted against them. If we switch to Proportional Representation, seats in Parliament match the number of votes each party gets. For example, if a party wins 20% of the national vote, they get 20% of the seats.

Making change could mean more voices are heard

You could say that making change could mean more voices are heard. Proportional Representation allows smaller parties to gain seats, as they could gain some seats if they gain some votes, meaning Parliament reflects more diverse opinions from voters across the country.

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that we should change how we vote in elections? ⏸

The public are not turning out as much under the current system

The system is simple and easy to access, but the public are not turning out in large numbers for some elections. For instance, turnout at the 2024 general election was *59.7%*, the lowest since 2001, and millions remain unregistered to vote. *(Source: Reuters,* LINK*)*

Many votes do not affect the outcome of the election

Although everyone has a vote and should use it, in the 2024 UK general election, about 74% of votes were 'wasted' (meaning they did not help decide who won a seat) due to the MP receiving many more votes than they needed to win and therefore the extra votes had no impact. *(Source: Make Votes Matter,* LINK*)*

AGAINST: We should not change how we vote in UK elections

Now let's change positions and consider why you might argue that we should not change how we vote in elections in the UK.

Our system makes it simple for everyone

You might think that our current system makes it simple for everyone. First Past the Post is easy to understand - one person, one vote, most votes wins. It's been used for centuries and people know how it works. So why complicate things?

Our systems creates single stable governments

Or you could also say our system creates single stable governments. This system usually leads to one party having a majority, which helps create strong governments. Countries with proportional systems often end up with coalitions, which can be slow to make decisions.

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that we should not change how we vote in elections in the UK? ⏸

There is increasing support for the current system

According to another YouGov survey, support for keeping the current First Past The Post system has risen among some groups, such as Reform UK voters, showing that opinions on change vary depending on circumstances and viewpoint. *(Source: YouGov, LINK)*

Changing the system could create unstable governments

Critics argue that switching systems like proportional representation could produce many parties in parliament and make forming a government harder, possibly leading to unstable coalitions. *(Source: Reddit, LINK)*

FactSheet: Should we change how we vote in UK elections?

Here's six key facts - three on each side - if you'd like to go a little deeper.

We should change how we vote in UK elections

Many votes do not affect the outcome of the election
Although everyone has a vote and should use it, in the 2024 UK general election, about 74% of votes were 'wasted' (meaning they did not help decide who won a seat) due to the MP receiving many more votes than they needed to win and therefore the extra votes had no impact. *(Source: Make Votes Matter,* LINK)

There is public support for a change to the system
According to a YouGov survey, about 45 - 48% of British people preferred proportional representation (PR) over the First Past the Post system we currently use. *(Source: YouGov,* LINK)

The public are not turning out as much under the current system
The system is simple and easy to access, but the public are not turning out in large numbers for some elections. For instance, turnout at the 2024 general election was *59.7%,* the lowest since 2001, and millions remain unregistered to vote. *(Source: Reuters,* LINK)

We should not change how we vote in UK elections

Changing the system could create unstable governments
Critics argue that switching systems like proportional representation could produce many parties in parliament and make forming a government harder, possibly leading to unstable coalitions. (General point from electoral debates and opposition views). *(Source: Reddit,* LINK)

There is increasing support for the current system
According to another YouGov survey, support for keeping the current First Past The Post system has risen among some groups, such as Reform UK voters, showing that opinions on change vary depending on circumstances and viewpoint. *(Source: YouGov,* LINK)

Many factors can influence why people do not turn out
While the public not turning out is a concern under First Past The Post, many factors influence whether people vote (e.g., political engagement or trust in politicians), not just the voting system itself. *(Source: The Guardian,* LINK)

Sentence Starters

POINT

LEMON & HERB: One reason why I (agree/disagree) with this debate is because…

MEDIUM: One point I have for this debate is…

HOT: You could say that…

EVIDENCE

LEMON & HERB: One way I can prove my point is through this example…

MEDIUM: I can show this works through the fact that…

HOT: I know this because…

EXPLANATION

LEMON & HERB: The evidence I have discussed above proves my point as…

MEDIUM: This example proves my point because…

HOT: Therefore, this proves my point as…

LINK

LEMON & HERB: All together, this answers the debate question asked by…

MEDIUM: This point answers the overall question because…

HOT: These ideas answer the debate as…

BIG DEBATE CLUB

Post your debate on social media!

SHARE YOUR VOICE

We shout out the best opinions each week

#BIGDEBATECUB

TWITTER @SSCCTY

INSTAGRAM @SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS

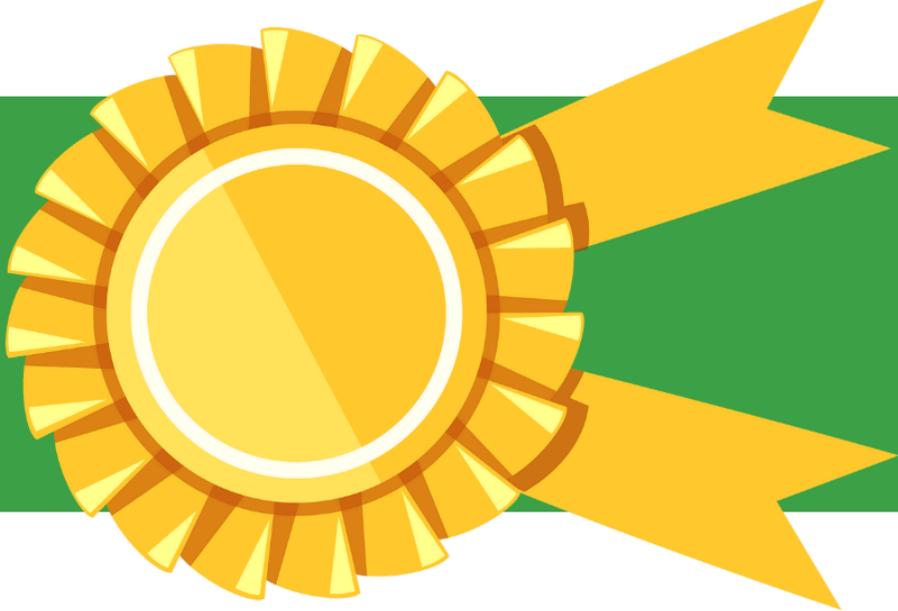**WWW.SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS.ORG.UK**

DEBATER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

For debating fairly, respectively and persuasively. Well done!

Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!

Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils

Smart
School
Councils
Community

CLASS MEETING
LEADER OF THE WEEK

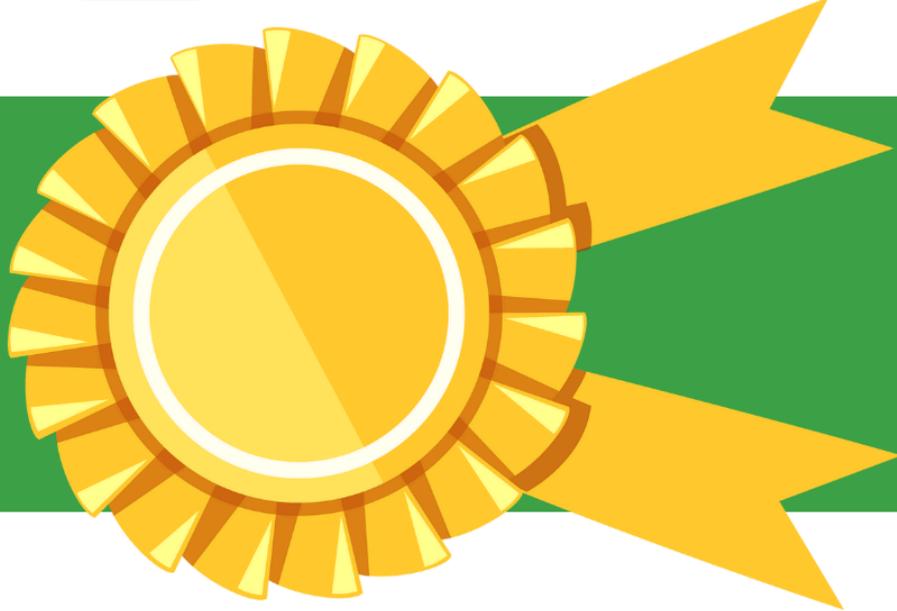We are proud to present this certificate to...

For showing skill and confidence in leading today's Class Meeting.

Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!

Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils

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BEST IDEA
OF THE WEEK
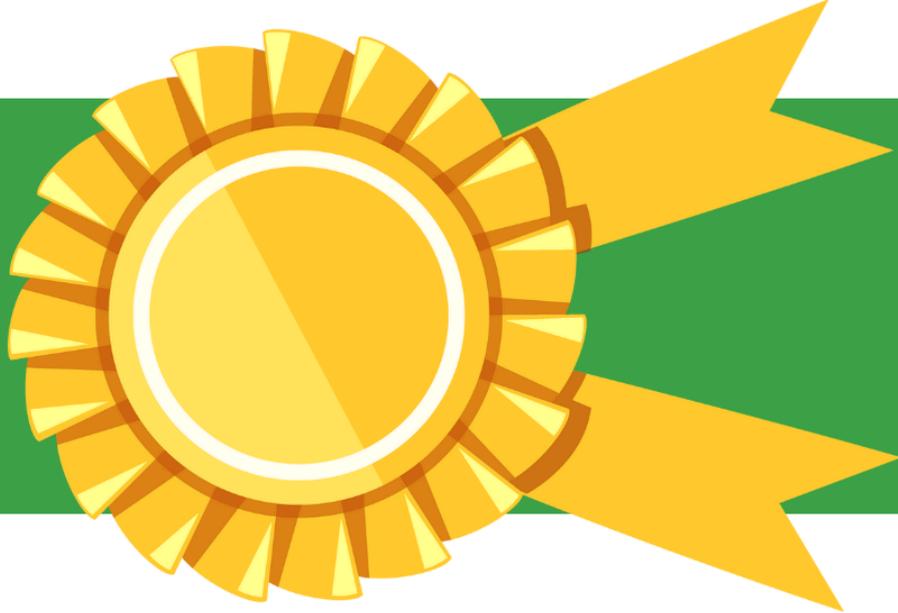
We are proud to present this certificate to...

For speaking up with a great new idea on today's topic. Amazing.

Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!

Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils

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