



Smart School Councils

DEBATE PACK

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

HAS OUR NEW PRIME MINISTER HAD A GOOD START?



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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...

Is a packed itinerary better than a completely free schedule for a summer break?

Welcome to the new year of Big Debate Club! We're so excited to hear your thoughtful ideas as we get started on some new debates for you to decide on. We are adding even more opportunity for interesting debates as every two weeks, you'll get an exciting new debate about something that's happening in the world right now.

This week we are discussing how Andy Burnham became the UK's leader, known as our Prime Minister, in July 2026, after previously leading Manchester as the Mayor of Greater Manchester. As Prime Minister, many people are watching to see whether he can make life better for everyone in the UK and make them feel listened to. So has he made a great start leading us all or has he not made a good start just yet? You decide.

Brain Gym Question

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

Andy Burnham was the Mayor of which English city-region before becoming Prime Minister?

- a. Liverpool City Region
- b. West Midlands
- c. Greater Manchester
- d. West Yorkshire

Andy Burnham was chosen by the community of Makerfield, near Wigan, to represent them and be their Member of Parliament (MP) in June 2026. As an MP, he can be chosen as the Prime Minister, the leader of the country, and was chosen by the Labour Party to be the UK's leader on 16 July 2026. (Source: Gov.UK, [LINK](#))



FOR: Andy Burnham has made a good start as PM

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

The new Prime Minister has brought new hope



You might be thinking that the new prime minister has brought new hope. Making everyone more hopeful through promising to solve big problems is a good thing for the whole country. Burnham said 'a government can fix it if it chooses to, and today, on day one, I'm choosing to' and he wants to make changes, like helping hospitals treat people more quickly and making things like bus fares and household bills cost less, so life is easier for families. Creating hope that positive change will happen is definitely a good start.

Representing different parts of the population is a good start

You could say that listening to and representing people from different parts of the UK is a good start for making fair decisions that are best for everyone. Andy Burnham has chosen to work from the North of England instead of London because he wants people in all parts of the UK to feel heard. He has also chosen lots of people who went to state schools, just like most people in the UK. Supporters say this shows he wants different voices and experiences to help make decisions for the country.

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that our prime minister had a good start? 

He has started talks to fix important issues



On the 24th of July, Burnham held his first talks with major business organisations, including the Federation of Small Businesses, who represent hundreds of thousands of businesses. He asked businesses to work with the government to tackle rising youth unemployment and create more opportunities for young people. (Source: Gov.UK, [LINK](#))

He has made quick changes to those who sleep rough



One of Burnham's first actions as Prime Minister was to launch a national programme aimed at ending people having to sleep rough. The government announced £340 million to help, the most ever offered to help those who need help so they don't have to sleep outside. The programme is expected to provide 1,200 homes and intensive support for at least 3,000 people. (Source: Gov.UK, [LINK](#))



AGAINST: Andy Burnham has not made a good start as PM

Now let's change positions and consider why you might argue that our prime minister, Andy Burnham, has not made a good start.

Lots of positive words but not many positive actions is not good



You might think that lots of positive words but not many positive actions can mean he hasn't made a good start until we see change happening. Although Burnham has told us about his positive and ambitious plans, some people have argued that problems such as helping the NHS, making the North feel heard and helping those struggling with living costs cannot be solved quickly, so although changes sound good, no actual changes have been made just yet.

Can we believe his promises if he might be gone soon?

Or you could also say that Andy Burnham is the 4th prime minister in 5 years, can we believe his promises if he might be gone soon? No matter what promises he makes and how good they sound, is that enough if people don't know if he will have enough time to make the positive changes happen?

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that our new prime minister has not made a good start? 

Many of his biggest promises have not had time to produce results



Burnham has announced ambitious plans including a 10-year plan for Britain, more council homes, changes to education and greater regional powers. However, his first speech said the 10-year plan would be brought forward later in 2026. At the time of the first business talks on 24 July, he had been Prime Minister for only four days. (Source: Gov.UK, [LINK](#))

Some problems are complicated and need a long time to fix



Burnham has promised to end long-term rough sleeping, but the latest available figures show how difficult this challenge is. In December 2025, an estimated 8,010 people were seen sleeping rough over the month in England. This was 7% higher than December 2024. (Source: Gov.UK, [LINK](#))

FactSheet: Has our new prime minister had a good start?



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

He has made a good start

Creating hope can be a good start

Making everyone more hopeful through promising to solve big problems is a good thing for the whole country. Burnham said 'a government can fix it if it chooses to, and today, on day one, I'm choosing to' and he wants to make changes, like helping hospitals treat people more quickly and making things like bus fares and household bills cost less, so life is easier for families. (Source: BBC, [LINK](#))

He has made quick changes to help those people who sleep rough/are unhoused

One of Burnham's first actions as Prime Minister was to launch a national programme aimed at ending people having to sleep rough. The government announced £340 million to help, the most ever offered to help those who need help so they don't have to sleep outside. The programme is expected to provide 1,200 homes and intensive support for at least 3,000 people. (Source: Gov.UK, [LINK](#))

He has started talks to fix important issues like young people not finding jobs

On the 24th of July, Burnham held his first talks with major business organisations, including the Federation of Small Businesses, who represent hundreds of thousands of businesses. He asked businesses to work with the government to tackle rising youth unemployment and create more opportunities for young people. (Source: Gov.UK, [LINK](#))

He has not made a good start

Some of these problems are complicated and will need a long time to fix

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Lots of positive words but not many positive actions

Lots of positive words but not many positive actions can mean he hasn't made a good start until we see change happening. Although Burnham has told us about his positive and ambitious plans, some people have argued that problems such as helping the NHS, making the North feel heard and helping those struggling with living costs cannot be solved quickly, so although changes sound good, no actual changes have been made just yet. (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...





**Post your debate on
social media!**

SHARE YOUR VOICE

We shout out the best opinions each week

#BIGDEBATECUB

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INSTAGRAM @SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS



WWW.SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS.ORG.UK

DEBATER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

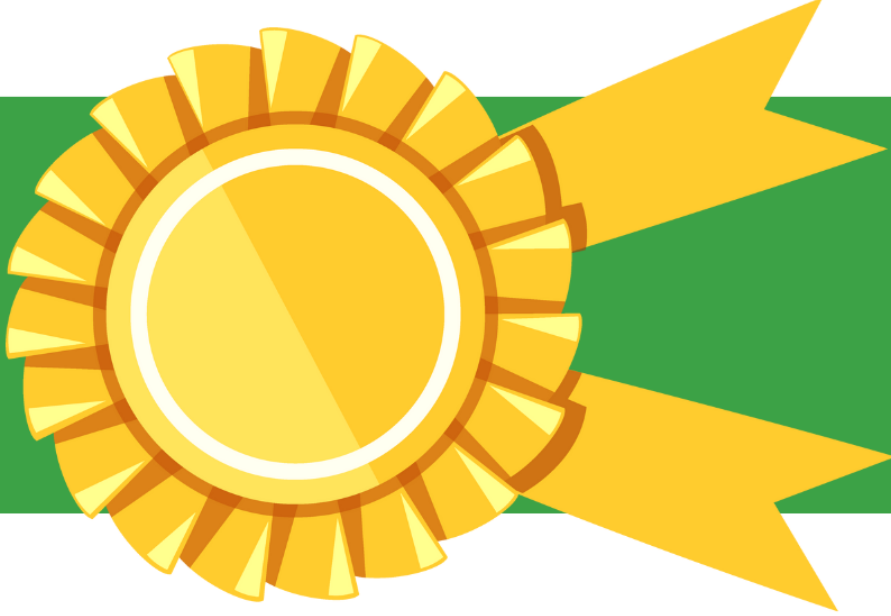
For debating fairly, respectfully and persuasively. Well done!

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



Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils



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CLASS MEETING LEADER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

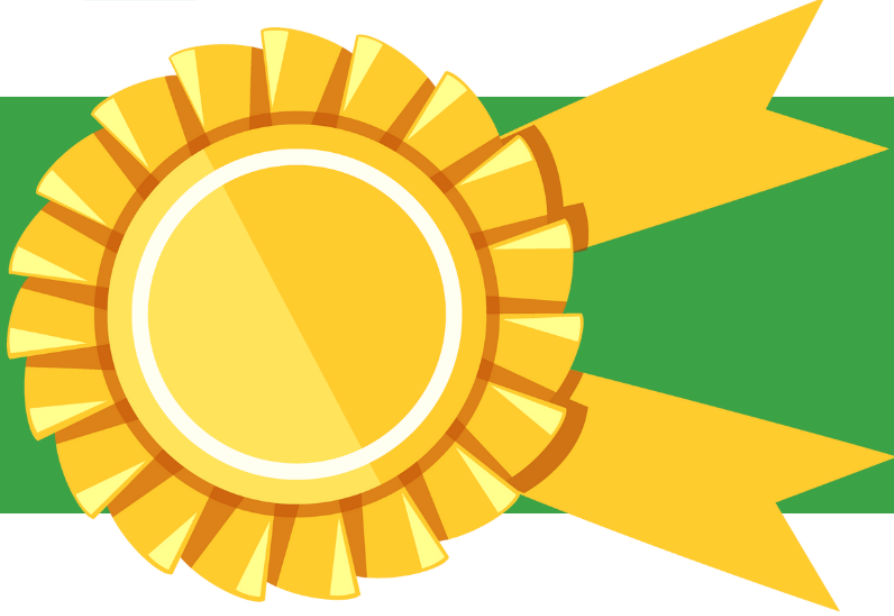
For showing skill and confidence in leading today's Class Meeting.

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...

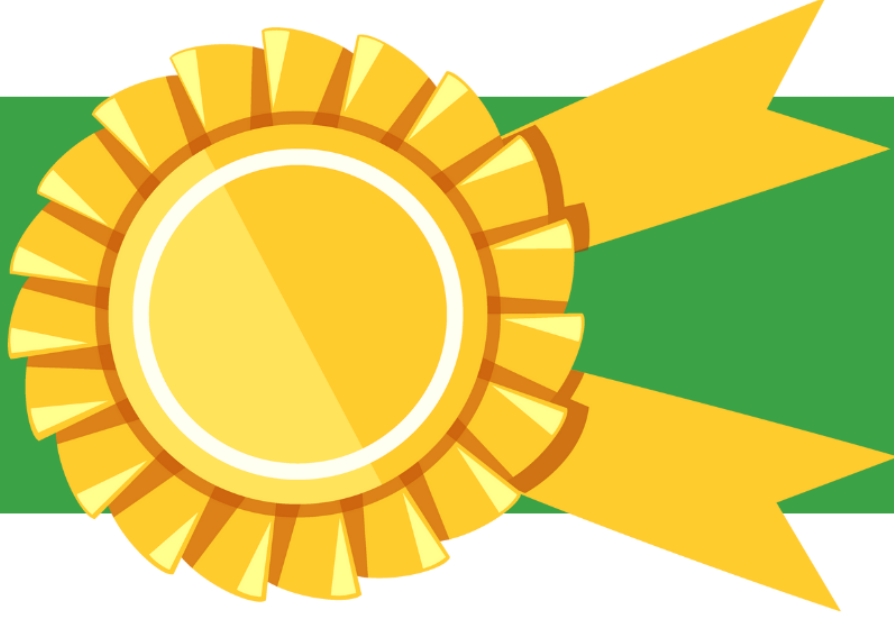
For speaking up with a great new idea on today's topic. Amazing.

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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