



Department  
for Education



## What you need to know about political impartiality in schools

This pamphlet outlines how teachers and staff in schools should consider political impartiality in their work. We have also published full guidance which includes illustrative scenarios and more detail – you can find this on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) by searching ‘political impartiality in schools’.

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Teaching about political issues and the different views held on these is an essential part of a broad and balanced curriculum, and an important way in which schools help pupils to become active citizens who are prepared for life in modern Britain.

Legal duties on political impartiality do not limit the range of political issues and viewpoints schools can and do teach about. Instead, they should help ensure teachers and staff do this in an appropriate manner, building pupils’ ability to form their own views and opinions.

You should always take a reasonable and proportionate approach to political impartiality. This should not interfere with effective teaching and meeting other responsibilities, including promoting shared principles that underpin our society such as tolerance and respect.

It is also important that concerns from parents, carers and others about political impartiality are always treated seriously and handled with sensitivity.

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## The Law

In simple terms, legal duties on political impartiality mean that schools:

- must not promote partisan political views in teaching



This means you must not encourage pupils to support or adopt a one-sided view expressed with a political purpose.

This covers many of the policies of political parties, as well as some views held by campaign groups, lobbyist, charitable organisations and other external agencies.

You can of course teach about partisan political views and explore them with pupils. This will be an important part of teaching about many historical and political issues.

- should offer a balanced presentation of opposing views when political issues are brought to the attention of pupils



This means you should present different views on political issues in a fair and dispassionate way, avoiding bias.

Teachers and staff will need to use their own reasonable judgement when it comes to balance. It is preferable, where practical, to present pupils with a reasonable range of views on a political issue.

This doesn't mean that different views are always given equal time in teaching or cannot be critically assessed. When taking steps to ensure balance you should not do anything that would be clearly inappropriate or undermine effective teaching.

You should also continue to challenge misinformation and extreme views, such as those based on discrimination and prejudice.

You may need to think carefully about what is and is not a political issue. Our full guidance provides more detail on this. Some issues are clearly political, such as those relating to ongoing government activity, whilst other political issues may not relate to government at all.

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## Teaching about political issues

There are some simple steps that you can take to help ensure your teaching is in line with schools' legal duties on political impartiality:



Identify political issues covered in the curriculum in advance, so that you can structure your teaching to ensure balance.



Think about the age, developmental stage, and existing knowledge of pupils, as well as the complexity of political issues covered, to decide whether teaching is age-appropriate and balanced.



Select resources carefully, being mindful of bias and imbalance that might not be immediately obvious. Make sure you review materials and assess the organisations that produced them, before they are used with pupils.

## Using external agencies

It is important to remember duties on political impartiality when working with external agencies. This means thinking carefully about which organisations to work with and being clear about what is expected from them.

Schools can work with organisations that engage in political activity or hold partisan political views, but you should make sure that they do not promote these views to pupils.

You should also take steps to offer pupils a balanced account of the political issues external agencies may cover with them. This might require additional teaching about different views and their contested nature.

You should never work with organisations that adopt extreme political positions, such as encouraging serious criminal activity, or seeking to abolish democracy. More information on external agencies with extreme political positions can be found in our full guidance.

Political impartiality is important beyond the curriculum. All staff have a responsibility to ensure that they act appropriately in terms of their behaviour, the views they express and the use of school resources, at all times.

You can discuss political issues with pupils, and their interest and engagement in these should be encouraged. However, you should not promote partisan political views to them, or encourage them to participate in specific political activity, including protests.

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