

May 2024

Writing to MPs and learning about Parliament

Going to school matters

Thank you for participating in School-Home Support's campaign: Going to school matters. We want every child in school every day by 2050, and you are helping us to achieve that goal.

We want children all over England to send a letter to their new MP after the General Election to share why school matters to them, the challenges that many children face, and to ask for better support for families whose children struggle with attendance.

Lesson pack guide

This lesson pack includes three parts. Feel free to use this as little or as much as you like.

- **(Optional) Part one:** resources to teach your pupils about Parliament, the role of an MP, the General Election, and how to get their voices heard.
- **Part two:** resources for your pupils to write their letter, including an example and a letter template.
- **Part three:** sending the letter. **Monday 15 July to Friday 19 July is letter sending week**, as Parliament will have opened for the first time with the new MPs. Please have the pupils' letters ready to be sent by this week so that all schools send their letters at the same time. Please also fill in our Google Form so we know how many letters have been sent and to whom – a link for which will be sent closer to the time.

About us

School-Home Support is an education charity that works through schools to help families whose children are struggling with school attendance. We work closely with families to understand the underlying causes of high absence, and provide bespoke whole family support to rebuild the bridge between home and school.

Our Going to School Matters campaign is part of our Dig a Little Deeper campaign, which is making the case for more support for schools to work with families on the underlying causes of poor attendance

If you have any questions regarding this campaign or School-Home Support's work, please contact Rachael Powell at rachael.powell@shs.org.uk

(Optional) Part one - Parliament

Learning objective: To learn about the UK Parliament, the role of an MP, and the General Election.

Key words: MP, Government, Parliament, constituency, General Election, Prime Minister, Minister, representative, House of Commons, legislation, political party

Activity one: Discussion about Parliament and MPs

Show the videos under the 'resources' heading and discuss with the class about what the Government, Parliament, and MPs do.

The Government - runs our country (including education, prisons, employment, health, and local services).

Parliament - checks the work of the Government and aims to improve it.

MPs - A Member of Parliament's role is to check the Government's work, and represent their constituency. Half their time is spent in the constituency, listening to their constituents' concerns. The other half is spent in the House of Commons in Parliament. Some MPs are part of the Government, known as Ministers.

General Election - a national vote where people decide who will represent their area (constituency) in the House of Commons and become their MP. Most MPs are part of a political party, and the party with the most MPs form the Government. The next General Election will be on the 4th July 2024.

Resources:

Introduction to Parliament video

▶ Parliament's structure explained (primary)

Introduction to MPs video

▶ What is the House of Commons: A guide for primary school students

General election resource

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/resource/what-is-a-general-election-a-resource-for-children-and-young-people/>

Activity two: Your MP

The MP's main job is to represent the views of the area they represent, known as the constituency. The people living in the constituency are called constituents.

You could show a video of MPs in the House of Commons to give your pupils an idea of what they do.

As we are coming up to a General Election, MPs are now candidates and they are campaigning to win people's vote. After the General Election, there may be a new MP in your constituency. Go on the 'Find your MP' website to find out who is the new MP for the school's constituency after the General Election.

People can get their voices heard through a range of methods. Discuss with your class how people can get their voices heard in Parliament through their MP:

- Voting in a General Election
- Write to an MP
- Meet with an MP during their surgeries
- Become an MP

Resources

Find your MP website <https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP>

Interactive map of constituencies (tick the 'Westminster Constituencies' box)
<https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

Video of Oral Questions for the Department for Education
<https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/21b91923-0e51-46fe-bd67-f2290f32b6e5?in=14:35:28>

Search for other proceedings <https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Search>

Part two: Writing to an MP

Learning objective: To write a persuasive letter to an MP about why going to school matters, why some children struggle to secure good attendance, and ask the MP to campaign for more investment to support families.

Activity one: Brainstorm why going to school matters

On their own or in small groups, have the pupils brainstorm reasons why they think going to school is important. It could include making friends, their favourite

subjects, working towards a dream job, or learning about the world. This will then be used when they write their letters.

Activity two: Brainstorm why some students find going to school challenging

Brainstorm with your pupils to explore the reasons why some students find it more difficult to get to school. Maybe they have problems at home, worry about making friends, feel tired because they don't have a bed, or go to school hungry because they can't afford lunch. Some might not have clean clothes, may worry about their parents, or live far away from school.

Share with your pupils statistics around school absence to show that not all students are able to attend school every day because of different reasons.

Resources

Student absence facts:

- One in five pupils missed 10% of lessons in the 2022/23 academic year, meaning that they missed one lesson every fortnight, which adds up to four school weeks over the year.
- This is double the percentage of pupils who missed 10% of lessons before the pandemic.
- <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england>

Activity three: Writing a letter

Recap with your pupils how to write a letter and what techniques they can use to write persuasively. Then it's time to start writing the letters.

Make sure that your pupils write to their new MP after the General Election. You will be able to find out who they are on the Find your MP website:

<https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP>

There is an example letter and template letter under the 'resources' section. Please feel free to use this as much or as little as you like, but we ask that letters focus on why going to school matters, the difficulties some children face with securing a good attendance, and the need for support.

Resources:

Letter example and template resource is available on our Going to School Matters campaign webpage.

Part three: Next steps

Letter sending week is 15 July to 19 July 2024.

Please send the letters either digitally or physically during this week. Email addresses are found on the 'Find your MP' website. Physical letters should be sent to their Parliamentary address:

MP's name
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

After letter sending week, we will contact you with our form to ask how many letters were sent and to whom, and whether you have any images or copies of the pupils' letters that you are happy to share with us.

Thank you again for participating in our campaign.

Any questions? Please contact us.

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