

What Is Democracy?



Who Rules Britain?



The Queen?



The People?



The Police?



The Army?

What Does Democracy Mean?

We have a system of government called **democracy**.

Democracy means '**rule by the people**'. It comes from the Greek words **Dêmos**, which means people, and **krátos** which means **rule or strength**.

This is because the idea of democracy developed in **Greece** in about 507BC



Watch this video on
democracy:

Video

Ruled By The People?

How Can **Everybody** Rule?

It would be chaos!



What Does Democracy Mean?

We hold an **election** to choose someone to **represent** us.

Most **candidates** who 'stand' for election belong to a political party – a group of people who share similar beliefs.

Together, people who belong to the party agree on changes they will make if they are elected. These are called **policies**.

Can you name any political parties or their leaders?



Main Political Party Leaders



Boris Johnson
Conservatives



Jeremy Corbyn
Labour



Nicola Sturgeon
SNP



Jo Swinson
Liberal Democrats



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Our democracy is a system of government with four **special features**:

Allows people a way of choosing and replacing their representatives through free and fair elections.

Protects the human rights of all citizens.

Depends on laws, which apply equally to all citizens.

Encourages citizens to participate in politics and community life.



Voting

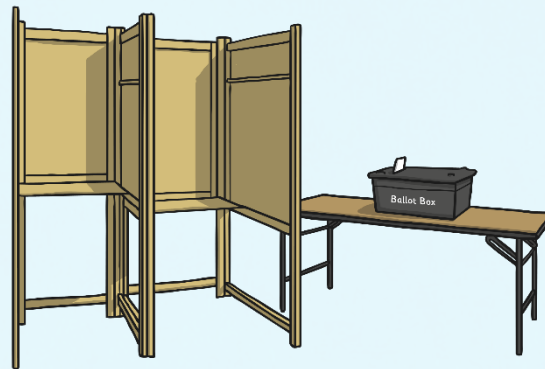
Every citizen should listen to the views of the different parties and candidates, and then make his or her own decision on whom to support.

People must be 18 or over in order to take part in an election.

Each person (voter) **votes** ('casts a ballot') for the candidate of his or her choice. S/he does this by putting a cross beside the person's name on the ballot paper.

People cast their ballots in a booth so that no one can see who they are voting for. This is called 'secret ballot'.





At the end of the election day the votes are added up and the candidate with the highest number of votes (the **majority**) is declared the winner.



Why Do You Think Voting Is Necessary?

Do you think 18 is the right age to allow people to vote? Why?

If not, what age do you think people should be allowed to vote?

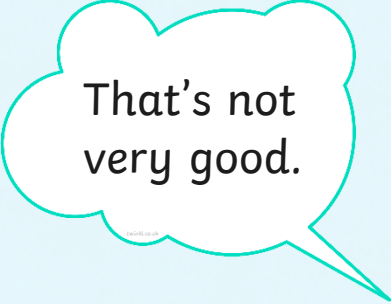
VOTE FOR ONE CANDIDATE ONLY			
1	KHAYUM Adil Khayum 79 Firs Hill Road, Sheffield S5 6HY Labour Party Candidate	 Labour	
2	MACK Joan Dorothy Mack 134 Lydgate Lane, Crookes, Sheffield S10 4LD Green Party	 Green Party	
3	FROST Tom Frost 301 Burnt Stoner Drive, Sheffield S10 6FF Liberal Democrat	 LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	
4	HOYES Sean Hoyes 45 Western Road, Sheffield S10 7BN The Conservative Party Candidate	 Conservatives	

Elected Representatives

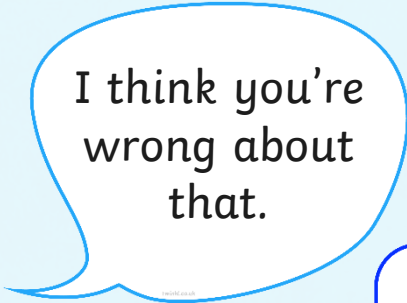
Elected representatives in all forms of government should listen to the people and respond to their needs and suggestions.

People are free to criticise all their elected leaders and representatives, and to look closely at how they govern.

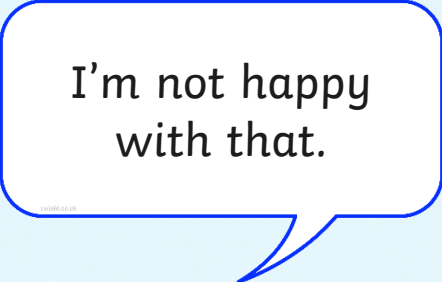
Elected leaders and representatives hold power only temporarily.



That's not very good.



I think you're wrong about that.



I'm not happy with that.



I disagree.

Who Makes The Decisions?

The Prime Minister appoints a '**cabinet**' of about 20 ministers.

Each minister is put in charge of an area of government, e.g. children's issues. One of the most important posts is that of the **Chancellor of the Exchequer**, who decides how the money collected through taxes will be spent.

The cabinet meets with the Prime Minister once a week at his home in 10 Downing Street.



The House of Lords

The House of Lords has 742 members who are appointed, not elected.

Members of the House of Lords **scrutinise** and debate bills which have Passed through the House of Commons, and question government parts they are concerned about.

They can stop a bill from passing into law, although the House of Commons can overrule this after a certain amount of time has passed.

Why is it a good idea to check things through?



The House of Commons

The **House of Commons** is the lower **house** of Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The House of Commons meets in the Palace of Westminster.

The **House** is an elected body consisting of members known as Members of Parliament (MPs).

The UK public elects 650 Members of Parliament (MPs) to represent their interests and concerns in the **House of Commons**.

MPs consider and propose new laws, and can scrutinise government policies by asking ministers questions about current issues either in the **Commons** Chamber or in Committees.



Why Do We Have Laws?

Without laws people would be able to do whatever they wanted to, and might harm others. Laws protect our **rights**, and ensure that we carry out our **responsibilities**.

Most people obey our laws. When people are suspected of breaking the law they are taken to court. If they are found guilty, they are punished.

Sometimes laws seem unfair and need to be changed. Our governments are constantly changing and making new laws.

How Can We Participate in Democracy?

Stand as a candidate.

Attend community meetings.

Join a trade union.

Petition the government.

Join protests and marches

Campaign for a political party or cause.

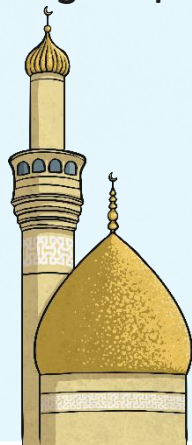


In our democracy, every citizen has certain basic rights

No one can tell you what you must think, believe, say or not say.

Everyone is free to choose their own religion and to worship and practice their religion as they want to.

Every individual has the right to enjoy their own culture, along with other members of their group, even if their group is a minority.



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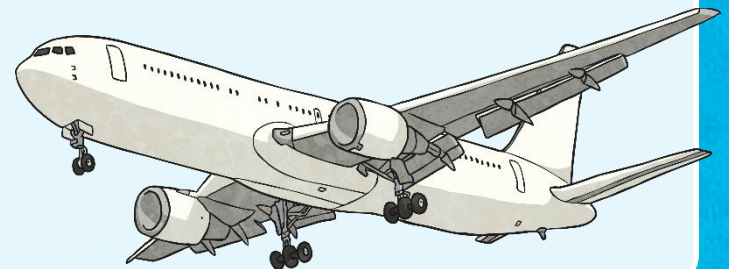
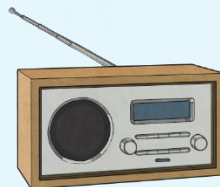
You can read, listen to and watch all kinds of news and opinion in the newspapers, on the radio, and on television.

You have the right to join organisations, including trade unions.

You are free to travel around the country, and to go abroad if you want to.

You have the right to gather with other people, and to protest about what the government is doing.

However everyone must exercise these rights peacefully, with respect for the law and the rights of others.



Our democracy is a system of rule by laws, not by individuals.

The rule of law protects the rights of citizens, maintains order, and limits the power of government.

All citizens are equal under the law. No one may be discriminated against on the basis of their race, religion, ethnic group, or gender. No one is above the law, not even the Queen or the Prime Minister.



3 Elections for 3 Governments!

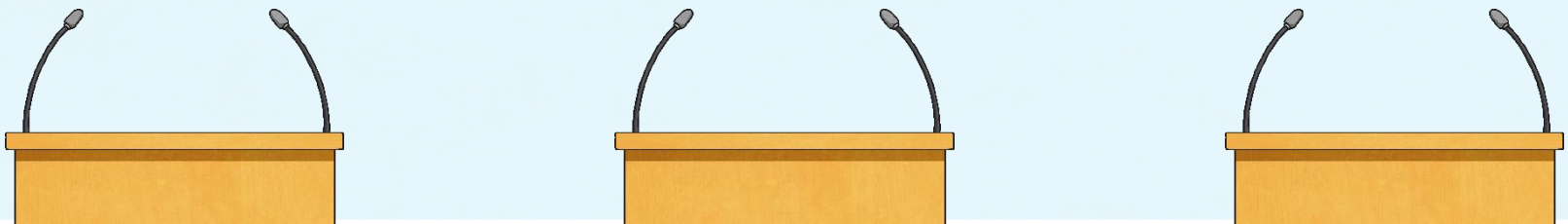
In our democracy, we are given the opportunity to elect representatives in three governments:

Central Government

Local Government

European Parliament

Their job is to talk for us, and fight for the things we want changed or kept as they are.



Central Government

The person we elect for our central government is called a Member of Parliament (or MP for short).

Elections to the House of Commons must take place at least every five years. The exact timing is decided by the leader of the biggest party, the Prime Minister.

Proposals for new laws, or proposals to change an existing law are called bills. Bills are discussed and amended in the House of Commons, and the House of Lords.

When the bill is agreed, the Queen is asked to give her approval (known as Royal Assent). Once Royal Assent is given, a bill becomes an Act of Parliament and is law.

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Central Government is responsible for the welfare of all citizens and protects the most vulnerable in our society.

It looks after national matters, such as health, defence, foreign policy and the environment.

Every four years people are asked to vote for local government representatives called councillors.

Many councils elect a mayor, who chairs (keeps order) in full meetings of the council.

Local Government

Local government (your council) is responsible for:

Roads

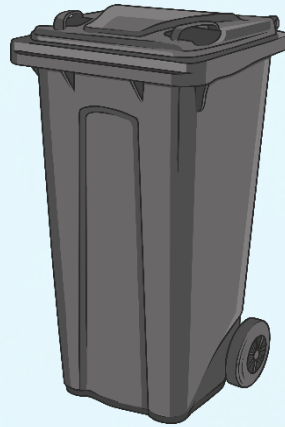
Education

Housing

Policing

The Fire Service

Waste Disposal/Street Cleaning



European Parliament

Every citizen is also entitled to vote, and stand as a candidate, for their representative in the **European Parliament** every five years.

The 785 members of the European Parliament (MEPs) represent more than 490 million people in the 27 European member countries.

It works for the peace and the safety of its citizens, and protects their human rights.

It makes laws which help European citizens find work, and buy and sell their goods.

It encourages the development of the poorest regions, and tackles important environmental issues.







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Children and Democracy

What can you do?

Stand as a candidate and vote in your school council election.

Lobby your councillor and/or MP about local and national issues.

Find out about your rights and responsibilities.

Learn to see the difference between choices that affect you personally and those that affect others.

Improve your skills: for example public speaking.

Keep informed. Watch and read the news regularly.

Glossary

Democracy	Rule by the people
Election	A system of selecting a representative
Representative	Someone chosen to speak for others
Candidate	Contestant
Policy	A written plan
Ballot	Vote
Majority	Most popular
Constituency	District, area
Bill	A proposed law

...Continued

Scrutinise	Examine, check
Welfare	Wellbeing, good
Vulnerable	Weak, at risk
Trade Union	An organisation representing workers
Petition	An appeal showing strength of support
Criticise	Judge, comment on