

THE DEMOCRACY IN SCHOOLS STANDARD





Democracy in Schools Standard™

Giving young people a voice – and listening to it – are clearly ways forward to building a more inclusive, participative and cohesive society. Much publicity is given to possible responses to dealing with antisocial behaviour and extremism of young people, but less is given to successful efforts made by schools and colleges to promote active and responsible citizenship.

Over recent years several reports have indicated the need to prepare better children and young people to participate in democratic processes. Increasingly, schools and colleges are expected to play their part in responding to these reports. Revised National Curriculum specifications and guidelines, along with new inspection requirements reflect this expectation. The Democracy in Schools Standard provides an easy-to-use framework built around providing and recording a number of practical experiences for children and young people.

A set of standards are specified for each of primary and secondary phases of schooling.

For each standard, exemplification materials set out what evidence should be collected to demonstrate the standard has been met, and these are given to school at the point of registration.

Alongside the exemplification material are sheets (electronic) for schools to log their evidence and build up a school-level portfolio in readiness for assessment.

Participating schools are invited to share experiences and resources.

If you want to be part of the re-launch of this project then contact democracy@ecarda.co.uk



There is much discussion on the promotion of British values. Increasing levels of disaffection and disconnection from society are associated with the growth of crime and extremism, particularly amongst the younger generation. Schools are expected to play their part in tackling extremism and help to build a more cohesive society.

At the same time, it is reported that a principle of the Government's foreign policy is to take democracy to troubled areas of the world as a means of empowering and stabilising countries comprised of hitherto disparate and disenfranchised communities.

Perhaps the export of democratic practices has left the home stock depleted!

On the back of the declining voter participation in political elections in the United Kingdom, the Power Inquiry proposed a down-shifting of power: from government to parliament and from parliament to the people. David Cameron, in his speech at the Power Inquiry launch conference argued that institutional and behavioural changes were needed to re-invigorate democracy and that these should be effected at both national and local levels. Though the Electoral Administration Act authorises funding to returning officers for the promotion of elections, a more fundamental response, included in the Power Inquiry recommendations, relates to education about elections.

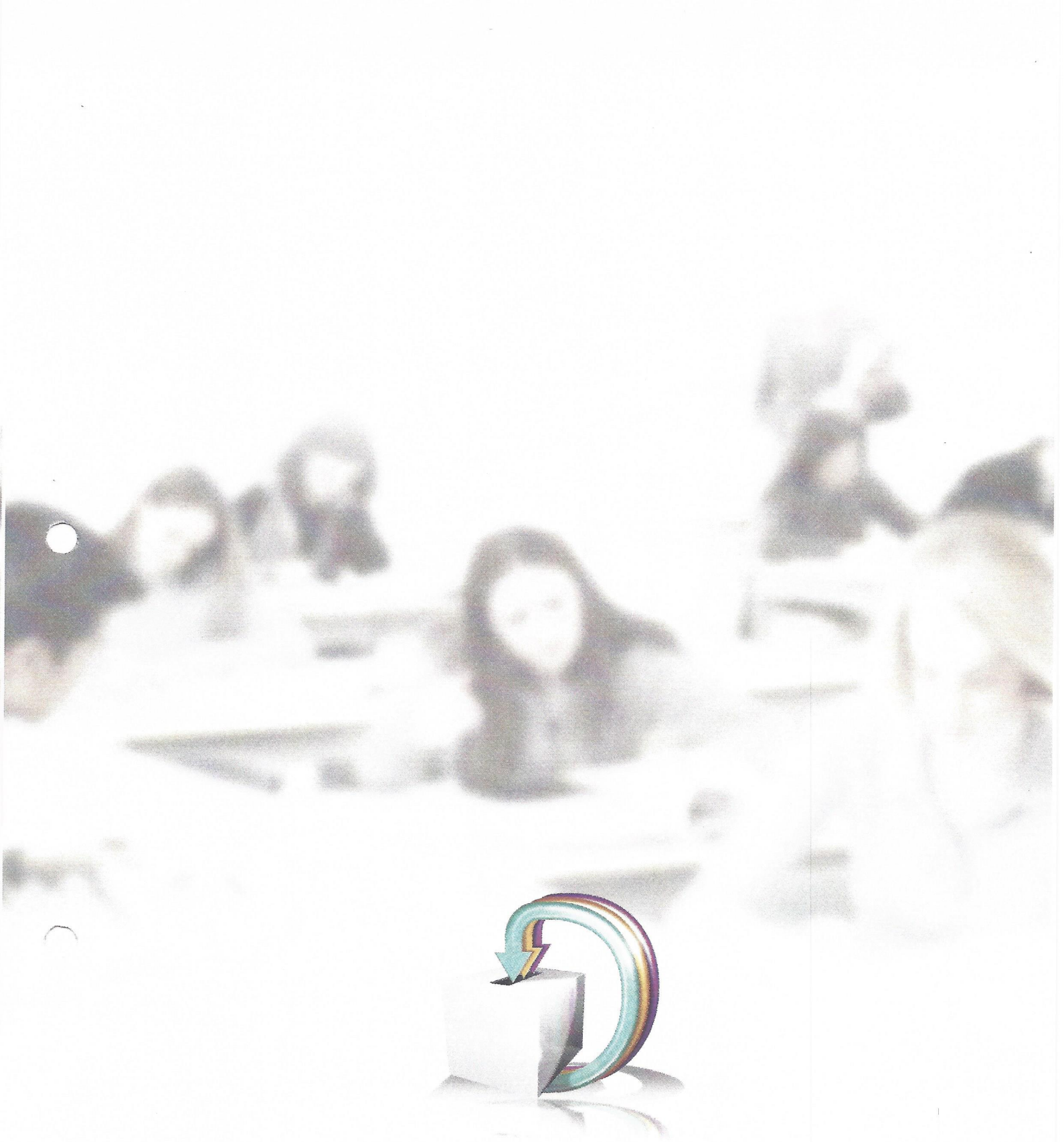
The Democracy in Schools Standard provides a clear set of criteria written in terms of practical democratic experiences for pupils that would underpin their understanding of electoral processes. The standard has the potential to motivate and change practice in schools and colleges without the clutter of changes to the statutory curriculum or qualifications frameworks, nor does it increase the burden of pupil assessment.

Schools who regard this aspect of active citizenship as important will have their commitment acknowledged and achievement recognised.

History shows that the achievement of democracy and universal suffrage is hard won, that their maintenance is precarious and that their practice is fundamental to an inclusive and cohesive society.

Your support for and promotion of this standard will help to ensure that all young people leave school with the understanding and confidence to practise their democratic heritage.

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The Power Inquiry (2006) includes recommendations to stimulate democratic understanding and participation, particularly amongst young people. **(Recommendations 16-18)**

These intentions are echoed in the National Curriculum for Citizenship, which states

"Pupils should be taught what democracy is, and about the basic institutions that support it locally and nationally". (Non-statutory guidelines for Key stage 2)

"Pupils should be given opportunities to participate [for example in the school's decision making process, relating it to democratic structures and processes such as councils, parliaments, government and voting]" (Non-statutory guidelines for Key stage 2)

"Pupils should be taught about the electoral system and the importance of voting."
(National Curriculum - Citizenship Education - Key Stage 3 Programme of Study)

"Pupils should be taught about the importance of playing an active part in the democratic and electoral processes." **(National Curriculum - Citizenship education - Key stage 4 Programme of Study)**

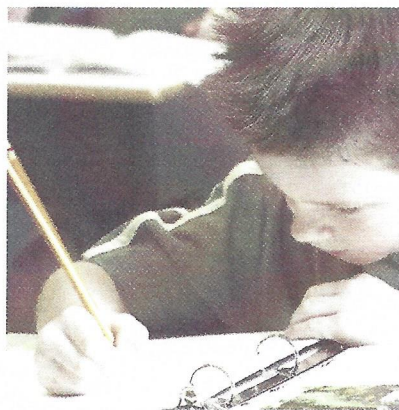
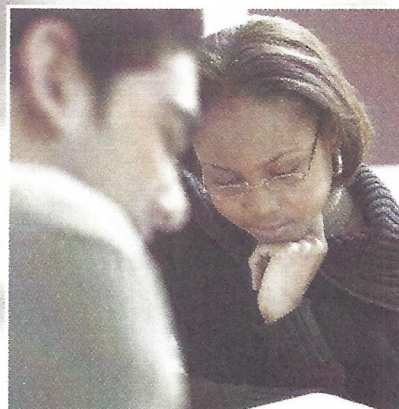
The Green Paper **"Every Child Matters"** that preceded the Children Act (2005) included amongst its key performance measures:

"The percentage of young people in secondary schools participating in school/college or mock elections"
(Every Child Matters - Outcome Area 4 - Indicator 1)

The Every Child Matters outcomes are now incorporated into the current framework for the inspection of schools.

Giving young people a voice - and listening to it - are clearly ways forward to building a more inclusive, participative and cohesive society. Much publicity is given to responses to dealing with antisocial behaviour of young people but less is given to successful efforts made by schools and colleges to promote active and responsible citizenship.

These standards provide a way in which those efforts made by schools to promote democratic engagement may be recognised and celebrated. Furthermore, the achievement of the standards provides robust evidence for the purposes of self-evaluation and external inspection. These standards have been developed in consultation with young people, teachers and staff from Higher Education.



The Standards

By the age of 11 years pupils should have experienced:

Within school

- Participation in elections for their school council representative;
- Different ways of selecting candidates and methods of voting;
- An observation of their school council in formal session;
- A meeting to express their views to at least one of the school governors.

Beyond school

- A discussion at their school with at least one of the ward councillors;
- A visit to the local town hall or seat of local government;
- Discussions on topical local, national and world events;
- A real or simulated visit to a polling station on an election day;
- A video broadcast of their local MP speaking in public;
- A video broadcast or conference link related to the election of their local Member of the Youth Parliament or local youth council representative or youth mayor.

The school should have established:

- A democratically elected and representative school council and a process whereby it meets regularly and has a say on its agenda;
- A school council notice board or section on their website that lists dates of meetings, agenda and minutes;
- A process whereby elected members of the school council can take the views of the pupils they represent;
- A process by which school governors and managers receive and respond to matters brought to their attention by the school council;
- Facilities, opportunities and resources so that elections may be formally and fairly conducted.



The Standards

By the age of 16 years students should have experienced:

Within school or college

- Participation in elections for their student council representative;
- Different ways of selecting candidates;
- Different models of election including first past the post, transferable vote, proportional representation, multi-round;
- An observation of their student council in formal session;
- A meeting to express their views to at least one of the school or college governors.

Beyond school or college

- Participation in elections for their local member of the national Youth Parliament or local youth council representative or youth mayor;
- A real or virtual discussion with their ward councillor, MP and/or MEP;
- A real or virtual visit to a debate and decision-making meeting in their local town hall or seat of local government or track a council decision from report stage, through consultation, to decision;
- Interaction (real or on-line) with local and/or national candidates in the run up to an election (the hustings);
- A mock local, national or European election;
- Discussion on different manifestos;
- A 'formal' debate on a topical issue of local, national or international relevance;
- Filling in an electoral registration form;
- Filling in a ballot paper.

The school or college should have established:

- A democratically elected and representative student council and a process whereby it meets regularly and has a say on its agenda;
- A student council notice board or section on their website that lists dates of meetings, agenda and minutes;
- A process whereby elected members of the student council can take the views of the students they represent;
- A process by which governors and managers receive and respond to matters brought to their attention by the student council;
- A process that allows and encourages students to stand as candidates for election to area-wide or national assemblies, for example, a local Young People's Forum or the Youth Parliament;
- Facilities, opportunities and resources so that elections may be formally and fairly conducted.

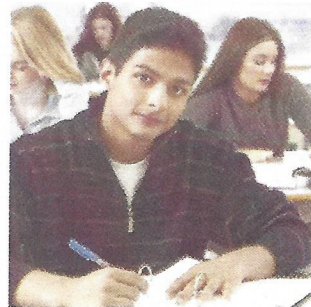


How are the Standards Assessed?

1. To achieve certification every element of the standards for the age group must be met.
2. Schools or colleges are expected to compile an evidence portfolio that demonstrates how each element has been achieved.
3. Schools or colleges that register may look to other organisations or locally based consultancies to procure advice and assistance.
4. A trained external assessor will visit the school or college for up to one day to examine the portfolio and talk with selected staff and/or governors and pupils/students.
5. If the school or college has successfully met the standards then they will receive a plaque, a certificate and permission to use the Democracy in Schools logo on stationery. The school's success will be published in the educational press and on the Democracy in Schools Standard Website. At the same time the Company will notify the Leader of the Local Council and local MP with a view to stimulating local publicity and recognition.
6. If the school or college has not successfully met the standards then the school will receive a detailed report on those areas that need further work.
7. Schools or colleges that are unsuccessful on their first external assessment may have a second external assessment at reduced cost within 12 months of the initial assessment.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Registration	£250
Assessment and Certification	£1000
Second assessment (see note 7)	£700



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In September 2009 Ecarda Ltd acquired and took over all the affairs of “The Democracy in Schools Standard” Ltd. Ecarda Ltd now owns all the property and rights hitherto owned by “The Democracy in Schools Standard” Ltd.

If you have any queries about the standard or you believe that your school meets all the standards and you wish to arrange an assessment, please contact us on:

democracy@ecarda.co.uk



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

8 June 2006

Engaging in meaningful dialogue with young people and really listening to what they have to say is a simple way of building a more inclusive, participative and cohesive society.

To this end my Liberal Democrat colleagues and I fully support *The Democracy in Schools Standards* developed and outlined by ECARDA. These guides offer an ideal approach by which the endeavours made by schools to promote democratic engagement may be recognised and celebrated.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Menzies Campbell', written in a cursive style.

Sir Menzies Campbell
Leader of the Liberal Democrats

THE DEMOCRACY IN SCHOOLS STANDARD

The recently published Democracy in Schools Standard is an example of an educational initiative timed for the moment.

The September 2006 OFSTED report, "Towards Consensus? Citizenship in Secondary Schools" revealed variations in the quality of teaching of citizenship with provision in a quarter of schools in the survey judged as inadequate. Recommendations to schools and colleges include monitoring and evaluating the degree to which students have opportunities to participate.

The Electoral Administration Act, July 2006, aimed to improve access to and engagement in elections as one of its four key areas in which to improve the health of democracy. The Act reduced the age of candidacy from 21 to 18 and gave new powers to Returning Officers to promote elections.

The Report of Power: An independent Inquiry into Britain's Democracy, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Trust and published in March 2006, pointed to the need to 'download' power and re-energise engagement in democratic processes. It recommended the introduction of automatic voter registration at age 16 and a move to a more practical citizenship curriculum in schools and colleges.

The Children Act, 2004, was designed to give legislative backing to the delivery of targets specified in the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes framework, one of which refers to children and young people participating in school-based elections.

These forces for change are set in the context of declining rates of participation in local, national and trans-national elections, and a shift away from democratic processes towards direct action.

And yet, the appetite and enthusiasm for voting (and even paying for the privilege) is evidenced by the high degree of audience participation in the latest wave of television 'reality' shows.

A hundred years ago, women were fighting for the vote and Britain was eight years away from a war to protect the democratic rights and institutions it had struggled to achieve.

And yet, at the general election in 2005, 17 million of those registered to vote chose not to do so, and the estimated turnout of young people had dropped to 37%, half the proportion of older people.

Today's intentions and yesterday's struggle sit uncomfortably with today's practice. Education, whose business is to build tomorrow's society, is best placed to alleviate the discomfort and resolve the contradiction.

Peter Lacey, the architect of the Democracy in Schools Standard, is not enthusiastic about the Power Inquiry's recommendation to introduce a Citizenship qualification. With experience in designing parts of the National Curriculum and end of key stage testing, Peter argues for broadening and enriching the experiences of students rather than increasing the burden of assessment and examinations. As Peter says, "there exist the horrific possibility and consequence of failing the 'citizenship' examination. The message that this may send to the student or those who may be selecting the student for further education or employment is a matter of concern."

Di Bennett, the client services manager at Ecarda, the company which promotes and manages the Democracy in School Standard, points to other standards adopted by schools that have had a significant effect on improving outcomes for children and young people. She cited the Healthy Schools Award and the Sports Active Mark that have an impact on school curriculum thinking and design and argues that the Democracy in Schools standard fulfils a similar function.

High levels of initial interest in the Democracy in Schools Standard suggest Di is right.

The best schools in the Country are now looking beyond qualifications to deliver quality. The 'rounded' education, a characteristic of British education that used to be envied and emulated around the world may be on the verge of a comeback. 'Adding values' should be seen as an equal priority to 'adding value'.

The Democracy in Schools Standard is to be commended as one initiative right for the moment. Perhaps a Local Authority, where seventy five percent of its schools achieve the standard, should also receive acclamation and recognition from the Company.

Show an interest at democracy@ecarda.co.uk to find out more.