# Lundin Mill Primary – Applying political literacy skills in a whole school context – Transcript

**Lundin Mill Primary School, Fife**

**Heading: What is political literacy?**

**Practitioner 1**: In the last couple of years, since the term was used … has very much run alongside the developments with the Referendum and a much higher profile of politics in Scotland. And I think that has really been very very engaging for the children. And we feel that it’s so important that they are engaged in learning about politics and learning about the world about them, and that it will help them in the future. The idea of sixteen/seventeen-year-olds voting – some of our Primary 7s, that’s not long away. And they really see the importance of having a voice and the difference they can make. And that’s something, I think, that we’ve seen in recent years, particularly across Scotland, with the increase in interest in politics.

**Pupil 1**: Mrs [unclear] told me what political literacy means but I had an idea that it was something about politics and writing and reading.

**Heading: Research and critical thinking skills**

**Practitioner 1**: We’ve always had a real interest in politics and parliament and news with our children, particularly the children at the older stages. And that has evolved, it’s not something new – in years gone by, we’ve used other TV programmes, in the news, and we’ve always had an interest in newspapers to really encourage children’s interest in world affairs. And it’s always been part of our, certainly our Primary 7 topic work and curriculum, that there would be a visit to parliament and that they would find out about political parties.

**Practitioner 2**: When they come in buzzing, you’ve really got to respond to that right away. We get on to the internet, we open up the Newsround. They’ll have heard – there’s one or two of them watch Newsround in the morning, before they come into school, and they’ll come in full of ‘Have you heard this?’, ‘Have you seen this?’ So, you’ve got … it’s like the old-fashioned style child-centred learning: you’ve got to key into that and develop it, take it into their writing, take it into their reading, take it into everything in the classroom, and then expand it outwith. They come up with a lot of the ideas, which I then home in on and just develop it from there. We look at, as Bradley said to me yesterday, ‘I’ll tell them how you teach it’, and I says to him, ‘Well, tell me, how do I teach it, Bradley?’ And he says, ‘Well, you give us the learning intentions and then you give us the … we make up the success criteria,’ he says, ‘And then we think about the things that fit round about that.’ Sometimes, we’re starting from a core subject and going out and encompassing these. And other times, we’re actually taking a topic and developing it inwards. So, it’s going two ways.

**Pupil 2**: Before the Primary 7s went to parliament, we learned a lot of information about it at school. But we learned more when we got there. We met politicians and we asked them questions about their jobs.

**Pupil 3**: We researched lots of different parties in Scotland and the politicians who were leading it. Well, what surprised me, ‘cause I’d never seen it before, were the look of the building and how different compared to other buildings it looked like. It looked quite special.

**Pupil 2**: Well, practically the people there, because they were really nice, and I never knew what a politician did before and now I know what they do.

**Pupil 4**: It would probably be the art on the outside of the building, because it was quite different when you see other kinds of art on buildings.

**Pupil 5**: I would usually go to the internet first and type it up in a search engine. But if that doesn’t work, then I’d go to books, and if not, then I’d look at newspapers and things like that.

**Pupil 6**: Most of the topics that we talk about, we hear on the news or we see them on Newsround, then we talk about them as a class. We use different sources to see if … like a topic, like ‘Is dark chocolate healthy?’, just saying that the teacher’s liking it, ‘cause we found out that it was researched in the University of Aberdeen by scientists.

**Heading: Debate and discussion skills**

**Practitioner 2**: A lot of the teaching comes from the children. They come in, they’ve heard things at home. I think, in this world, we’ve got to be confident and face them. We’ve done lots and lots of things … it’s trying to keep a balance as well, so that you’re not taking any side, and they know that: they won’t ask me my opinion. They know that I won’t give them their opinion – that’s one of the main things that, when I’m first starting out with them, they know that I can’t take either side, that I’m neutral.

**Pupil 4**: We watched a Lego video that showed us how debating works, and it also showed what you need to know about debating. After we watched it, we wrote down the rules and put them up on the wall. When we do a debate, we … we bring them down and we look at them to remember what we have to do.

**Pupil 3**: We’ve done lots of different debates in the class. So far, the ones that we’ve done are: Should we test on animals? Should we have free school dinners? And should we have homework? We’ve also listened to many others.

**Pupil 4**: Probably having a loud, clear voice. And good at persuading people.

**Pupil 3**: You also have to be quite confident so, ‘cause you have to speak to quite a lot of people and you have to be good at putting your ideas forward.

**Pupil 2**: You have to be good as listening as well, because you have to listen to other people’s ideas, and you have to make sure that your ideas are good as well.

**Pupil 7:** You don’t really have to get angry in a debate, or it’s going to be an argument. It could just be, like, a question that both of yous … if it’s between two people, it may be a question that you just be asking yourself, that you’re just asking it with another person but they have another opinion.

**Pupil 5**: So, sometimes in debates, I get put onto the team that I don’t want to be on. Sometimes, say the debate is free school dinners – I might want free school dinners but then I might be put in the opposition team, saying ‘No, we don’t want free school dinners’.

**Pupil 4**: As Jamie said, it would be like a good experience, ‘cause you kind of, like, learn about the one that you would do, but then you get put onto the opposite team, and then you learn more experience and learn new things, and then it might change your mind a bit.

**Pupil 8**: Well, we were talking about, like, the Referendum in school, but we’d also, like, talk about it to our parents and that, when we got home. And we were also discussing about 16-year-olds getting the vote, and most people thought that it was really good that they were, because it was their future that it was going to be affecting.

**Pupil 9:** I’d also use [unclear] but sometimes also Snapchat and maybe … on a group message something might just come up, and then it might remind you about something that’s happening in school. And then you kind of just get into, like, a chat about it, and it’s sometimes really fun because some people say something that’s quite funny about it, or really good.

**Practitioner 2**: An impromptu debate that we ended up … we had had a planned one, and it came from discussing toys at Christmas time, things like that. And one of the debates we got into was: should five-year-olds have televisions in their bedroom? And it was amazing, because some of them were really, really sensible and coming up with quite mature, grown-up answers, and others ones were going, ‘No, I’ve had a telly in my room since I was tiny and I do this and I do that’. And it was the excitement and the cross-questioning and saying, ‘Ah, but this’ and ‘What about that?’ And I had actually posed the question because my grand-daughter was getting a television for her Christmas and I had thought, ‘Mmm, I wonder what these 12-year-olds think, eleven/twelve-year-olds think about this’. But there was a lot of information came out from that. And because it was so impromptu, they hadn’t actually prepared it, and I was surprised at the depth of answers that I was getting from them. It was really quite interesting and fun.

**Heading: Participation and rights**

**Pupil 10**: In the mock election, everybody got to make a campaign. I was part of the SNP. The SNP, we all made a campaign, I was in a team. The SNP won our campaign in the mock election. Also, in the Scottish General Election, the SNP won. Well, you had to prepare, like, a talk, which is a wee bit like a campaign. And you had to work as a team to get all the facts together, and you had to decide what everybody was going to say. So, we all had our bit to say, and you had to make it as persuasive as you could, so that the people were thinking that you were the best for the job.

**Interviewer** [*off-camera*]: And were you elected as a team or as one person in charge of …?

**Pupil 10**: As a team.

**Pupil 8**: Well, a few years ago I heard about the suffragettes and, like, how they were fighting for votes for women. I thought that was really good that they were fighting for us to get the vote. And also, like, with all the things about the Referendum and the General Election, we’ve been talking a lot about politics. And I thought that I’d quite like to be a politician, because I’d be able to make good changes for the country.

[End of transcript]