What is political literacy? – Transcript

**Narrator** [*voice-over*]: Political literacy, or democratic literacy, is about helping young people to develop political awareness and understanding. It is about the skills they need to read, evaluate and discuss issues and events. Political literacy focuses on developing transferable skills for learning, life and work.

**Gail Copland, Head Teacher Ralston Primary School:** When we first looked at political literacy, there was a bit of worry that it would be an additional aspect of the curriculum. But, when you dig down, you realize that it’s actually very good skills development, looking very closely at how we communicate with each other, and involving children in the decision-making process, and then seeing how that would impact later in life in things like the Referendum, the General Election or indeed the local elections.

**Narrator**: In Curriculum for Excellence, political literacy is evident in the attributes of the four capacities. It is central to citizenship education and is an entitlement of all Scottish learners. Political literacy for children and young people is fundamentally linked to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and is embedded in the cross-curricular themes of global citizenship, learning for sustainability and interdisciplinary learning. The opportunity to develop skills, knowledge and understanding in political literacy can be found within every curricular area.

**Anne Urquhart, Head Teacher Lundin Mill Primary School**: The idea of 16- 17-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 that I think we’ve seen in recent years, particularly across Scotland, with the increase in interest in politics.

**Pupil 1**: People see politics as just a bunch of old guys sitting in Westminster, taking cheap shots at each other. But, in reality, it does affect everyone in so many different ways, but people just seem to overlook this and they just don’t realise the differences that can be made if they did get involved.

**Pupil 2**: It gives you an insight into what’s actually happening, because before you didn’t have a clue about it.

**Narrator**: The key skills, as outlined in the ‘You decide’ resource, are research, debate and participation. Research can be defined as the frequent use of higher order questions and critical thinking skills to evaluate sources of information for bias, opinion and fact. Numeracy skills will be developed through conducting surveys and interpreting graphs, statistics and economic arguments, thereby helping learners to make informed choices and decisions.

**Pupil 3**: I actually really enjoyed researching this debate, because when I started I actually knew nothing about the EU at all. It’s something I’d never… I mean, the other motions I’d thought about, I’d thought about before, but I’d no clue with this one. It was quite a lot of research beforehand, which I quite enjoyed doing.

**Narrator**: Debate can be summarised as the regular opportunity to debate and discuss ideas, developing confidence in public speaking and expressing an opinion within a safe learning environment, which respects all individuals’ viewpoints. Learners should develop skills that are effective for considering different arguments, challenging opinion and generating open discussion on contemporary, and potentially controversial, issues. These conversations may take place in the home, classroom, community and on social media.

**Pupil 4**: It’s important for people to listen to you, because you should be able to say what you think … what you think it should be like.

**Pupil 5**: 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.

**Narrator**: Participation can be expressed as the creation of equal opportunities for all learners to be seen and heard, showing young people respect and valuing their input by giving them real choice and the chance to make meaningful decisions. These skills may include planning and organising parliaments, committees and campaigns, creating publicity materials, writing speeches and information leaflets, collecting surveys, petitions, and creating a variety of digital media content, with opportunities to be creative, to fundraise, to volunteer and to educate peers.

**Claire Dunphy, Class Teacher, St Eunan’s Primary School**: It’s just been really lovely to see the children who, maybe, weren’t so confident – the shyer ones, the ones who didn’t want to speak at assemblies throughout the years… and, now, they recognise that in themselves, they recognise that their confidence levels have grown.

**Pupil 6** [*speaking into megaphone in front of pupils and passers-by in the street*]: Did you know there are an estimated 186 million child labourers worldwide? Did you know there are an estimated 250,000 child soldiers in the world? Clearly, something has to be done.

**Pupil 7** [*in classroom*]: We knew that we could make a difference if we tried hard enough. And the … like, when we went to Buchanan Street, it made us feel, like, more powerful, because we know that not a lot of children go out to such a big place like that and to go and gather support for something as important as our campaign.

**Two girls** [*facing camera*]: One child, one teacher, one book and one pen ***can*** change the world.