

General election 2024

Children's work



What is a general election?

How can we enable children to understand how politics affects all our lives? We live in uncertain times in a world of political instability. As adults we may have known a more stable political environment, but for today's children and young people this tumultuous political climate is all they have known.

Can we help children to understand a little of how politics works, and how can we enable them to be part of the political process, albeit in small ways?

A helpful video to explain elections and voting to children can be found [here](#).

Quakers use quiet thoughtful processes to bring about change through engaging with politicians. That isn't to say that Quakers are not active, because central to Quaker beliefs is the importance of demonstrating our faith through our actions.

Politics and political processes are often complex, so here we try to keep it simple but show how decisions politicians make can affect people's lives – often in ways that cause suffering and hardship.

How Quakers can take part in the general election

The general election is a chance for people to vote for a person to represent them in parliament. Those people usually belong to a political party, and the party with the most members of parliament (MPs) will be invited to run the country. As children we can't vote but we can all bring about change by engaging with politics at a local level.

Quakers have long been known to get involved with this process to bring about change. They take their concerns to other Quakers at business meetings – local meeting, area meeting and general meeting. Everyone talks about the concern and what action might be appropriate, which could include:

- a petition
- writing to MPs, MSP and MSs
- meeting MPs, MSPs and MSs
- demonstrating
- taking other peaceful action.

The children may have examples of these. If not, suggest some. Show pictures of people taking action. Where are they? What do you think they are protesting about? What do they want to happen?

Ask the children about some important issues that may be of concern to them. You can ask them to come up with their own ideas, but if they need some inspiration, you can suggest topics like climate justice, food poverty, peace and peace education, democracy, and migration.

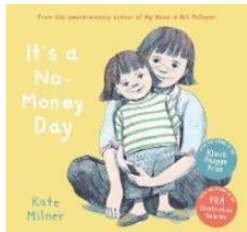


Climate justice

One of the things that young people have been very involved with is climate change. The young people in the picture have been politically engaged by walking out of school on a Friday afternoon to sit outside the Scottish Parliament to voice their concern about climate change. Their message is simple – they want the government to make and strengthen laws to stop carbon emissions, among other ways of looking after the planet.

They have some banners to get their message across. Perhaps the children could make banners displaying a message about a concern they would like politicians to do something about. These could be sent to your local MP or displayed where you meet.

All-age meeting for worship



Preparation: Story of [It's a no-money day](#) by Kate Milner. Coloured card, pens, crayons, scraps of tissue paper and other bits for decorating cards.

Begin by welcoming everyone to this all-age worship. Start with a few minutes of quiet.

Read the following:

I want you to imagine how you would feel if you came home from school or work and found that there was nothing much to eat for dinner. There might be a little bread and a scraping of margarine or jam, but no butter. You have run out of milk and juice, so there is only water to drink. Perhaps black tea or coffee for the adults.

How would you feel? Well, you would certainly feel hungry. You had been looking forward to a hot meal, so I am sure at the very least you would feel disappointed. Sitting down to bread and jam would not be the same. You might feel angry – why isn't there anything else to eat? Is this bad planning? Or just that you have run out of provisions?

For many, this is the reality of life. Families are not able to buy all the things they need, and very often must go without. Children may have to go to school without breakfast. Adults have to go without food until they can get some more money, but very often the money they do get is not enough to last all week. Even if people do have jobs, they may not earn enough to feed themselves and/or their families.

The government has control over many of the decisions that affect these families. For example, government decisions can affect wages, school meals, and the money that people get to help them survive if they lose their job or can't work because of illness.

When families don't have enough money for food, there are places called food banks where they can go and get provisions. The people who give out the food are kind and give people the food they need, and they don't have to pay for it.

We are now going to hear a story about some people who needed to go to a food bank. Please read the story.

Wondering questions

After reading the story, ask some wondering questions:

- **I wonder which part of the story you think is the most important.**

“The practice of wondering about a story with children is similar, in that it makes space for children to explore the ideas and images, words and characters in a story (from the particular perspective of that moment in their lives).”

[Melinda Wenner Bradley, *Wondering with children*](#)

You might like to organise a collection of things to take along to a food bank. (This can be done ahead of the meeting for worship by announcing it the previous week.) There may be people in your meeting who need to use a food bank. It can be very hard to admit that you need this kind of help.

I wonder if it might be a nice idea to make some cards to go to the food bank as well. Perhaps some of these people would like to be given a card with some good wishes or a special message. As well as the food, I am sure that getting a personal message will help them to know that there are people like us who really care about them.

We have lots of materials to make these cards. Think about what you might like to say, and when you are ready, help yourself to what you need. You might like to share what is on your card – this is called ministry. If you prefer not to do the activity, uphold the rest of us in the silence.

Place the cards in the centre of the room before adding them to the provisions to go to the food bank.

Links to websites for further materials:

- [The Children's Parliament](#)
- [Newsround](#)
- [National Geographic Kids](#)
- [The Loving Earth Project](#)
- [Quaker general election resources](#)

For songs to accompany your plan, check out the [Sing me on a journey resource and playlist](#).