



# What is Parliament and what are its functions?

Lesson 2

**Key stage 4 scheme of work:  
Should the UK be called a democracy?**

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<p><b>Context</b></p>	<p>This lesson is part of a scheme of work that comprises six lessons for teaching Key Stage 4 Citizenship in line with the requirements of the Citizenship National Curriculum. The lesson is part of the ACT model Key Stage 4 curriculum, which can be used and adapted to fit with your school's provision.</p> <p>Each scheme of work has an enquiry question as the focus and is then organised into smaller questions that provide a learning focus for each lesson.</p>
<p><b>Overview</b></p>	<p>In this lesson, students recap knowledge from the previous lesson and develop critical thinking about the link between Parliament and democracy. They find out about parliamentary functions and consider whether there are enough checks on the prime minister.</p> <p><b>This lesson has been designed for delivery as a double lesson. Timings for each task are given as guidelines.</b></p>
<p><b>Citizenship Skills and Concepts</b></p>	<p>Critical thinking, power, democracy, separation of powers</p>
<p><b>Essential Teaching Guidance</b></p>	<p>If your class has not learnt about Parliament in key stage 3, please spend some extra time showing and discussing the video clips that were set for flipped learning in Lesson 1. This lesson is designed to go into more detail about how Parliament functions and the checks and balances made on the government.</p> <p>Ensure you check the links to video clips prior to teaching, as these can change due to the topical nature of the lesson.</p> <p>If this lesson contains sensitive topics, it is crucial to understand the students you teach and their individual circumstances as this may be directly related to their personal lives. Be mindful of the viewpoints that might arise and encourage empathy and understanding through discussions with students. Where the issues raised in teaching the lesson may be sensitive or controversial in nature, please ensure you are in line with your school policies on such matters. You may also find the ACT</p>

	<p>guidance on teaching sensitive and controversial issues in Citizenship helpful.</p>
<b>Learning Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the link between Parliament and democracy?</li> <li>• What is Parliament’s purpose?</li> <li>• How are the UK Parliament and government organised?</li> <li>• Are there enough checks on the prime minister?</li> <li>• How do the monarch, legislature, executive and judiciary work together?</li> </ul>
<b>Lesson Resources</b>	<p>Slide presentation</p> <p>Video clips about Parliament:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="https://learning.parliament.uk/en/resources/what-is-the-use-of-commons-video/">https://learning.parliament.uk/en/resources/what-is-the-use-of-commons-video/</a></li> <li>2. <a href="https://learning.parliament.uk/en/resources/what-is-the-use-of-lords-secondary-animation/">https://learning.parliament.uk/en/resources/what-is-the-use-of-lords-secondary-animation/</a></li> </ol> <p>Worksheet: How is the prime minister checked? For students to complete during the scavenger hunt in Task 5</p> <p>File of information for the scavenger hunt (this is also included in the main lesson presentation as slides 16 to 21)</p>
<b>Differentiation</b>	<p>Ask students to form questions for peers about the main function of Parliament, to open up discussion.</p> <p>Use different levels of tasks.</p> <p>Use the SEND/EAL guide provided.</p>
<b>Assessment Opportunities</b>	<p>There are opportunities for students to improve on their baseline knowledge and several knowledge checks are included.</p> <p>These are self-assessments that will not need to be marked. The students need to look at their own answers and improve them based on the answers given. You are advised to circulate the classroom to check this is being completed correctly.</p>

<p><b>Do Now / Starter / Entry Task</b></p> <p><i>(15 minutes)</i></p>	<p><b>What do you know about Parliament?</b></p> <p><i>Slides 2 to 6</i></p> <p>Ask students to list and explain what they already know about Parliament.</p> <p>If the students were given a Takeaway Task to complete following the last lesson, discuss the answers using slides 4 (for the task that involved watching videos) or 5 (for the challenge task).</p> <p>If the students did not complete a Takeaway Task following Lesson 1, share the video clips on slide 6 and, following each video, ask students to add a further piece of information to their lists of what they already know about Parliament in another colour pen.</p>
<p><b>Task 1</b></p> <p><i>(5 minutes)</i></p>	<p><b>The link between Parliament and democracy</b></p> <p><i>Slide 9</i></p> <p>As a class, discuss how Parliament and democracy are linked. Why is this link important?</p> <p>Remind students that in Lesson 1 they learnt that democracy is a system of government in which power is vested in people. It can be exercised by them directly or through freely elected representatives.</p> <p>Parliament is composed of the elected representatives – MPs. Ask students for their opinions on the House of Lords and the Crown being unelected. Do they think this is acceptable in a democracy? Do we need them for checks and balances?</p>
<p><b>Task 2</b></p> <p><i>(10 minutes)</i></p>	<p><b>The purpose of Parliament</b></p> <p><i>Slide 10</i></p> <p>Ask students to write answers to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What do you think Parliament represents? (e.g. all people in the United Kingdom)</li> <li>● What do you think is Parliament’s purpose?</li> </ul> <p>Ask two students to share their answers. Students’ opinions on how well Parliament represents everyone in the UK may vary, particularly in relation to the diversity of people in Parliament.</p>
<p><b>Task 3</b></p> <p><i>(5 minutes)</i></p>	<p><b>How is the government organised?</b></p> <p><i>Slide 11</i></p>

	<p>Ask two students to take it in turns to read the content of the boxes on slide 11: ‘How is the government organised?’</p> <p>Clarify any points students are confused about.</p>
<p><b>Task 4</b> (15 minutes)</p>	<p><b>Checks on the prime minister</b></p> <p><i>Slides 12 to 14</i></p> <p>To check the students’ baseline knowledge, ask them to write the following statement in their books:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The prime minister is too powerful. There are not enough checks on what’s being done.</p> <p>To what extent do they agree? Ask them to write an answer based on their own knowledge. Do they already know of any checks on the prime minister? Tell students you will return to this at the end of the lesson and that it is ok if they are not sure and haven’t written much.</p> <p>Show the students slides 13 and 14 – the separation of powers diagram and descriptions of different bodies that check the prime minister. Have they heard of any of these before? If so, where?</p> <p>The monarch is included here, as they officially have a role to play, but as this is mostly ceremonial it is not looked at in any more detail in this scheme of work.</p>
<p><b>Task 5</b> (30 minutes)</p>	<p><b>Scavenger hunt: how are we governed?</b></p> <p><i>Slides 15 to 21</i></p> <p>In this task, students take part in a scavenger hunt for information about how we are governed.</p> <p>Print the file of information for the scavenger hunt (this is included in the main lesson presentation as slides 16 to 21).</p> <p>Ask students to work in pairs. Give them a copy of the worksheet ‘How is the prime minister checked?’ and ask them to retrieve the relevant information from around the classroom to complete the sheet.</p> <p>Set a time limit of 20 minutes for the hunt itself (you may wish to use an online timer).</p> <p>Spend five minutes talking through the students’ answers together (you can un-skip slides 16 to 21 if you wish to show them on the board).</p>

<p><b>Plenary / Reflection</b></p> <p><i>(20 minutes)</i></p>	<p><i>Slides 22 &amp; 23</i></p> <p>Return to the question considered in Task 4: ‘The prime minister is too powerful. There are not enough checks on what’s being done.’</p> <p>Discuss whether students have changed their views based on what they have learnt in this lesson.</p> <p>To extend their thinking, ask them: ‘We have a representative democracy, so we do not need to challenge the government.’</p> <p>Do they agree? Can they give examples?</p> <p>Ask students to go back to the baseline activity from Task 4 and, in a different colour pen, add a reason to agree, a reason to disagree, and their own personal point of view. They can use the sentence starters on slide 23 to help, if they wish.</p> <p>Ask two or more students to share their ideas.</p> <p>Finish with a short writing task, expressing their opinions on this question. Again, feedback ideas from two or more students.</p>
<p><b>Takeaway Task</b></p> <p><i>(30 minutes)</i></p>	<p><i>Slide 24</i></p> <p>Ask the students to either:</p> <p>Go to the following website and take a virtual tour of the Houses of Parliament:</p> <p><a href="https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/role/relations-with-other-institutions/parliament-crown">https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/role/relations-with-other-institutions/parliament-crown</a></p> <p>Or go to the following website and play the ‘MP for a week’ online game’:</p> <p><a href="https://learning.parliament.uk/en/resources/mp-for-a-week/">https://learning.parliament.uk/en/resources/mp-for-a-week/</a></p> <p>Tell them to be prepared to report back to the class what they find out and how it relates to our topic.</p>

**Additional Teacher  
Links and Resources**

Additional resources to use with students:

[How Parliament Works booklet](#)

[Your UK Parliament: The Essentials UK Guide](#)

[The UK Parliament and its Members SEND/EAL guide](#)

Support video for teachers – How Laws are Made:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iM4CKYCrW7Y>

Printout of a judicial review, for example:

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/jun/08/home-offices-rwanda-deportation-plans-face-high-court-challenge>

Extra reading for teachers:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-35883590>

You can find Parliamentary Questions here:

<https://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary-questions/>

You can watch PMQs here:

<https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Commons>

Name:

## How is the prime minister checked?

Scrutiny – debates	Scrutiny – asking questions	APPGs	Judicial reviews	Select committees	Parliamentary inquiries



# Scrutiny – debates

MPs and members of the House of Lords participate in debates.

In the House of Commons, debates are chaired by the Speaker, who calls on MPs to speak one by one.

MPs debate government proposals and topics suggested by the opposition. They also raise concerns from their constituents (which must be responded to).

In the House of Lords, the members debate a broad range of topics and members manage the debate themselves.



# Scrutiny – asking questions

<b>Oral questions</b>	<b>Statements and urgent questions</b>	<b>Written questions</b>	<b>Prime minister's questions (PMQs)</b>
<p>MPs and members of the House of Lords can question government ministers regularly.</p> <p>In the House of Commons, ministerial question time takes place for an hour every day from Monday to Thursday.</p> <p>In the House of Lords, the day starts with a half-hour question session. A government spokesperson may be asked to respond to questions on any issue within the government's responsibility.</p>	<p>Ministers come to Parliament regularly to update MPs on their work. MPs can follow the statements with questions.</p> <p>If there is an important matter an MP wishes to talk about, they can ask the Speaker for an 'urgent question'.</p>	<p>MPs and members of the House of Lords can submit questions in writing.</p> <p>Government ministers and their teams are required to answer each question so that they can be made publicly available online.</p>	<p>For half-an-hour, normally every Wednesday, MPs can ask questions directly to the prime minister in the House of Commons on any subject for which the Government is responsible.</p>

# All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)

All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) are informal, cross-party groups that have no official status within Parliament. They are run by and for members of the Commons and Lords, though many choose to involve individuals and organisations from outside Parliament in their administration and activities.

## APPG on women in Parliament

Brings together MPs and peers to discuss and campaign for increasing the number of women in Parliament in all parties, and to support women in Parliament and those standing for public office.

## APPG on youth employment

Promotes youth employment in all its forms and the role of young people within the economy. Ensures that young people's voices are heard. Highlights the need for quality opportunities and shares best practice.

## APPG on refugees

Provides a forum for the discussion of issues relating to refugees, both in the UK and abroad, and promotes the welfare of refugees.

# Judicial reviews

A court decision can be challenged if it is suspected it has not been properly made.

For example:

- Immigration decisions about whether people are allowed to stay in the country
- Decisions about the way police have dealt with an incident

# Select committees

A small number of MPs or members of the House of Lords will carry out detailed scrutiny of a particular matter from a cross-party perspective.

Select committees hold inquiries to investigate problems and collect evidence, then they make recommendations to the government. Their findings are public and usually require a response from the government.



# Parliamentary inquiries

If there is a concern that the government is doing something wrong, a parliamentary inquiry can be requested.

For example:

- Attitudes towards women and girls in educational settings
- Flight cancellations and compensation