

## Send My Friend to School 2017: General Election resource

On June 8<sup>th</sup> 2017 the UK will have a General Election.

The last election was in 2015 and the next one was not due until 2020. However, in April the Prime Minister, Theresa May, called for a snap election and Member of Parliaments (MPs) voted overwhelmingly to allow it to take place.

### The UK Parliament and First Past the Post

General Elections can seem very complicated. But in some ways it's really simple, we have **one** elected chamber in **the UK Parliament**, the **House of Commons**. Throughout the UK, we elect 650 different representatives to this chamber. This means that the UK is divided into 650 different areas, otherwise known as **constituencies**. Each of the 650 constituencies elects an MP to represent it in the UK Parliament.

Every eligible person in the UK will vote for one candidate, among their **Prospective Parliamentary Candidates**, the candidate with the most votes wins and goes on on to become the **Member of Parliament (MP)** for that constituency, and their representative in the **House of Commons**.

This is called the **First Past the Post** electoral system – there are advantages and disadvantages to this voting system.

Your elected representative (MP), has the responsibility to speak up for you and your fellow constituents in the UK Parliament. They are your means to exercise your political will. It's important we engage with MPs so they speak up for the issues we care about.

As well as the House of Commons, we also have one other chamber of the UK Parliament. This second chamber is the **House of Lords** this is made up of men and women who are unelected, but instead chosen based on achievements they have made. The role of the House of Lords is to question the work of government and to work with the House of Commons to share legislation.

### The UK Government

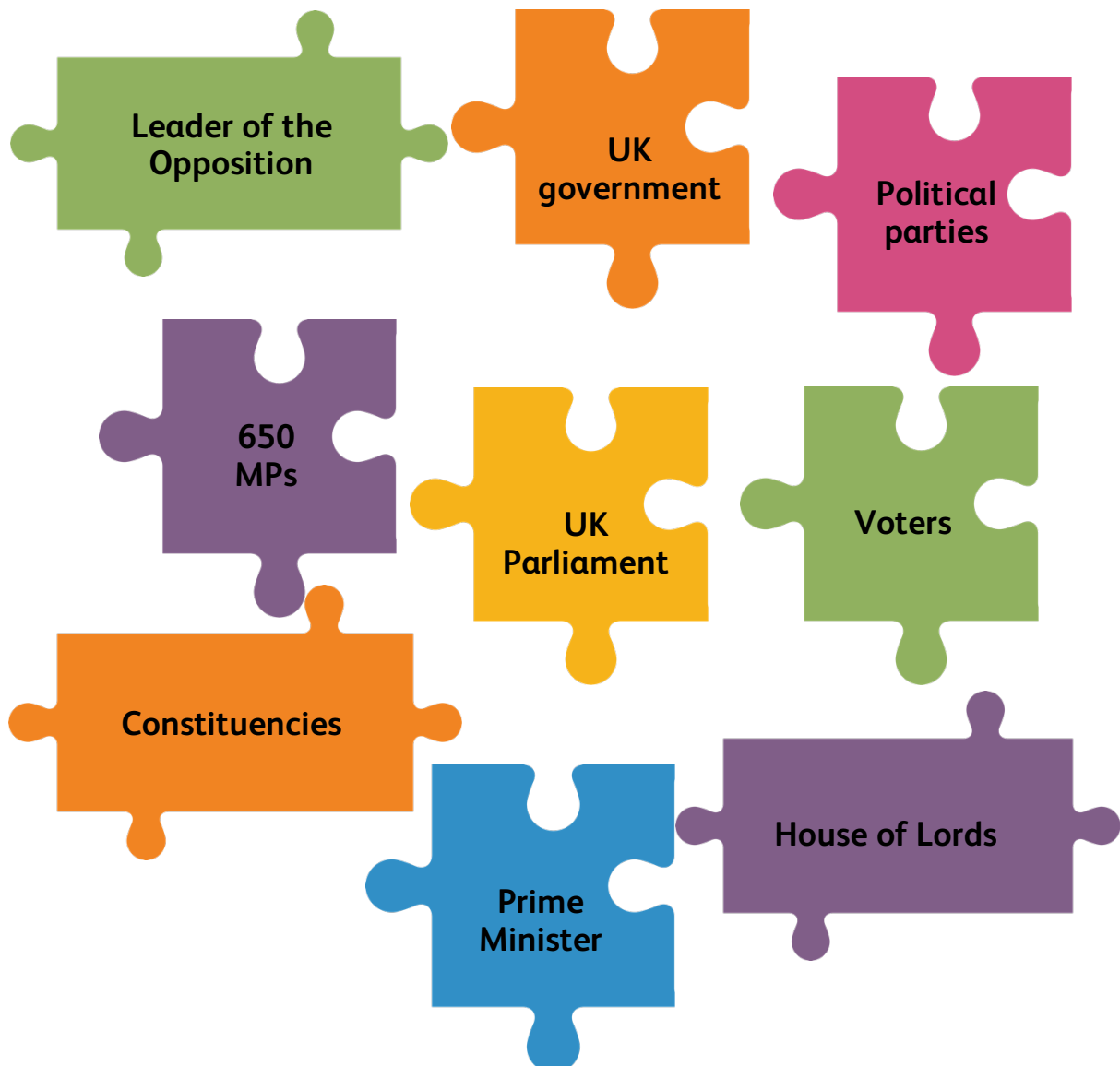
Most MPs belong to a **political party**, these include the Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats, Green, SNP, UKIP and more. In the UK Parliament a political party needs **more than half** of the 650 seats to form the **UK government**.

The political party with the most MPs is the one that ‘wins’ the Election – the leader of this party becomes the **Prime Minister**, and the leader of the second biggest party becomes the **Leader of the Opposition**, an official title.

## Activity 1 – build your own UK democracy

Each of the puzzle pieces below represent a different part of the UK parliamentary system.

**Discuss:** what is the purpose of each piece in helping to make democracy work?

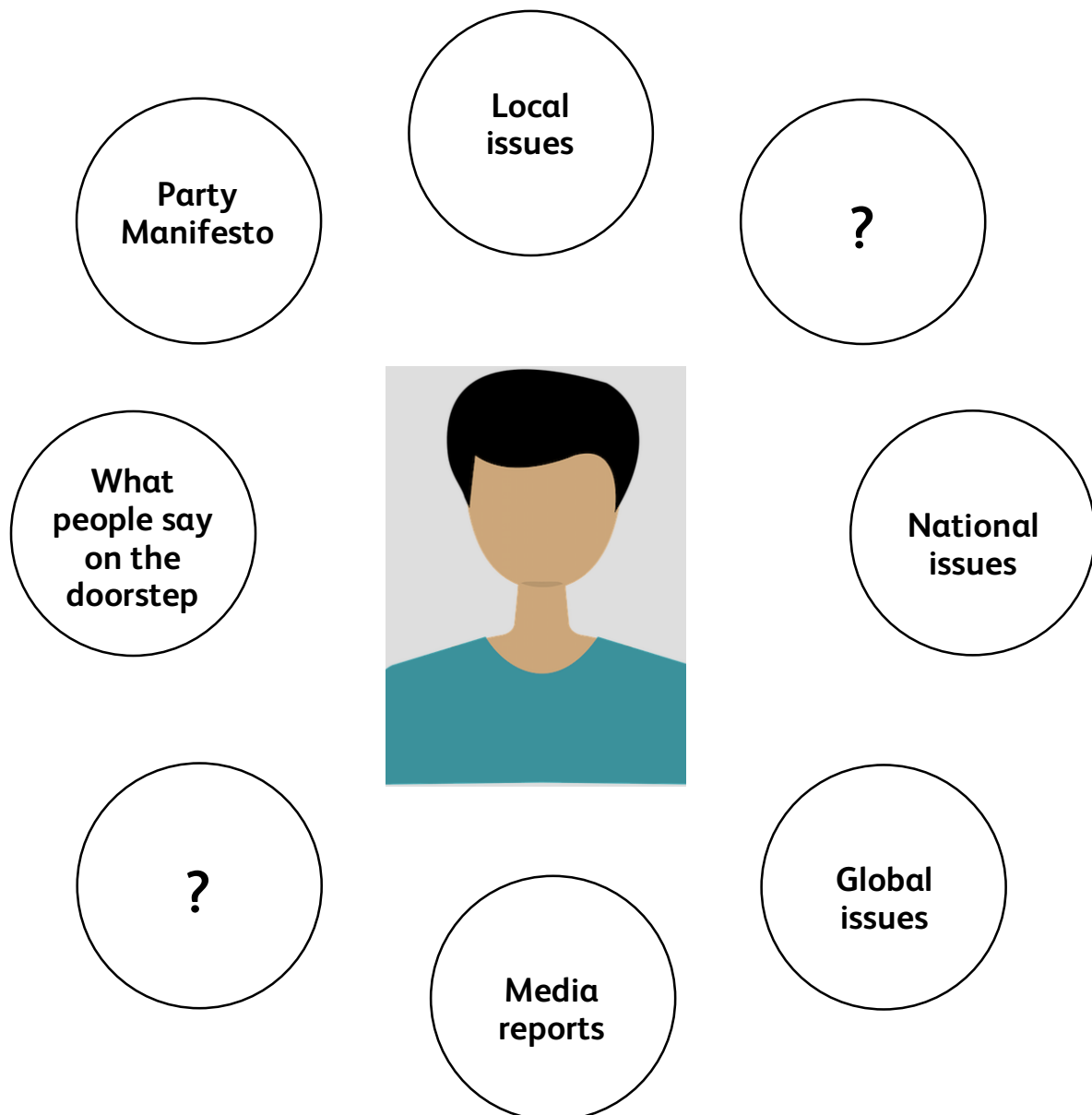


## Activity 2 – What’s in their head?

In the run-up to the General Election, your Prospective Parliamentary Candidates will be working hard to achieve the majority of the vote in their constituencies. They’ll want to show that they’re the best person to elect or re-elect.

So what’s in their head? In part, they’re thinking about what’s in **your** head – what will gain your support and help them to achieve the votes they need.

**Task:** create a picture like the one below and try to think of all the different elements that could be influencing a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate.





Send My Friend to School young campaigners at an event in the UK Parliament

## It's a General Election – how do we make our voices heard?

### 1. Get everyone to register to vote!

Using your right to vote is one of the first ways you can achieve the change you want to see in the world.

You can vote in a UK General Election if:

- You are 18 or over
- You are a British citizen, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of the Republic of Ireland
- You are not subject to any legal incapacity to vote
- You have registered to vote with the Electoral Register

You may not yet be old enough but does the list above match with anyone you know? The answer is likely yes! So get campaigning and convince them to register to vote, and then to cast their vote in the General Election.

Here is the link to register to vote: [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)

It's a little known fact, but you can actually register to vote at 16, ready for your 18th birthday.

## 2. Question your candidates about global issues!

Elections are often a time when national issues take centre stage and global issues get little air time. The Send My Friend to School campaign focus on global issues and international aid – especially ensuring children all around the world get the opportunity to go to school.

Your candidates will be seeking your vote (or that of your parents, teachers, siblings...) and it's common for them to be very present in your constituency during the election campaign. This could be at a hustings event (debate between different PPCs), on the doorstep, or at a meeting in your school.

### Could you ask them about their support for international aid?

- The UK has committed to spending 0.7 % of its income on supporting the world's poorest people. We are a brave and generous nation. We have always stood up for the underdog and dug deep when things get tough. That's Britain at its biggest.

### Could you ask them about their support for ensuring children across the world get a quality education?

- The UK has played a key role in investing in education for the world's poorest children and along with the rest of the international community has promised to get every child an education by 2030. However, there are currently 263 million children missing out on school across the world so more needs to be done.

### Could you let them know how passionately you feel that every child should have a quality education, and that you hope they'll do their best to make education for all a reality?

Make sure **they** care about the issues **you** care about – and remember, you don't need to be able to vote to ask a question...