

# Debating and the National Curriculum

Debating inculcates skills that are central to the National Curriculum. Indeed, efforts are being made to introduce debate into lessons, complementing extra-curricular debating activities. Debating addresses these aspects of the National Curriculum:

## **Communication**

“...skills in speaking include the ability to speak effectively to different audiences; to listen, understand and respond appropriately to others.” (National Curriculum p. 22)

- debating involves speaking in public, in front of various audiences, including adjudicators, other students and members of the community
- debating encourages close consideration of what others have said and effective response to different viewpoints
- responding to what others say is at the heart of debating: participants must build on what members of their side have argued and explain the shortcomings of the other side’s points

## **Thinking skills**

Debating develops argumentation skills, critical thinking and information processing: participants learn to formulate clear, concise and rational arguments.

## **Social development**

“...the acquisition of an understanding of the responsibilities and rights of being members of...communities (local, national and global)...[Students] develop the knowledge, skills, understanding, qualities and attitudes they need to make an active contribution to the democratic process in each of their communities.” (National Curriculum p. 21)

- debates often concern topical issues, encouraging an awareness and understanding of the UK’s “constitution” and matters of contemporary controversy
- debating combats narrow-mindedness by revealing alternative perspectives: this encourages respect for the views of others
- debaters learn to evaluate information critically, enabling them to analyse the claims of politicians and others
- these skills are particularly important, with the introduction of Citizenship into the Curriculum

## **Use of language across the curriculum**

“speaking and listening – students should be taught to use language precisely and cogently...to listen to others, and to respond and build on their ideas and views constructively.” (National Curriculum p. 40)

- debaters become practised in using language clearly and appropriately, bearing in mind the issue in question and the composition of the audience
- debating involves swift and reasoned response to what others have said, developing, modifying and correcting their arguments

Comprehensive advice about using debate in English, Science and History lessons is available under “Resources for Teachers” at [www.londondebatechallenge.org](http://www.londondebatechallenge.org)