

Controversial issues - Topic 1: Controversial issues at school
Controversial issues – Why it is good to talk

It is tempting to try to shy away from controversial issues at school. You may think that bringing issues out into the open will only create more ill feeling, that students will not be able to cope, or there will be complaints.

This is not the democratic way. The **democratic way of resolving disputes and conflicts of opinion is to talk about them**. It is important to discuss issues, openly and respectfully. Learning how to do this is one of the most important lessons a school can teach.

Here are **some other reasons why it can be good to talk about controversial issues at school**. Which do you think are the most important? Try to rank them on a scale from 1-10. This is an exercise you can also do with your students, staff or parents.

1. It develops the competence of critical and analytical thinking	
2. It prepares students to deal with future controversies they will likely encounter	
3. It gives students an opportunity to express themselves	
4. It helps students make sense of what they see and hear in social media	
5. It exposes students to a wider understanding of the world	
6. It makes school lessons more realistic and up to date	
7. It makes students feel valued by the school and by society	
8. It helps students respect people with different views and backgrounds	
9. It highlights misinformation and fake news in social media	
10. It gives students confidence and a sense of self-efficacy	

Of course, this does not mean that all issues, however controversial, should be discussed in school. What this exercise shows is that there is much to be gained from talking through controversial issues in school if you can handle them safely.

