

DEMOCRACY DAY 2026
3rd February
Causeway House

Introduction

This report provides a summary of Democracy Day 2026, held on February 3rd, 2026. The event was designed to engage young people with the democratic process and foster an understanding of their rights and responsibilities as future citizens. This report outlines the event's objectives, activities, outcomes, and feedback received from participating schools. The event was organised and delivered by the Braintree District Cultural Education Partnership and Braintree District Council's Elections Team.

Event Overview

- **Date:** February 3rd, 2026
- **Participating Schools:** St Andrews Hatfield Peverel Juniors, Holy Family Catholic School, Lyons Hall School, Alec Hunter School, Great Bradfords Junior School, DeVere Primary, Great Bardfield Primary, White Notley Primary, Great Bradfords Infants
- **Students:** Approximately 33 students participated.
- **Staff:** 11 teachers and support staff were involved.
- **Purpose:** Democracy Day aimed to provide students with hands-on experience of democratic principles and the electoral process. The day sought to empower students to become active and informed citizens.

Aims of the Day

The key learning objectives for Democracy Day 2026 were:

- To **understand** the principles of democracy and their importance in society.
- To **learn** about the different roles and responsibilities within a democratic system.
- To **explore** the electoral process and the significance of voting.
- To **develop** critical thinking skills and the ability to evaluate information.
- To **encourage** active participation in civic life.

How Democracy Works



The Elections Team delivered a presentation covering:

- **Decision makers** – the difference between Parish, District, County Councils and Governments
- **Elections** – different types of elections
- **Democratic Processes** – how elections work, how to vote
- **Why democracy is important!**

Democracy in Action: The Biscuit Election



A highlight of Democracy Day was the 'Biscuit Election,' a simulated election designed to engage students in a fun and interactive way.



- **Candidates:** Four candidates pitched their manifestos for the election of Biscuit Mayor of Braintree. The students heard from Chocolate Digestive, Custard Cream, Jammy Dodger and Bourbon
- **Election Process:** A mock polling station was set up, complete with ballot boxes and voting slips. Students registered to vote on the Electoral Register and cast their ballots in a secret ballot. Poll Clerks were present to oversee the event.
- **Results:** Students then counted the ballots and learnt about spoilt ballots. The Chair of Braintree District Council, Cllr Justin Wrench, was the Returning Officer announcing the following results :



Biscuit	Votes	Percentage
Chocolate Digestive	3	9%
Custard Cream	6	19%
Jammy Dodger	6	19%
Bourbon	17	53%

Democracy in Action!

Following the ballot and Bourbon landslide, students were set a challenge - to design three cultural projects they could run in school. They then take these ideas back to school to be decided by vote, using their new knowledge of democratic processes. The winning project from each school will receive £150 from the Braintree District Cultural Education Partnership. We hope to visit the schools to see their project in action.

<p>Great Bradfords Junior</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Drama and Culture workshops ● More instrument ● History day ● Professional artist to create display in school 	
 <p>de Vere Primary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chickens! ● Information board about de Vere ● Mud art area ● Jet2 Holiday! 	

Great Bradfords Infants



- Drawing Room
- Outside lunch canopy
- Art supplies for art club
- New instruments
- Disco ball for school hall

St Andrews Hatfield Peverel



- Drama Club with performance arts
- Props and equipment for performances
- Monthly school magazine

Lyons Hall Primary






- Library equipment
- Art Equipment
- PE Equipment

White Notley Primary



- Food and activities related to Kenya
- Ingredients for Bake Off competition
- Greenhouse

 <p>Holy Family Catholic School</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment for a whole school art project to replace existing painting • Den Building materials • Outdoor storage 	
<p>Alec Hunter Academy</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International food for canteen • Art roof on bike shed • Musical and drama props for drama performances 	
 <p>Great Bardfield Primary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside play equipment • Sensory garden • Creative area 	

Feedback and Evaluation

Democracy Day 2026 brought together pupils from across the district for an immersive, hands-on introduction to democratic participation. The event successfully strengthened civic understanding, developed confidence in public speaking, and encouraged collaboration between schools.

Feedback from both students and school staff indicates exceptionally high engagement, strong enjoyment levels, and a clear appetite for more cultural and democratic-themed experiences in the future.

Councillors may wish to note that the event directly supports district ambitions around:

- youth voice and participation,
- cultural enrichment,
- skills development, and
- wellbeing and community cohesion.

- Provide a fun, inclusive and culturally rich experience for all attendees.
- Amplify children’s voices by giving them opportunities to vote, debate and influence outcomes.

These aims were strongly reflected in the qualitative feedback from children and staff, who highlighted the voting process, idea pitching, and open, welcoming atmosphere as key strengths.

Event Highlights

1.1 High Student Engagement

Schools reported very strong levels of excitement and participation. Children were enthusiastic, worked collaboratively, and responded positively to the structure of the day.

Staff noted:

- “Children understood and felt at ease.”
- “It gave the children a voice.”
- “Lovely, welcoming feel.”

1.2 An Inclusive & Well-Organised Experience

Staff feedback emphasised the smooth running and accessible structure of the event:

- Organisation praised by 5 staff members
- Inclusivity praised by 3 staff members
- Clear communication and strong cross-school involvement noted as key strengths



1.3 The Power of Voting

Students consistently cited the voting stations, counting ballots, and the feeling of having influence as their favourite parts.

For many, this was their first direct experience of a democratic process.

2. Cultural & Creative Outcomes

Although Democracy Day focused on civic learning, the event also provided insights into young people’s cultural engagement.

2.1 Activities Students Already Do in School

Top-reported in-school activities:

- Arts & Crafts (10)
- Singing (8)
- Music lessons (7)
- Sports & Dance (5 each)



2.2 Activities They Want More Of

Students expressed interest in more:

- Art & Crafts (9)
- Musical Theatre (4)
- Drama, Singing, Instruments, Cooking, Dance & Science

This demonstrates a clear appetite for expanding cultural and creative experiences across the district.

3. Impact on Wellbeing

Students frequently described arts and democratic activities as making them feel:

- Happy (6 mentions)
- Relaxed (5)
- Excited (3)
- Mindful (3)



Many also said the event made them feel *calm*, *confident*, or “able to express myself

freely”.

This aligns well with both BDCEP’s and BDC’s broader health and wellbeing outcomes.

4. Recommendations for Future Development

Based on staff and student input, several areas for enhancement were identified:

4.1 Expand Participation

- Greater involvement of secondary pupils (requested by 3 staff)
- More opportunities for schools to mix and network

4.2 Provide Advance Materials for Schools

Staff suggested giving pupils activity information beforehand to help them come prepared

and feel more confident.

4.3 Broaden Cultural Opportunities

Staff would welcome district-supported activities such as:

- Drama clubs (5 mentions)
 - Community workshops (2)
 - DJing and street art (2)
 - Cooking, STEM, eco-activities, textiles, live music
- This suggests strong potential for BDCEP partnership programmes.

5. Student and School Staff Feedback



Below is the combined feedback section requested for councillor reference.

Appendix A – Student Feedback Summary What students enjoyed most

- Voting (4)
- Pitching ideas (3)
- Thinking of a name (3) Other frequent comments:
- “All of it!”
- “Wearing the Mayor’s necklace”
- “Pressing the button”

Enjoyment Levels

- I loved it – 9
- Good – 3
- Meh / Not very good – 0

Selected Student Quotes

- “I loved voting the best!”
- “It made me feel excited and calm.”
- “Dramas alright.”
- “Enjoying the learning.”



Appendix B – Staff Feedback Summary Successes (most mentioned)

- Organisation (5)
- Inclusivity (3)
- Voting activities (2)
- Student engagement (2)

Areas for Improvement

- Nothing to improve! (3)
- Greater secondary inclusion (3)
- Advance notice of activities (3)
- Later start time (1)
- More events like this (1)

Staff Quotes

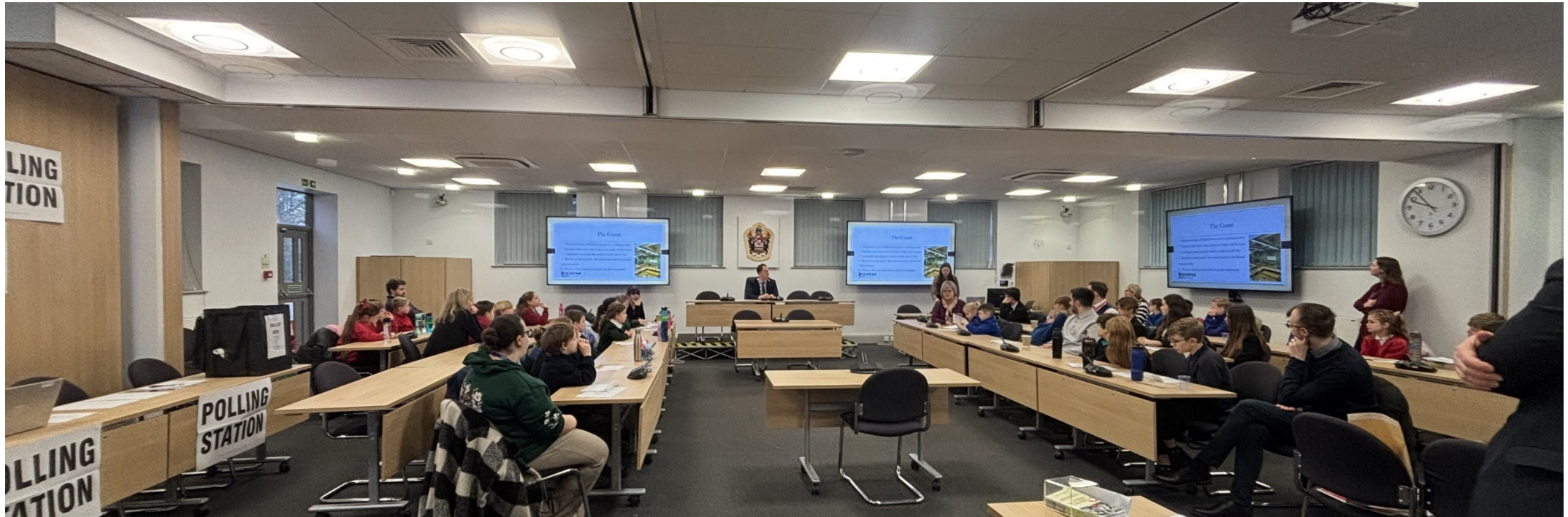
- “Lovely session – thank you.”
- “Just keep doing what you are doing.”
- “You offer lots and lots – thank you for what you do.”



Conclusion and future outcomes

Democracy Day 2026 was a high-impact, high-value event that significantly contributed to youth voice, confidence and civic education in Braintree District. Both students and staff expressed strong enthusiasm and a desire for more opportunities of this kind.

The feedback indicates that BDCEP's collaborative model is delivering clear benefits for local young people and has strong potential to be scaled further.



Democracy Day 2026 was a successful initiative that provided students with a valuable introduction to the democratic process. The positive feedback from both students and staff highlights the effectiveness of the event in achieving its learning objectives. The council remains committed to supporting future initiatives that empower young people to become active and engaged citizens.