

School Parliament visits the Houses of Parliament

On the 27th of January 2023, members of our School Parliament (Y3-6) visited the Houses of Parliament to find out; how Parliament works, where debates and laws are discussed and to see the magnificent artwork, architecture and stunning statues that it houses. We even got to meet a real life Baroness.

To begin with, we followed the journey that monarchs take when they arrive at the Sovereign Gate. Standing under the Victoria Tower where all of the laws are kept, we looked out towards Big Ben otherwise known as Elizabeth Tower and saw the impressive clock and its surroundings.

Next, we were led into the Robing Room. This is where King Charles III will prepare for the State Opening of Parliament. Inside this room, there is a small throne that was only used by Queen Victoria during her reign. The tour guide explained that the building has been redesigned many times as parts of it grew old and crumbled, or was targeted during protests. The latest version was designed by the Victorians, hence the Victorian look and the ceiling is covered in a green, red and gold design. This room was the point where everything started to become red.

As we continued our tour of Parliament we came to notice the drawings on the ceiling. For example, in the room of the Prince of Wales, there is the Welsh flag and lots of dragons on the ceiling. Around the walls of this room, were paintings of every single monarch and their husbands and wives.

After that, we entered the House of Lords, and were told where certain people sit, who comes in and how it works in there. The party who has control sits on the right and other parties sit on the left. There is also a gold throne where the monarch would sit and we learnt about what their role is. When laws are made or important rules have to be set, both the House of Lords and House of Commons get involved. The House of Lords creates a document with the law or rule and sends it over to the House of Commons to be improved. Then with the improvements, it is sent back over to the House of Lords, to be improved further. This is called Parliamentary Ping Pong. At the end of this room, everything began to become green. This is because we were entering the Commons section of the Houses of Parliament.

Next, we arrived in the Central lobby that is filled with statues of the most inspirational British people. This is where the public can go when they want to get their opinion heard. Following through the hall, we entered the House of Commons. This room's seats are green, and, at one end there is a chair in which the leader of the Commons sits.

The last part of our tour was to visit Westminster Hall (where everybody paid their respects to the Queen) and learnt about its history. It used to be a court where King Henry VIII found people guilty or not guilty.

Lastly, we took part in a People's Parliament workshop and thought about what it was like to be a suffragette. Suffragettes chained themselves to the grills that were in place for women and they protested in St Stephen's Hall.

To end the day off, we met a real life Baroness called Christine Crawley, who told us how she became one and what the role is like. She told us that one day she got a call from the Prime Minister at the time (Tony Blair) and was thrilled to be asked to join the House of Lords. She had been a Labour MP within the European Parliament for 15 years and was pleased to no longer have to do the journey to Brussels each week. She told us that she fights for women's rights and although she agrees with the suffragettes message, she didn't necessarily agree with some of the ways that they protested.

We had a fantastic day and were inspired by what we saw and heard. Everyone that we spoke to were also incredibly impressed with how our very own School Parliament works, particularly its democratic process.

