

## MICROSOCIETY



*"I think it's a brilliant way to teach children about tax and government and handling money. It's not just a teacher talking and explaining, that would be boring!" Emma*

*"Provides pupils with very good learning experiences to develop their economic and business understanding and their enterprise skills and has excellent potential for further development." Ofsted*

**MicroSociety** is a twelve-week programme of work for primary school pupils endorsed by Ofsted. It involves children in creating their own society within the classroom and in setting up the institutions required by that society – government, a civil service, businesses, a legal system and an economy.

The programme is based around a number of economic concepts, which are introduced and then incorporated into the children's own society. These concepts include scarcity, currency, enterprise, profit, taxation and supply and demand.

Visiting speakers are invited to take part in the programme to relate the children's learning in the simulation to a real context, and pupils then make their own decisions about how much to base their society on the real world and how much to invent.

The **Learning Objectives** of the programme are to help pupils to:

- explore, the workings of a parliamentary democracy
- learn the basic steps in running a business
- improve skills such as communication, problem solving,

*"A wonderful opportunity for children to develop a range of skills in a meaningful context. An experience they will not forget!" Teacher*

*"I think we did MicroSociety to teach us about what sort of world we will be living in when we grow up." Omar*



negotiation and decision making by working in groups

- know more about how our economy functions

MicroSociety provides stimulating contexts and opportunities to cover aspects of the Key Stage 2 programme of study for English, Speaking and Listening, and Writing. It is also of particular relevance to Citizenship by preparing pupils to play an active role as a citizen.

*"Normally in class if someone has an argument then the teacher sorts it out but in MicroSociety the government or you has to sort it out." Louise*

### MicroSociety Training

Before embarking on MicroSociety with a class of pupils, teachers are required to participate in a two day non-residential course delivered by My Voice London.

*"How brilliant to have a course where you experience what the children will feel." Teacher*

The training programme includes:

- an introduction to MicroSociety and its underlying rationale
- reinforcement of teachers' understanding of the economic concepts and discussion of their use with young pupils
- practice in the use of simulations
- discussion of best practice when working in the classroom with visitors from the business community.

*"Using other Teachers' experiences was vital. Very much liked the friendly 'we are all learning together feeling' from the facilitators – didn't feel 'us and them' or patronised." Teacher*

Every effort will also be made to include a visit to a MicroSociety in a local school – this largely depends on schools' curriculum and timetabling constraints.

### Children said:

202 pupils who had taken part in 2010, told us that as a result of taking part in MicroSociety:

I have felt more confident about myself	<b>87%</b>
I have felt more able to sort out difficulties and problems myself	<b>95%</b>
I feel better prepared for working life	<b>91%</b>
I've realised it's worth trying new things even if sometimes I fail	<b>93%</b>
I've realised that I can learn from mistakes.	<b>90%</b>

*"Sometimes I sit in my bed and I'm scared and I don't know why and I realised that I am scared of life...what can happen and what you have to do. MicroSociety has shown me that there is nothing to be afraid of and I am glad." Tammy*



## MicroSociety Resource Pack

The MicroSociety resource pack is made available to every teacher attending the training. It contains weekly units, each consisting of two MicroSociety sessions.

Each unit follows a common format including:

- background briefing on economic concepts or citizenship aspects,
- planned outcomes,
- a tale about the problems faced by the people of a fictional planet to illustrate the economic concepts,
- a range of suggested activities.

We would love to hear from you! Please contact us on 020 8545 2131 or at [info@myvoicelondon.org.uk](mailto:info@myvoicelondon.org.uk) for more information.

MicroSociety is based on a programme developed by Dr Marilyn Kourilsky in Los Angeles, California, entitled *Mini-Society*, which has run successfully with pupils aged 8-12 years for more than 20 years. It has been adapted by My Voice London for use in British primary schools.



*"Very detailed and accessible – inspiring!"*  
Teacher

*"Guided and developed thinking and proved clear links with the real world. Challenged thinking and developed focussed questioning."*  
Teacher

*"The best, most memorable and potentially transformative course I have attended."*  
Teacher

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## **MICROSOCIETY TEACHERS' NOTES WEEK 1 – SCARCITY**

At any given time there are a fixed amount of resources in the world. Decisions must be made as to how these resources are going to be shared out and used by all the people in the world. Scarcity of resources is a world issue.

Human beings have needs and wants. Human wants are *unlimited* in the sense that as soon as needs are satisfied, additional wants emerge. For example, all people need shelter, but once they have it they may want more comfortable surroundings; humans need food, but then want more variety and certain kinds of food. The only way of satisfying these needs and wants is to use the world's resources, but people can never have all of their wants satisfied because there are not enough resources to go around – resources are *limited*. There is thus a problem of scarcity.

To say that something is scarce does not necessarily mean that there is only a small amount of it. The important part about scarcity is that there is less of something available than the amount people want. A resource is scarce if the total amount available is not sufficient to produce all of the things that people want. However some things are not scarce because no one wants them, for example, rotten eggs.

Scarcity of resources that people want gives rise to the necessity to make choices. All societies have to make these choices which are determined by value judgements – i.e. which is the 'best', 'most efficient' or 'fairest' way to use scarce resources. The process whereby these decisions are made is the society's economy in action.

### **Outcomes from Week 1**

- Pupils understand the concept of scarcity.
- The teacher helps the class to understand the notion of paying for what you want.
- The children choose a name for their society, design a flag and make some decisions about how they will be paid in their society.

### **Suggested activities – Session 1**

Read the tale called Justenuf and discuss the following questions with the class:

How do you think the people should decide which of them should have what?

If the computer is not mended, how could the people of Justenuf get the things they need and want? What things do people need? What might they want?

Choose three things that people want. How could these three be produced? (Example – clothes: plant, water, fertilise, harvest, spin, weave, and sew) Once the three things have been produced, how might it be decided in Justenuf who gets what?

What is the word for there not being enough of something for everyone to have what they want?

Give some examples of scarcity.