

Students attend 'Up For Debate'

Last Thursday (19th April), nine Year 8 and 9 students from Durrington's Excellence Academy had an exciting trip to London as they honed their debating skills entering the PiXL Edge and Noisy Classroom *Up For Debate* Regional Competition held at Ibstock Place School.

Mr Shoebridge, English teacher and Leader of The Excellence Academy took 2 teams to represent Durrington, a main team, that had prepared for 2 debates and a 'Swing Team' that were held in reserve; unsure if they would be needed (they were!) and unsure of which side they would argue. They were supported by 3 other students who helped with time-keeping during debates and asked questions when the debate was opened to the floor. It was a busy day with 36 teams from the South region taking part in over 100 debates which lasted around 25 minutes each. The subjects debated were tough issues that required much thought and maturity for our students to argue their point. Both teams opposed 'This House would tax junk food' and proposed 'This House would return cultural treasures to their country of origin.'

There was a final debate which neither team were prepared for and so they used all the skills they had learnt during their time in The Excellence Academy to debate whether assisted suicide should be legalised. The swing team opposed this and the main team proposed it and, to their credit, both teams won their debates! In all three debates our teams received high praise from the judges, people with a background in debating and the day was a fantastic success. What was particularly impressive was the Swing Team winning an unprecedented 2/3 debates, not bad for the reserves!

The students had a fantastic day and it was wonderful to see them grow in confidence and put into practice their classroom learning. For some students, it was their first time debating or even public speaking, and we are very proud of their achievements. The experience has clearly left some students thirsty for more with one (American-born) Year 8 boy asking 'Do you need to be born in the UK to become Prime Minister?' So, a career in politics may beckon for some but a great day out was had by all, as once again Durrington students went beyond their best.

