

**Message from Michael Jarrett, Director of Children and Education
Elections 2023: Voter ID Messages in Schools
(circulated on 6 March 2023)**



Dear Headteachers,

You may have seen the local and national communications campaign regarding the requirement to show photo ID when voting at a polling station, starting from the Local Elections on 4 May.

It is critical that we spread awareness of this change, Schools can really help with this by spreading the message amongst staff, parents and carers, and, in some cases, students (for those that have learners who are aged 18 or close to 18 who will be able to vote in elections this year or next.)

Attached are some digital resources that we would be grateful if you could share on your communications channels including in staff messages and, if possible, on your social media channels and or your websites.

Key places of distribution are:

- Websites
- Text messages
- Digital Newsletters

There is also a further partner resources pack that includes a web and newsletter copy, as well as some translated materials and a draft text message you can send via your text message system. The draft text message includes a list of Sandwell schools that are hosting polling stations at the elections in May. I would particularly ask schools who are hosting a polling station to ensure they share this message, especially with parents and carers.

Below are the details of Voter ID to assist you in spreading the message:

What is Voter ID? Three key messages:

- You need photo ID to vote at a polling station.
- Which ID you need to vote at a polling station.
- No ID? How to get some for free.

Here's the key info on these three messages:

You need photo ID to vote at a polling station This new requirement will apply for the first time in Sandwell at the local elections on Thursday 4 May 2023.

You may already have a form of photo ID that is acceptable. You can use any of the following to vote at a polling station:

Which forms of ID can I use to vote?

- A passport
- A photo driving licence (including a provisional licence)
- A Blue Badge
- A biometric immigration document
- A national identity card
- An identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (a PASS card)
- An Older Person's Bus Pass
- A Disabled Person's Bus Pass
- An Oyster 60+ Card
- A Freedom Pass
- Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identity Card)
- And some other forms of photographic ID

You can still use photo ID if it's out of date as long as it still looks like you.

If you don't already have an accepted form of photo ID, or you're not sure whether your photo ID still looks like you, you can apply for a free voter ID document, known as a Voter Authority Certificate.

And if you don't want to vote at a polling station you can apply for a postal vote or proxy vote.

How to get a free Voter Authority Certificate

- For voters living in Sandwell - for more details and to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate online go to www.sandwell.gov.uk/elections2023 You will need your National Insurance Number.
- Call the council's Voter ID helpline on 0121 569 6999.
- Go into any Sandwell Library or Sandwell Council House in Oldbury for help to apply for free photo ID.
- [If you vote in another local authority area, please check the Electoral Commission website.](#)
- The deadline to get a Voter Authority Certificate to vote in this year's Local Elections is 5pm on Tuesday 25 April 2023.

Checking photo ID at a polling station and privacy

All communities are reassured that photo ID can be checked in private. A privately screened area will be provided for anyone who wishes to have their ID checked in private. Head coverings will need to be removed in this area for a voter's identity to be checked. All polling stations will have a female member of staff to do these checks. Mirrors will be provided for voters to replace head coverings in comfort.

Postal votes

There are no changes to the way people vote by post. If you are registered to vote by post, you will receive your ballot paper pack and vote in the same way. Anyone who wishes to [apply for a postal vote](#) should do so before 5pm on Tuesday 18 April to vote by post in this year's elections.

Proxy votes

You can also [apply for a proxy vote](#) so someone you trust can vote on your behalf. A proxy voter will need to show their own photo ID in the polling station.

Further questions?

The answers to frequently asked questions can also be found on the council website: www.sandwell.gov.uk/voterIDFAQs

Some useful links:

- Full information about the 2023 Local Elections and Voter ID – including how to apply for a VAC/get help to get a VAC if you live in Sandwell: www.sandwell.gov.uk/elections2023
- Voter ID FAQs: www.sandwell.gov.uk/voterIDFAQs
- Translated materials: www.sandwell.gov.uk/voterIDtranslations
- Graphics and suggested posts for social media are attached, as well as the partner pack from the Electoral Commission.
- Here's a useful video that schools can add to their websites and share where it's useful (on social media, at events, on screens in buildings): <https://youtu.be/7RvIWxWzr3s> If you need the video file, get in touch and it can be sent via WeTransfer.
- Want to include Voter ID in your email signature? See below and feel free to copy and use on your own signature



Find out more about Voter ID and how to apply for free photo ID if you live in Sandwell.

If you vote in another local authority area, please check the Electoral Commission website.

Your support is greatly appreciated – we cannot spread this message and the support available to people who need free photo ID without your help. If you have any questions or would like any further clarification around this please do not hesitate to contact me or our elections team by emailing electoral_services@sandwell.gov.uk

With best wishes

Michael