

A FAIR SHARE



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DID YOU KNOW?



IN 2016/2017, the UK Government expects to take in around £716 billion in taxes!

THERE'S been a lot in the news recently about tax, and how some companies might not be paying their fair share of it. Chancellor Philip Hammond will talk a lot about tax in his Spring Budget on Wednesday (8 March). But what is tax, and how does it affect pupils and teachers?

What is tax?

A tax is money that people and businesses pay to governments, to pay for things like schools, police, hospitals and roads. For instance, adults who work full-time pay something called income tax, which is a portion of their wages that goes straight to the Government.

The price of most of the things you buy in the shops includes something called value added tax (VAT), which the shops give to the Government.

HOW MUCH IS RIGHT?

For as long as taxes have existed, people have argued over how fair they are. Some people think that, if a person or business makes a lot of money, they should be allowed to keep most of it, and not give much back to the Government. But others think that wealth should be shared more evenly, to make things more fair and to have less inequality.

This has become more of an issue lately, because the gap between rich and poor is getting wider in many countries. Many big companies and rich people have been criticised for avoiding tax.



Odile (left) and Jed with their teacher, Rosie Thomson

WHERE TO START?

The charity ActionAid UK has put together some teaching resources so that pupils across Britain can learn more and start talking about issues like fairness and equality. To make them, they worked with SAPERE, who specialise in teaching philosophy for children (P4C).

Your teacher can get the resources from the First News website (see below).



Pupils at St Nicholas' Primary discussing tax and fairness

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

You might think that tax is something for adults and that none of it affects you, but the reality is the complete opposite. If school or hospital budgets are cut, your education and health could suffer.

"Children learning about grown-up subjects, helps them to become better grown-ups," says Jed.

Also, if you don't like the behaviour of a company, you don't have to use them.

"A boycott is a good idea," says Odile. "When a company has a better service, we often forget our morals and just use it. We think it probably won't impact us, but it will."

What they said...

ActionAid tried out their resources in St Nicholas' Primary School in Oxford. Here's what two of the pupils (Odile and Jed, both 11) and their teacher (Rosie Thomson) thought about their lesson.

Odile: "What I like about P4C is you get to talk about all the problems of the world and look at how we could fix them. I didn't like politics before, but P4C opens up your views and changes the way you see things."

Jed: "Before, I had a rough understanding of what tax is, and I thought it was a bad thing. Now I understand that it pays for things like hospitals, schools and police."

Rosie: "The resources help children to realise that there is unfairness in the world, but also that they have the means and the education to try to put a stop to it."