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Press Notice

Sixth formers take their case to the Supreme Court

Students from two London Sixth Form Colleges will be making passionate arguments in front of a panel of peer ‘judges’ next week at The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom – the first time that the court has opened its benches and lawyers’ rooms for young people to prepare and stage mock debates.

A total of 120 Students from Leyton Sixth Form College in East London and Xavier Sixth Form College in South London are due to visit the court on Parliament Square, Westminster, in visits organised with the National Centre for Citizenship and the Law (NCCL).

The NCCL is a national education charity which seeks to provide engaging resources to help develop young people’s understanding of the law, community involvement, and moral rights and responsibilities. It works closely with the Royal Courts of Justice in holding similar events.

During the half-day visits to the Supreme Court, taking place next Monday (27 September) and Wednesday (29 September), the students will form teams to advocate and oppose two different propositions, based on past cases dealt with by the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords (the ‘Law Lords’, who are now the Justices of the Supreme Court). The students will debate the extent to which school uniform policies should allow forms of religious or cultural dress; and the issue of euthanasia. A panel of five students will hear each debate before retiring to consider their judgment.

The young people will also learn about the structure of the courts system in different parts of the United Kingdom, and the role played by the Supreme Court in particular.

Since the Supreme Court was formally opened just under one year ago, it has welcomed more than 100 school and college groups to explore the refurbished courtrooms and dedicated exhibition space, which presents information about the UK’s justice systems, constitutional and legal history, and some interactive examples of cases.

The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom

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Jenny Rowe, Chief Executive of the Supreme Court, comments: “We hope that giving students a chance to sit at the benches used by the most senior advocates and judges in the country to debate contemporary social issues will ignite their interest in law and fuel further study of the way our legal systems have developed.

“One of the Supreme Court’s founding aims is to educate and inspire people about the justice systems of the United Kingdom, as well as to adjudicate on cases. Moving out of the House of Lords has given us a fresh chance to review how the highest court in the land can do this, and this project is a great example of that work in action.”

Tim Desmond, Chief Executive of the NCCL, comments: “Having worked with the Galleries of Justice Museum and the Royal Courts of Justice, this is a fantastic opportunity for the NCCL to follow the legal process through to the Supreme Court. It is very empowering for young people to debate points of law in the very rooms where the Justices make decisions that shape society. I have no doubt that this experience will play a key role in their appreciation of the value of being a citizen in our democracy.”

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