

## School Councillors vs. MLAs

### KEY:

MP: Ms Porter

L: Lewis

(MUSIC)

L: Good morning Ms Porter. What are all these posters about?

MP: Good Morning Lewis. The posters are for the school council elections. We're electing school councillors to represent all students, and they will work together to improve our school.

L: So, it's like the way MLAs are elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly? Don't they represent everybody and pass laws?

MP: That's right! We will elect one student from each class to be a member of the school council. In the Assembly election, we elect five people from each area, known as a constituency. We have eighteen constituencies.

L: Five people, multiplied by eighteen constituencies, equals ninety. So that must mean we elect ninety MLAs.

MP: Correct. In school council elections, students who want to be elected have to persuade students to vote for them by explaining what they stand for. This is just like the Assembly election, adults who want to be elected have to persuade people to vote for them, by telling them what they will do if they get elected.

L: Oh yes, I remember the MLAs talking about something called a manifesto, and a lot of leaflets being dropped through the letterbox at election time.

MP: That's right. When people want to be elected to the Assembly as MLAs, they usually join a political party. A manifesto lists what the party stand for, and what things the party will do if they get elected. Students who want to be on the school council will write their own manifesto, so everyone in the school can read what they will do if they get elected.

L: I should read this before I vote for anybody! I want to make sure that I vote for someone with good ideas.

MP: That's wise, but you know, you can also stand for election to the school council. Just as anybody over the age of 18 is free to stand at Assembly elections.

L: What will school councillors do?

MP: The school council will meet to discuss things to do with our school, like the school lunches and the play area.

L: So it's a bit like the job of an MLA?

MP: Yes! MLAs debate ideas, they pass laws, they attend Committee meetings, and they meet the people they represent. School councillors work to improve the school, while MLAs work to improve Northern Ireland.

L: During a debate in the Assembly, I watched an MLA who had the job of being the Speaker. It was a bit like being a referee.

MP: And just like the Speaker, the Chairperson on the school council will also chair meetings and make sure everybody has an opportunity to give their view.

L: MLAs told us that we could find out what they are doing and saying by going onto the Assembly website.

MP: Yes, and the school councillors will put information onto the school website about the things they're discussing.

L: I can see that the work of an MLA and a school councillor have lots in common. I've lots of ideas for the school play area, so I'm going to write my own manifesto.

MP: Good idea, and maybe when you're older, you might want to think about taking part in the Northern Ireland Assembly elections.

L: That's something for me to think about.

(MUSIC)