

## **Our Visit to the Houses of Parliament – 21st January 2025**

On the 21st of January 2025, members of our School Parliament (Years 3 to 6) had the incredible opportunity to visit the Houses of Parliament. During our visit, we explored how Parliament functions, where debates take place, how laws are made and we admired the breathtaking architecture, artwork, and statues throughout the building. One of the highlights of the day was meeting our local MP, Bambos Charalambous.

Our journey began at the Sovereign's Entrance, tracing the same path followed by monarchs. Standing beneath the grand Victoria Tower, where all the nation's laws are kept, we took in the magnificent view of Big Ben—also known as the Elizabeth Tower—and its iconic clock face.

We were then led into the lavish Robing Room. Inside, we saw a smaller throne once used exclusively by Queen Victoria. Our guide explained how the Palace has been redesigned many times due to age and damage, including during times of protest. The current structure, with its richly decorated red, green, and gold ceilings, reflects the Victorian era and this room marked the beginning of the red-themed decor.

As the tour continued, we noticed beautiful ceiling designs, especially in the Prince of Wales' Room, which featured dragons and the Welsh flag. The walls were lined with portraits of monarchs and their spouses throughout history.

After that, we were shown where MPs can select which debates or bills they want to attend - one of which was about finances in football, a topic that really caught the children's interest!

Next, we stepped into the House of Lords. We learned where different members sit, the significance of the gold throne reserved for the monarch, and how debates and decision-making happen. We discovered how the lawmaking process involves both Houses—the Lords draft proposals, which are then sent to the Commons for revision, and then returned for further changes. This back-and-forth process is known as "Parliamentary Ping Pong."

Our final stop on the tour was Westminster Hall—a historic site where people paid their respects to Queen Elizabeth II. It was once a royal court where King Henry VIII tried people for serious crimes, making it one of the most historically significant spaces in the building.

To end the day, we met our local Member of Parliament, Bambos Charalambous. He explained how both Houses of Parliament work and what his role involves. He was very interested in hearing from the children and asked them to share ideas about changes they would like to see in their community and beyond. The pupils offered thoughtful suggestions and felt encouraged knowing their voices mattered.

We left feeling inspired by everything we saw and learned. Everyone we met was incredibly impressed by how our School Parliament operates—especially its strong commitment to democracy.

