

SOCIAL STUDIES — CITIZENSHIP · P6–P7

# Pàrlamaid na h-Alba — The Scottish Parliament

Citizenship — P6–P7

## The Scottish Parliament

1

### Established

1999, following the 1997 devolution referendum (74% voted Yes). First sitting: 12 May 1999. Located at Holyrood, Edinburgh — the building designed by Enric Miralles, opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 2004.

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### MSPs

Members of the Scottish Parliament. 129 MSPs — 73 constituency MSPs (FPTP) and 56 regional MSPs (proportional representation). Mixed electoral system gives more proportional outcomes than Westminster.

3

### Devolved powers

Health (NHS Scotland, separate from England); Education (Curriculum for Excellence); Justice (Scots law); Housing; Agriculture; Transport; Environment; Some tax powers (income tax rates, council tax).

4

### Reserved powers

Remain with Westminster: defence, foreign policy, immigration, social security (benefits), most taxation, broadcasting.

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### First Minister

Leader of the Scottish Government — the devolved executive. Elected by MSPs. Current (2026): John Swinney (SNP).



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## Committees

The Scottish Parliament has a strong committee system — committees scrutinise legislation and hold the government to account. Their reports are taken seriously.

# nd the Scottish Parliament

Voting and participation

- VOTING AGE: Scotland lowered the voting age to 16 for Scottish Parliament elections (2015). Young Scots aged 16-17 can vote — unlike in UK general elections.
- PETITION: Any member of the public can petition the Scottish Parliament on any matter within its remit. There is a dedicated Public Petitions Committee.
- VISIT: The Scottish Parliament is free to visit. Educational visits for school groups are welcomed.
- YOUTH PARLIAMENT: the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) represents young people aged 14-25. Members are elected. They have genuine influence on policy.

