



Tolerance Day Survey

November 2016

Table of Contents

Survey Highlights	p. 3
Q1. Age of respondents	p. 5
Q3. Has anyone been mean to you because you're different?	p. 6
Q4. Why do think people are mean to those who are different?	p. 9
Q5. What would make the world a more tolerant place?	p. 12
Q6. How could we make people less scared of difference?	p. 14
Q7. Questions for the Prime Minister	p. 16

Survey Highlights

While young children often seem unaffected by the concerns of adults, especially when it comes to questions of difference, it seems increasingly apparent that they are affected by the views and attitudes of the adults around them.

Given the resurgence of intolerant language and attitudes engendered by the Brexit and US election campaigns, at Learn2Think we wanted to understand how children of a young age experienced the world and expressions of intolerance.

The survey was undertaken to anonymously explore primary school aged children's experience of such behaviour, and any thoughts they might have on how to make the world a more tolerant place.¹

An interesting analysis post-election in the US was the different voting patterns by age, and the fact that Trump would not have been elected by millennial voters. This underscores the fact that as generational shifts occur, we see changes in how society accepts increased diversity and creativity.

We developed the ToDay programme to mark the UN International Day for Tolerance as it appears increasingly important that we make acceptance, understanding and dialogue central to the way we educate our children.

These are their thoughts.

Have people been mean to you because you're different?

For **over 40 per cent** of respondents, someone has mean to them because they were different.

It is sad to recognise that a number of children are already experiencing the impact of being seen as different, even at primary school, and the ways in which their peers can react to that difference.

Twenty three per cent of children have experienced meanness because they behave or act differently to their peers, and **19 per cent** because they look different, while **14 per cent** have suffered because their opinions or beliefs differ.

Why do you think people are mean to those who are different?

The children who responded to the survey clearly recognise that one of the reasons that children are mean to them is because of factors that have nothing to do with them. **Eighty-eight per cent** of respondents felt that people were mean because they want to feel better than other people, or that they were simply mean.

Yet **36 per cent** of the children were aware that people can be mean about others because they've heard or been told bad things about them, seeing this as a driving force behind people being mean.

The importance of getting to know people also came through the responses as an important element in making a difference to behaviour, with **25 per cent** of the children thinking the problem

¹ The survey was completed by 217 children from 49 schools. Where percentages add up to more than 100 it is because the children were allowed to choose more than one answer.

is caused by people not knowing them properly and a further **20 per cent** thinking it's because they've never seen this sort of difference and are afraid of it.

There were a few instances where a child said outright that the behaviour they experienced was because of their skin colour, or their attacker was racist, or didn't like their religion. Given the natural open-mindedness of most children, it is the insidious nature of intolerance, the idea that that which is different is wrong, which is of such concern at such a young age.

Comments from the children suggested we include the notion that their attackers could be jealous, they could have horrible things happening at home, or that they'd been bullied themselves, or even that they were worried that they were going to be bullied so it was safer to join in on an attack.

What do you think could make the world a more tolerant place?

Perhaps most impressive was the result that **53 per cent** of children said that the most important way of making the world a more tolerant place would be if people were kinder to each other.

While only **14 per cent** of children said the most important thing was to make the world more tolerant was for adults to listen to children more, there were a significant number of children who thought that this was the second or third most important thing, at **43 per cent**.

A significant number of the children also felt that finding new and different things exciting and not scary was the second and third most important element to a more tolerant world, at **34 per cent**.

How could we make people less afraid of those who are different?

One of the most important findings from the survey were the ways in which we could make people less scared of each other and they were: learning more about people who are different; thinking about the things we have in common; and talking more to people who are different. These came in at **40 per cent**, **32 per cent** and **28 per cent** respectively.

It's worth noting however that many of the children made comments about how important it was to make friends with people who are different, to experience their lifestyles and to play together. One child suggested having a talk with class mates about why we are different. It's clear that children recognise that understanding each other is crucial to getting along, probably a suggestion that adults could learn from. And remember, as one child pointed out, "It does not matter if you're different, you're perfect the way you are in different ways."

Questions for the Prime Minister

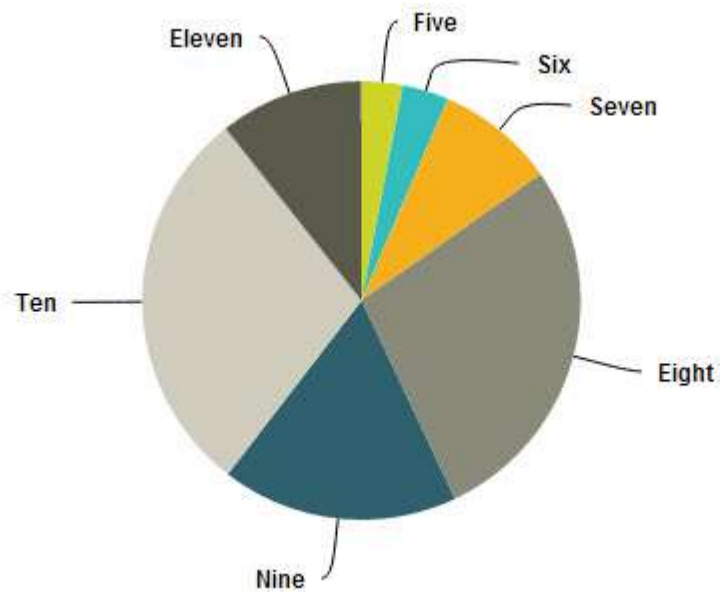
Many of the same questions arose and unsurprisingly many of those questions focused on issues around fairness and the need to prevent bullying. There was a definite interest in the need for more kindness and a surprising number of children were politicised, with varying calls for the right of children to vote, either generally or at least on matters that would impact them.

We have identified the questions which arose and listed them below but the questions most often raised – up to 10-15 times - were about children's right to vote on things that affect them, and the problems and challenges of inequality (whether of access to money, home, healthcare or food).

Children seem to want the world to be a fairer place.

Q1: Age of Respondents

There was a broad range of ages of respondents, but the majority of respondents were over the age of 8, and 10 years olds being the largest percentage of respondents, at 33 per cent.



In percentage terms the age of respondents broke down as follows:

11 years old	11 per cent
10 years old	29 per cent
9 years old	17 per cent
8 years old	28 per cent
7 years old	9 per cent
6 years old	3 per cent
5 years old	3 per cent

Q2: Has anyone ever been mean to you because...

- You look different (colour of skin, because you're a boy/girl, size, clothes)?
- You sound different (language)?
- You behave differently (boyish/girly, very bad/very good at something)?
- You live differently (eat different things, live in a different area, don't have the latest gear)?
- You have different ideas about something (religion, opinions, likes/dislikes)?
- No one has ever been mean to you for these reasons

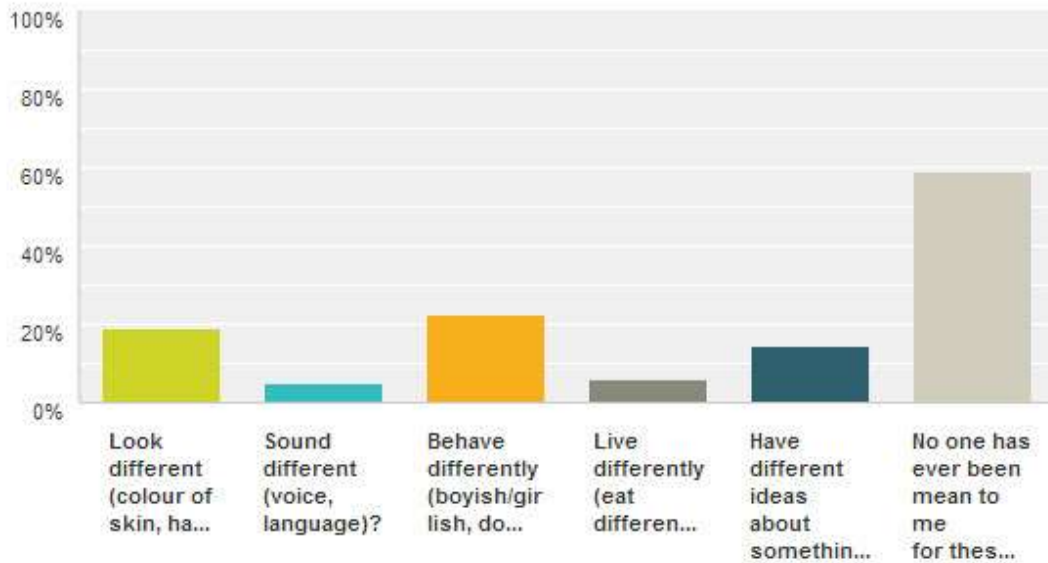
One of the most positive findings from the survey is that for 59 per cent of respondents, no one has ever been mean to them because of any of the above reasons. Sadly though a number of children are already experiencing the impact of the ways in which their peers can react to that difference.

Many of the comments refer to situations where one child is clearly being singled out for being different, whether it's because they're fat or freckled, sound different or have different friends, or have different beliefs and opinions. The children talk about being excluded from play, talked about behind their backs, teased and blamed for things they haven't done.

It's not easy being little and trying to grow up but it's clear that children need further support in accepting difference in each other – for whatever reason – and in preventing the bullying that seems to go along with the singling out of difference.

One of the saddest responses was from one child who said that they didn't want to tell us about it. There are children out there who can anonymously admit they have suffered, but they still don't want to talk about it.

Has anyone ever been mean to you because you:



In percentage terms:

Look different	19 per cent
Sound different	5 per cent
Behave differently	23 per cent
Live differently	6 per cent
Have different ideas	15 per cent
No one has ever been mean to you for these reasons	59 per cent

Please note that while the percentages above add up to more than 100 per cent, this is because the children were allowed to respond more than once to the question.

Some of the comments that the children made about their experiences and why and how people were mean:

- They were pushing and shoving me onto the floor, saying things behind my back
- People have been whispering about me behind other peoples backs
- People have talked behind my back saying I'm weird
- In my old school, I was treated badly by boys in my class because I was a girl and weaker than them
- That you had a bad language, and you did not
- I have different ideas
- People think I have a funny voice
- People have been mean to me because they say I'm bad at maths and also have different opinions about things

- Because sometimes I am not allowed to do things they do, so sometimes people can say mean things because of it
- People have been mean to me because I sometimes behave differently, or do something wrong
- Because of my Irish accent
- That I'm bigger in weight than other boys and girls
- I'm not as good at sports as some other people
- They say I am dumb
- They take my things and my teacher treats me different because I take too long to learn something
- Cause I've been ill and had a lot of time off school, which didn't affect my school work I got good grades
- Because I have eczema
- Making fun of me
- Because people think I am not brave
- A comment about my freckles
- Because of who my friends are
- I don't want to tell you about it

Q3: Why do you think people are mean to those who are different?

- Because they don't know them properly?
- Because they have never seen this sort of difference and are scared of new things?
- Because they have heard or been told bad things about people who are different in a certain way?
- Because they want everyone to be like them?
- Because they want to feel better than other people?

Perhaps one of the most interesting outcomes of the survey is the emotional intelligence shown by children at a relatively young age – a recognition that the unkindness that is being shown to them is not to do with them, but to do with the aggressor.

Eighty-one per cent of respondents felt that people were mean because they want to feel better than other people, or that they were simply mean people.

There is clearly a recognition amongst the children however, that people can be mean about others because they've heard or been told bad things about them, with 36 per cent of the children seeing this as a driving force behind people being mean.

The importance of getting to know people also came through the responses as an important element in making a difference to behaviour, with 25 per cent of the children thinking the problem is caused by people not knowing them properly and a further 20 per cent thinking it's because they've never seen this sort of difference and are afraid of it.

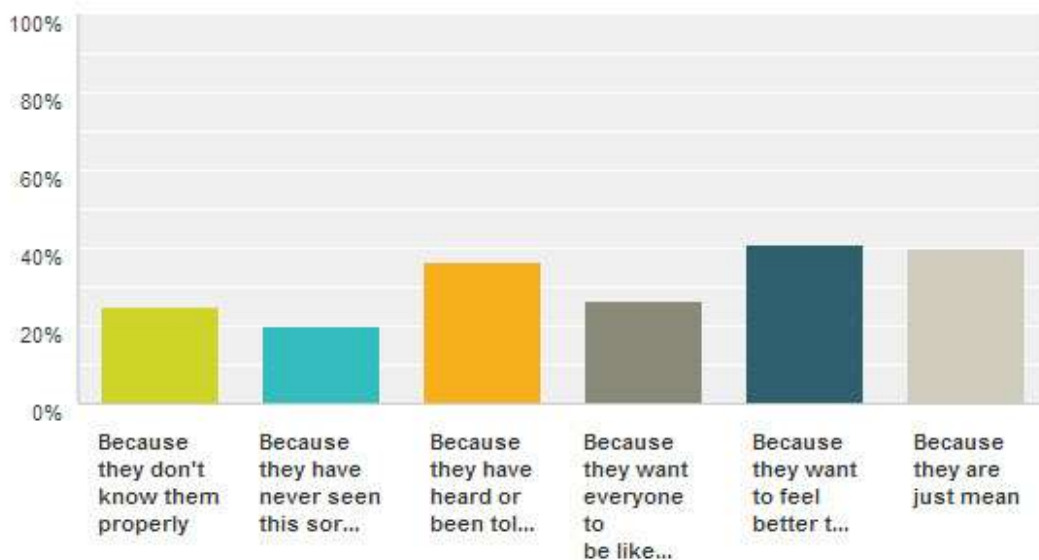
Many of the children recognised that meanness could be because those people are jealous of them, but they also recognised that sometimes people are mean because others have been mean to them. Comments from the children suggested we include the notion that they could have horrible things happening at home, or that they'd been bullied themselves, or even that they were worried that they were going to be bullied so it was safer to join in on an attack.

There were a number of instances where the children said the attack had been based on skin colour, some said it was because their attacker was racist and two instances where the attacker didn't like their religion.

Worrying as it is that such behaviour is apparent amongst children, it is the insidious nature of such ideas within society that is of such concern. It highlights how important it is to address intolerant attitudes wherever possible. One child even suggested talking to classmates about why people are different, so they also recognise the need to deal with these problems.

Given the ages of the respondents, one would hope that they would be open to each other and their differences, but the responses once again underscore the importance of embedding tolerance in everyday practice and within the education system.

Why do you think that people are sometimes mean to people who are different (you can choose more than one answer if you want)?



In percentage terms:

Because they don't know them properly	25 per cent
Because they have never seen this sort of difference and are scared of new things?	20 per cent
Because they have heard or been told bad things about people who are different in a certain way?	36 per cent
Because they want everyone to be like them?	27 per cent
Because they want to feel better than other people	41 per cent
Because they are just mean	40 per cent

Please note that while the percentages above add up to more than 100 per cent, this is because the children were allowed to respond more than once to the question.

Some of the comments that the children made about their experiences and why and how people were mean:

- Because they're racist
- Because they want to act big
- They also don't know they are doing it
- Maybe the person being bullied is too delicate scared and soft
- Because they have a different coloured skin
- Because they haven't been having a good day so they blame on you or someone else
- They are sometimes mean because they don't believe in themselves so they bully someone to make themselves feel better

- Because they feel stronger and bigger than them and they may feel more powerful than someone else
- Because they are a different race or religion than you
- As they are insecure on the inside so try to make life harder for others
- Because they are jealous
- As the person might of had it done to them so they want to do it to other people
- Because of the way they're raised and they look different
- Because they are not used to this different thing because they are jealous of them because they can do something really good that they can't do
- Because they like to make people feel bad and it might make them feel good to make some upset
- Because they think that the other is doing wrong instead of them
- Because they don't like other people's religion
- People can think different about the people they may not know and they will hurt the other persons feelings
- Because they don't like that person so they want the other person to feel left out
- They might be jealous of them
- Because if they don't they are maybe afraid that they will get bullied them self
- They are jealous
- Because it sometimes makes people feel more secure to find bad things in other people
- Because they are racist
- Because they could be jealous of the person
- Because they want to agree with everyone and be right
- Because they don't understand them
- Sometimes because people are mean to them first
- They may be having a rough time at home and want to put all their anger and sadness on other people.
- Because they have bad experiences at home
- They might be afraid of something different from themselves
- Because they like teasing or playing games
- Because they like excluding people
- It's just because they have to calm down

Q4. Which of the following do you think would make the world a more tolerant place?

Mark them in order of importance, where 1 is the most important?

- All adults would listen to children more
- Children could vote on the things that mattered to them
- People were kinder to each other
- Finding new and
- That people were allowed to live where they want
- That people could wear whatever they want

There were a wide range of responses to this question, more detail of which can be seen below. However the children rated the importance of things to make the world a more tolerant place in the following way:

- 53 per cent of children said that the most important element in making the world a more tolerant place would be if people were kinder to each other (72 per cent put this is the most important and second most important)
- 15 per cent thought that the most important element in making the world a more tolerant place would be if children could vote on things that matter to them
- 13 per cent thought it would help if adults listened to children more
- 10 per cent thought that letting people wear whatever they liked would help
- 6 per cent thought it would help by letting people live wherever they want, 5 per cent thought that finding new and different things exciting and not scary would make a difference

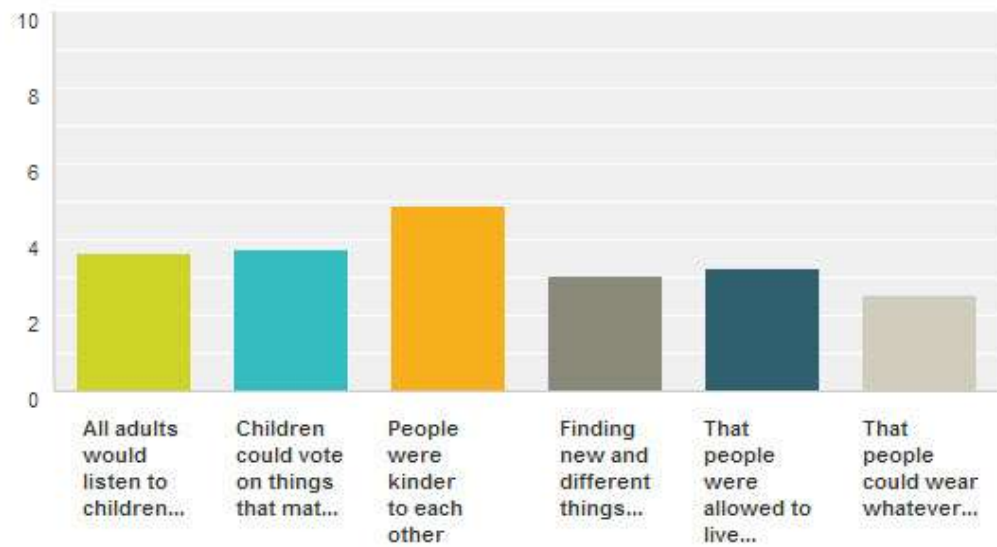
Other interesting findings from this question include that while only 13 per cent of children said the most important thing was for adults to listen to children more, there were a significant number of children who thought that this was the second or third most important thing, at 44 per cent.

A significant number of the children also felt that finding new and different things exciting and not scary was the second and third most important element to a more tolerant world, at 33 per cent.

Interestingly the majority of children felt that the ability to wear what you wanted was pretty unimportant in the grand scheme of things, with 61 per cent of respondents saying that this was the least or second least important thing needed to make the world a more tolerant place.

Many of the children's comments throughout the survey referred to refugees and the importance of supporting them, and 35 per cent of the children thought the importance of people being allowed to live where they liked was among the top three ways to make the world a more tolerant place.

If you could change any of the following things to make the world a more tolerant place, which would you choose (put them in order of importance)



Percentage rated levels of importance, where 1 is the most important

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Adults would listen	13	20	24	18	10	15
Children could vote	15	23	19	19	13	11
People were kinder	53	19	12	6	5	5
New things were exciting	5	12	21	24	19	18
People can live where they like	6	20	15	19	29	10
People can wear what they like	10	7	11	11	23	38

Q5. How could we make people less scared of people who are different?

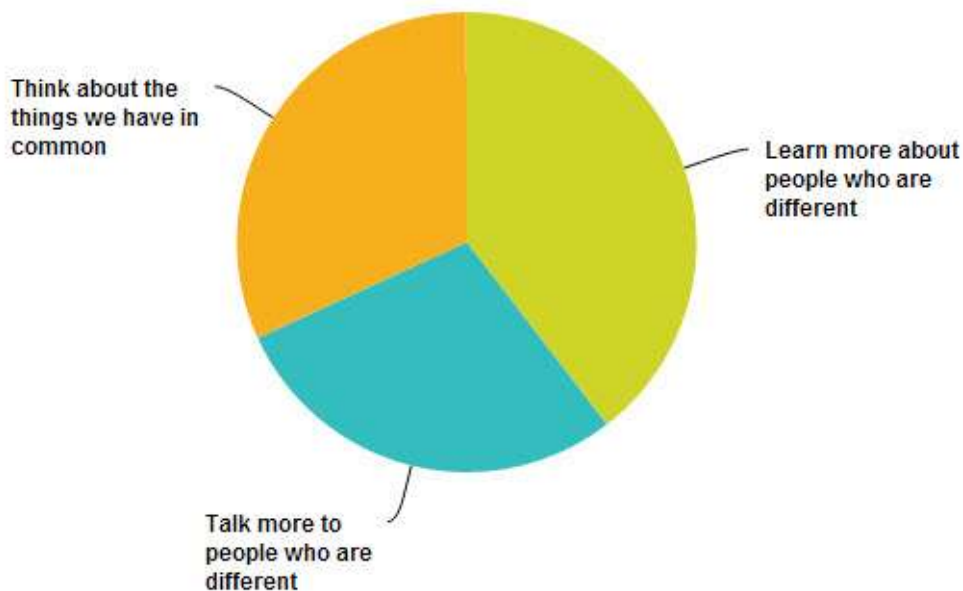
The answers to this question were reasonably equally split between three important aspects of communication:

- Think about the things we have in common
- Learn more about people who are different
- Talk more to people who are different

It's worth noting that many of the children made comments about how important it was to make friends with people who are different, to experience their lifestyles and to play together. It's clear that understanding each other is key to getting along, in a way that is obvious to ten year olds and younger. That's probably a suggestion that adults could learn from.

One of the nicest comments was, "Be happy that no one can be like you, you are special, so are they."

How do you think we could make people less scared of people who are different?



In percentage terms, responses broke down as follows:

Learn more about people who are different	40 per cent
Talk more to people who are different	29 per cent
Think about the things we have in common	31 per cent

Some of the comments that the children made about what could make the world a more tolerant place:

- Have a talk with your class mates in class about why we are different
- To know them better (mentioned many times)
- Make friends
- Talk to a trusted person you know and have a conversation
- To live the same life style for a day or two
- Spend time with people who are different
- Experience their life style
- Think that we are the same species and the same kind of species. We may have think different about each other yet we are similar in so many many ways and let's be honest human children may look scary but they are really not!
- Get to know their personalities better, and what they're like inside
- Realise how different they might seem to others. That people are unique
- Talk and hang out with the person that you had misjudged
- Play with them and hang out
- Making friends
- Try to make friends with people who are different
- And also to learn more about others
- Learn that it is absolutely terribly awful to discriminate in school
- To get to know people who are different
- Get to know the person
- To have jobs together and support each other
- Understand they have a personal issue so they take it out on you, understand it is not your fault
- Be happy that no one can be like you, you are special, so are they
- Understand them and respect them and their beliefs
- All people to talk
- Encourage people to do things together

Q6. If there was one thing you'd like the Prime Minister to change, or one question you'd like to ask her, what would it be?

The final question that the survey asked the children was what thing they'd like the Prime Minister to change, or one question that they'd like to ask her.

Many of the same questions arose and unsurprisingly many of those questions focused on issues around fairness and the need to prevent bullying. There was a definite interest in the need for more kindness and a surprising number of children were politicised, with varying calls for the right of children to vote, either generally or at least on matters that would impact them.

We have identified the types of questions which arose and listed them below but the questions most often raised – up to 10-15 times - were about children's right to vote on things that affect them, problems of inequality (whether of access to money, home, healthcare or food), stopping bullying and a surprisingly focused interest in politics.

Selected comments:

EDUCATION:

- Could you make it compulsory that all school children learn about all the different kinds of people around us to decrease bullying and increase tolerance?

SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Maybe she doesn't have this power, but if anyone could do anything, please stop racism. Like the people who shot the black people in the US. Stop racism and discrimination
- How can we make sure that everyone in the UK has enough food?
- Please can you try and make everyone more equal, as some people have much less than other people and that's not fair
- I would like Teresa May to change how many homeless people there are in the world
- Please make the country a better place for all to live in
- Help old people
- Why can't you tell all the banks that they should release a quarter of their profits and share it out to the people who don't have any money?
- Can you give women and children more opportunities?
- Why do you have to make rules that actually create more poverty
- That everyone would respect each other fairly on their skin colour or religion
- That girls and boys would be treated the same. For example, change the saying that boys are stronger than girls because that is not necessarily true. Also that people could all get on and that we could be kind to each other and all be happy
- Change the way tax, bills and mortgages are handled and bring the price of them down
- Could you make the country a more eco-friendly place?
- We should all have same amount to live on and no one should have struggle and go to food bank
- Can you please increase the number of hospitals across the UK so those people who are sick can get seen to and treated more quickly?
- Please may you make sure everything is fair in our country.
- Everyone should have a home
- Everyone would learn a lot about lots of religions, colours and differences
- Can you make the environment healthier

- To make schools talk about tolerance more often

REFUGEE CRISIS

- Please can you organise more charity events to raise money to help the refugees?
- Please let immigrants in to our country
- Change cruelty to Syrian refugees
- How can we make the world peaceful?
- Why do people hate or dislike the refugees who are coming to the country?
- I wish for all people to have freedom
- Make refugees welcome

POLITICS/BREXIT

- Please make the UK join the European Union again
- Could we have a re-election?
- Give children a voice to be heard because nearly all children have a opinion and nearly all of those children want that opinion heard. Why can you not give children 11+ a way of getting their votes heard?
- To make no wars
- To talk to other prime ministers about the war and segregation and make it STOP
- How can you stop people killing each other and why do they do it?
- Do we need rulers?

SECURITY

- How are you going to keep our country safe from ISIS?

BULLYING

- Make a law against bullying or being mean or ganging up on people at school
- To change the fact that people are mean
- To give children the support that they need
- Find out why people bully and help them, if not prevent it completely
- If people are bullies, then why do they have friends? The girl who bullied me had tons of friends, but some were my friends. I just don't get it at all!!!
- I would ask her to have a go at trying to make people stop disrespecting other people
- Be nicer to people who are black or white

PERSONAL

- How did you become prime minister?
- Why did you want to become Prime Minister?
- Were you ever bullied at school?
- How do you manage when people say mean things about you?
- How hard is it and how do you feel being the prime minister? Do you like being it?
- Is being prime minister changing your honesty and modesty?
- What do you think means the most to children?
- What do you think about the world now?
- Do you like to doodle?