KS

Learning - Charity - Community

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

• 8 MARCH •

7th March 2025, 7 Adar 5785

International Women's Day

What is International Women's Day?

Every year on the 8th of March, International Women's Day is celebrated across the globe. It is a day to recognise female achievement and a call to action encouraging everyone to stand up for women's rights and gender equality.

Aims of International Women's Day?

- Celebrate women's achievements
- Educate and raise awareness about women's equality
- Call for positive change advancing women
- Lobby for accelerated gender parity
- Fundraise for women-focused charities

History

Throughout history women have had to fight for the freedom and rights we enjoy today. 150 years ago, women could not vote, stand in parliament, receive proper medical attention, own property, access legal support, get paid the same as men, visit the same public areas as men, get a proper education . . . The list goes on.

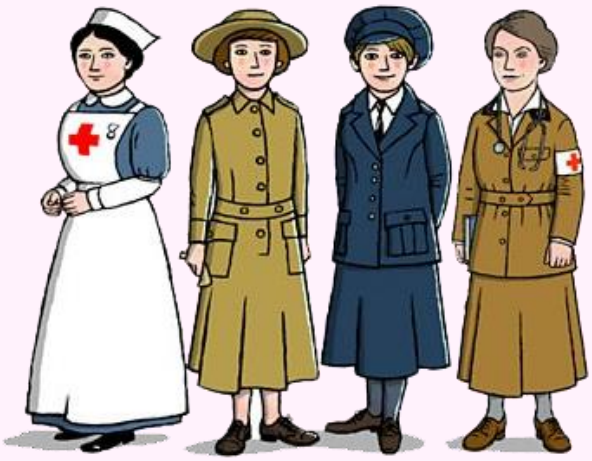
International Women's Day

How did things change?

Change occurred gradually through the tireless efforts of brave men and women fighting together for what is right.

In the late 19th century, the fight for women's suffrage began gaining momentum. Suffrage means the right to vote and at this time only men could do so. This meant that all the political decisions were decided by mean including those that only affected women.

One of these women was Emmeline Pankhurst who responded by forming the women's social and political union in 1903 which encouraged a stronger kind of activism. This led to years of protests, rallies and strikes with women being arrested, jailed, injured and some even losing their lives in the fight for suffrage.



When the first World War was declared in 1914, suffragettes shifted their campaign to encourage women's involvement in the war effort. The devastation of war brought the nation together in support of one another and attitudes began to change. Women took on responsibilities and jobs that they were previously excluded from like working as mechanics and drivers.

In 1918, the representation of the people bill was passed, giving women the right to vote, however it was only some women of a certain age and circumstance. It was not until 1928 that all women over 21 were finally allowed to vote.

The right to vote is instrumental in creating a society that is fair and just.

Once women were able to vote, the ball began rolling on other rights like political representation, access to greater opportunities, fairer pay and working rights. As you can see, change takes time, it was not until 1979 that Britain had its first female Prime Minister (Margaret Thatcher), which was 76 years after Emmeline Pankhurst first established the women's social and political union.

When was the first International Women's Day?

International Women's Day grew out of efforts in the early 20th century to promote women's rights, especially suffrage. In its campaign for female empowerment, the Socialist Party of America in 1909 held the first National Woman's Day, which was highlighted by mass meetings across the United States; the day was observed until 1913.

Encouraged by German activist Clara Zetkin, the International Socialist Congress agreed in 1910 to create an international version of the U.S. holiday, and on March 19, 1911, the first IWD was held in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland. More than one million people attended rallies marking the day.

In the following years, IWD was celebrated in additional countries and on varying dates. On March 8 (February 23, Old Style) 1917, women in Petrograd (St. Petersburg), Russia, marked the day by staging a strike to protest food shortages, poor living conditions, and World War I. This strike for "bread and peace" helped give rise to the Russian Revolution of 1917, which led to the abdication of Nicholas II on March 15 (March 2).

In 1921 the date of the IWD was officially changed to March 8.

What does gender equality look like today?

We are fortunate to live in a time and place where incredible opportunities are in abundance. Everyone can get an education, access healthcare, get a job and speak their minds however, we still have some work to do before we reach equality for all.

Women are still the minority in parliament, leadership roles and career fields like science and engineering as well as making less money than men on average.

Only 8% of CEOs of the top 100 companies are women

(Guardian 2021)

There is still a 7.7% gender pay gap among full-time employees

(ONS 2023)

Female enrolment in higher education was about 40% lower than male enrolment in some regions

(UNESCO 2022)

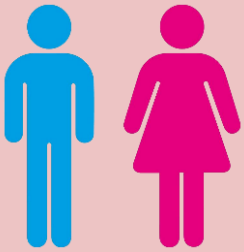
52% of women reported being sexually harassed at work

(Trades Union Congress 2019)

Stereotypes

One way that gender inequality plays out in our everyday life is through stereotypes. A stereotype is a generalised opinion of a person or group of people.

Ever heard someone say:



"You throw like a girl"

"Boys don't cry"

These kinds of phrases exist because of centuries of restrictive ideas about gender that really aren't true or fair. People are way too unique and complex to fit neatly in a box. Both boys and girls can be athletic, fast and strong and of course, everybody cries. It's normal and healthy to express your feelings and be vulnerable.

Stereotypes can be really damaging and can prevent you from being yourself and reaching your potential.

Why is International Women's Day important?

- Each year explores a theme
- The day has a long history
- It's an opportunity to celebrate women's accomplishments
- The day highlights to work that remains to be done
- It is an opportunity to raise funds for women's issues
- It is an opportunity for schools and organisations to provide education
- It is an opportunity to check on corporations that claim to be progressive
- The day connects people from around the world
- It is an opportunity to reflect on your own life
- International Women's Day is a call to action

IWD 2025 Campaign theme is 'Accelerate Action'

Imagine a gender equal world. A world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. A world that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and celebrated. Together we can forge gender equality. Collectively for #IWD2025 we can all **#AccelerateAction**.

At the current rate of progress, it will take until 2158, which is roughly five generations from now, to reach full gender parity, according to data from the World Economic Forum.

Focusing on the need to **Accelerate Action** emphasizes the importance of taking swift and decisive steps to achieve gender equality. It calls for increased momentum and urgency in addressing the systemic barriers and biases that women face, both in personal and professional spheres.

What are we doing at KS to mark IWD?

To mark International Women's Day, we invited the organisation Jewish Women's Aid to come in to speak to students. The sessions explored the importance of having an International Women's Day and why it is crucial to continue the conversation about improving circumstances for women all around the world.

Miss Mallach also organised a display in the library of inspirational women including actresses, activists and campaigners. She also selected and displayed an array of books written by celebrated female authors or stories with strong female protagonists which are available to be taken home.