

The Curriculum Briefing Series

ACT has produced a series of topic briefings which are designed to explain the new areas of content in the programmes of study for Citizenship and to provide a starting point for teachers as they review their plans. Topics include:

1. The electoral system and party politics
2. The constitution and political system
3. Active Citizenship & Volunteering
4. Personal finance
5. Justice, the legal system and international law

Additional resources such as guidance notes on the whole programmes of study and a 'big picture' are available to members on the ACT website:

www.teachingcitizenship.org

Active Citizenship & Volunteering

Curriculum Briefing 3

Curriculum references

The programme of study at key stage 3 requires teaching should develop:

- skills to research and interrogate evidence, debate and evaluate viewpoints, present reasoned arguments and take informed action

and that pupils should be taught about:

- the roles played by public institutions and voluntary groups in society and the ways in which citizens work together to improve their communities, including opportunities to participate in school-based activities

The programme of study at key stage 4 requires teaching should build on the key stage 3 programme of study and pupils should:

- develop their skills to be able to use a range of research strategies, weigh evidence, make persuasive arguments and substantiate their conclusions
- experience and evaluate different ways that citizens can act together to solve problems and contribute to society

and that pupils should be taught about:

- actions citizens can take in democratic and electoral processes to influence decisions locally, nationally and beyond
- different ways in which a citizen can contribute to the improvement of his or her community, to include the opportunity to participate actively in community volunteering, as well as other forms of responsible activity.

What's the big idea?

Democratic societies are more likely to thrive when there is an active and engaged citizenry who contribute positively to political and public life as voters, community members and informed, active citizens.

One of the aims of Citizenship is for students to “develop an interest in and commitment to, participation in volunteering as well as other forms of responsible activity that they will take with them into adulthood”. Active citizenship, including volunteering should involve learning *about* and learning *how* to influence decisions, improve communities and solve problems together.

The revised Citizenship curriculum requires students to explore and evaluate the roles of public institutions (eg parliament, the courts, public services) and of voluntary groups (eg third sector organisations such as charities, community or campaigning groups) in society. Students will also develop their knowledge whilst using skills to research challenging issues, debate problems and evaluate strategies and actions they have taken to address issues of concern within the school and wider community.

Key concepts & skills

The key to making teaching about volunteering and active citizenship effective is to return to a few clear central concepts and skills throughout:

- (1) Democracy – in particular how do individual citizens really get to influence decision-makers and those in powerful positions whether they are in government, business, public services or other organisations?
- (2) Rights - including political rights and duties such as the right to voice your opinion, participate in campaigns, undertake political actions versus responsibilities to consider others; duties to be active rather than a 'free-rider' in society.



**Association
for Citizenship
Teaching**

(I) Active citizenship involves active learning

Active citizenship is a teaching approach that uses active learning to equip pupils to take informed and responsible action aimed at making a positive difference in their communities.

Active learning is a technique or set of approaches designed to encourage pupils to be actively engaged as they plan, undertake and reflect on their learning.

<i>Active learning</i>	<i>Active citizenship</i>
Active learning is the opposite of passive learning where the learner is involved in the process of gaining and constructing knowledge. Active learning involves new experiences (doing and observing) and an on-going dialogue about learning (with self and others). Interaction with others is a key part of active learning. Active learning can, but does not necessarily involve physical movement but does require an active brain engagement with the issues.	Active citizenship involves people acting together or individually to achieve a change or benefit in society or to resist an unwanted change. Pupils undertake activities they have planned to address issues or problems of concern to communities. Through active citizenship pupils develop the confidence and conviction that they can act with others, have influence and make a positive difference in society.

There are a range of terms that are used to describe different kinds of active citizenship:

- *Community involvement* is a term used by Bernard Crick in 1998 when he set out the case for including citizenship education in the National Curriculum for England. Community involvement is 'learning about and becoming helpfully involved in the life and concerns of their communities, including learning through community involvement and service to the community'. (Crick, 1998)
- *Volunteering* is usually an unpaid activity where people give their time to do something of benefit to others in the community or society. The best examples of volunteering involve students undertaking research about the role and purpose of the voluntary action they propose to take and evaluating their learning from the experience.
- *Social action* can be defined as practical actions in the service of others. It involves activities carried out by individuals or groups that are not for profit and aim to bring about a change or benefit for communities. This might involve giving time and/or money. The National Citizen Service (NCS) define social action as 'meaningful and realistic projects that involve people from the community and deliver a tangible benefit along with the opportunity for social mixing'.
- A *Social enterprise* is a not-for-profit organisation with defined social goals. Any surplus income is used to contribute to making a positive difference to the community, be that locally, nationally or internationally. Students may be involved in setting up a social enterprise as an active citizenship or social action project.

"No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime."

Kofi Annan

(II) A continuum of participation and actions

As well as a range of types of active citizenship there can be variations in the level of participation and nature of actions. These variations include:

Complexity - complexities of issues being addressed eg from raising awareness of a need to investigating a complex and controversial issue affecting individuals, groups and communities in different ways

Nature and sophistication of participation eg raising money for a charity or volunteering to help others, to planning a detailed campaign

to address an issue of concern

Student autonomy, independence and leadership eg from teacher directed or supported actions to entirely student led

Community involvement eg from consultation with a range of community members to full and direct engagement and involvement of them in the actions undertaken

Location eg from those that are entirely school based activities to those undertaken off-site in a range of places in the wider community.

(III) Characteristics of effective active citizenship

Active citizenship including volunteering can take many forms. However often, successful projects will include most of the following features:

- addresses a real need or issue in a chosen community
- is realistic and has achievable outcomes that the students are committed to
- is student led, wherever possible
- has adequate resources and support to ensure the project can take place
- allows for input by the community and enables students to work with the community
- ensures time and space to reflect on and celebrate the achievements of the project
- provides on-going opportunities for students to contribute to different forms of responsible action.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

(IV) GCSE Case Studies

The GCSE Citizenship Studies qualification is widely used in schools across England to give public recognition to student attainment in the subject. The qualification involves practical opportunities for students to take forward active citizenship projects. Four recent examples of GCSE projects are described below:

- Students were concerned about rising local crime statistics. They decided to undertake a group activity to investigate the issue and share their research findings through a school-based event. The students were keen to challenge the perception that crime is only committed by young people in the area. The event included members of the school and wider community including the local police, local councillor and youth worker.
- Students wanted to find out about the problem of sewage entering the sea and the impact on tourism and the local economy with the aim of raising awareness of the health risks to local people. Contact was made with government, the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Commerce and Employment. The research findings were disseminated to local residents and shared with an environmental action group who used the research in their campaign.
- Students began an enquiry into racism in sport. They worked as a group to organise a whole school event to share their research and promote understanding of diversity in the wider community. The event involved a range of cultural activities to explore the diversity of the local community and social inclusion in society.
- Students organised a campaign and petition with local people to improve road safety on their high street following a number of fatal accidents. The project involved research, lobbying the local MP and organising an event and presentation about the campaign during a school assembly.

For further information about the GCSE for Citizenship Studies go to the Awarding Organisation websites:

AQA <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/citizenship>

Edexcel <http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/citizenship-studies/Pages/default.aspx>

OCR <http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse-citizenship-studies-j269-j029-from-2012/>

(V) Teaching ideas

Citizenship should give all students the experience of taking part in different types of active citizenship and volunteering within the school and wider community. Experiences of actions might include:

- **organising a meeting or event** to discuss or highlight an issue
- **developing a consultation exercise** about an issue and disseminating the findings to those in positions of influence and the communities affected
- **creating an information display** in school or the wider community
- **setting up a petition or campaign**, perhaps using social media
- **contributing to a community project** to renovate or improve a local facility
- **setting up or contributing to the work of a student or youth council**
- **raising awareness of a concern by writing to those in authority**, for example a local councillor, MP or organisation about an issue, or publishing a blog, writing a letter to the media or creating a newsletter
- **raising money** to support a cause or to enable them to take another form of action.

Assessment

If you link the teaching to concepts then assessment should reflect the extent to which students are able to use apply their knowledge and understanding whilst developing skills.

A reasonable outcome for KS3

Pupils give examples of key features of democracy and explain the roles of citizens and others in holding those in power to account. They begin to evaluate the role and effectiveness of citizens and groups and give simple examples of the ways in which problems and issues in communities can be addressed and improvements achieved. They work with others to plan and carry out actions aimed at making a difference to the lives of others. They express an informed opinion about their own role and impact of the active citizenship and voluntary activities they have undertaken. They explain and begin to evaluate the impact of the actions taken they have undertaken.

A reasonable outcome for KS4

Pupils identify areas for improvement in their communities and the operation of democracy. In their discussions they appreciate that democracy is not simply 'majority rule' and decision-making systems but must also protect minorities. They research and weigh up different sources of evidence and make a persuasive case for a course action and/or propose alternatives that might address their concerns. They explain and evaluate different ways in which individuals and groups of citizens act together in the effective operation of democracy. They work with others to negotiate, plan and carry out actions aimed at improving or influencing the community and, after reflecting on the extent of their success, suggest what they might do next.

Further teaching ideas and resources

National Citizen Service (NCS)

ACT has produced a set of curriculum materials and teaching activities to promote active learning and active citizenship and to help prepare students to participate in the Nation Citizen Service programme. NCS is a unique, government-backed programme of activities for 16 and 17 year olds in England. Participants experience new challenges and learn new skills through team building exercises and outdoor activities, while making new friends and contributing to their community. The programme involves residential and home-based experiences and gives students the opportunity to give something back to the community through a social action project. The NCS programme is easy to join and is available during the summer, autumn and spring each year through a number of providers. There is no cost to schools to get involved.

The curriculum materials include:

Key Stage 3 activities

Activity 1: Working together

Activity 2: What's the problem?

Activity 3: Getting involved

The first activity focuses on leadership and working with people known less well to you. The second helps pupils identify school-based citizenship issues that need solutions. The third introduces National Citizen Service and encourages pupils to find out more about it.

Key Stage 4 activities

Activity 1: Who does what

Activity 2: Finding out

Activity 3: Persuasion

The first activity introduces pupils to the wide range of voluntary groups operating in localities around the country. These have been selected to illustrate the diversity of different needs being addressed by the voluntary sector. The second encourages pupils to consider the various research techniques that can be used when carrying out a social action project. The third takes the form of 'Dragons' Den'

in which pupils pitch the need to carry out some social action to a panel of experts.

A teaching guide including information and advice on controversial and sensitive issues, running a successful debate and how to work effectively with the wider community.

'Make it happen!' *Social Action toolkit* is designed for use by learners with activities and tips for organising successful social action undertaken as part of their citizenship curriculum. The toolkit has also been design to fit with the requirements for GCSE where that is used.

You can download these resources at

www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/ncs

Active Citizens FE offer a range of free materials that support effective volunteering and active citizenship including:

'More than profit: work, social enterprise and citizenship, Post-16 Citizenship Support Programme'

'More than volunteering: active citizenship through youth volunteering'

'Getting the show on the road: skills for planning and running citizenship events'

'For the sake of argument: discussion and debating skills in citizenship'

'A case for action? Skills for active citizenship research'

All are available to download at www.activecitizensfe.org