

## **ACT submission to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities call for evidence - 30 November 2020.**

### **Q4. How should the school curriculum adapt in response to the ethnic diversity of the country?**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT) is the professional subject association for all teachers and educators engaged in Citizenship education. ACT was founded in 2001 and is a membership organisation and registered charity.

1.2 ACT's vision is for a strong and vibrant democracy enhanced by young people who are educated with the citizenship knowledge, understanding, skills and experience they need to play an effective role as active citizens; and who, together, can take action to create a more equal, fair and just society for all.

1.3 ACT's focus is on supporting teachers and the teaching of Citizenship through provision of professional networks, training and CPD, national teaching conferences, a journal 'Teaching Citizenship', teaching resources and information on the association's website ([www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk](http://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk)). Funded project work and consultancy also contribute to meeting ACT's core objectives. ACT's work is shaped by a committed Council of Teachers who are unpaid volunteers and is governed by a Board of Trustees.

#### **2. The aims of Citizenship**

2.1 A vibrant and healthy democracy in which every citizen feels their voice matters and they can play an active part in decision-making and public life needs young people who have had the benefit of effective Citizenship education. Democracy is precious and Citizenship education is vital in helping young people to understand and make sense of the complex world around them and equipping them to participate actively within democratic society. Education in Citizenship is simply too important to be left to chance. General education through the school and National Curriculum must prepare children for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and this cannot be achieved without an entitlement for every child to Citizenship education.

'The national curriculum provides pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens.' (National Curriculum, Department for Education, 2014)

2.2 It is worth noting that Citizenship was first introduced as a national curriculum foundation subject in 2002, in part as a response to the very public concerns following the tragic murder of Stephen Lawrence. The McPherson report recommended government should

‘enforce anti-racist policies through codes of practice and by amendment of the National Curriculum, to provide education which deals with racism awareness and valuing cultural diversity in the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society in which we live.’ (para 6.56)

The government at that time placed the introduction of Citizenship as central in its response to the inquiry as the subject through which anti-racist education should be included in the curriculum.

2.3 In 2008 the national curriculum, and Citizenship in particular, was updated in the light of reforms recommended by Sir Keith Ajegbo, then Headteacher of Deptford Green School and now chair of the Stephen Lawrence Trust, to increase teaching about identities and diversity and community cohesion. Citizenship is now on its third iteration; the most recent curriculum having been subject to the conservative reforms undertaken in 2014 when some of the 2008 additions were removed. The subject remains a part of the national curriculum in secondary education and there is a GCSE in Citizenship Studies, as well as several other qualifications, available for schools to use to recognise pupil attainment.

2.4 Many teachers and pupils agree that Citizenship education has a wide-ranging and important contribution to every child’s general education including developing their knowledge and understanding of the UK as a diverse, multicultural, and democratic society. In our 2016 project ‘Building Resilience’<sup>1</sup> funded by the Home Office, students themselves saw Citizenship knowledge as a powerful form of resilience to extremism in society. During the evaluation of this, we heard from a Year 12 student at a school in Kent who commented, ‘Citizenship is important as it increases understanding of the world around us....We need to become critical thinkers and find good sources of information. Citizenship helps us do this. Topics like democracy, voting and educating us on real news, not myths, around refugees etc. is really important.’ A Year 8 student at the same school said, ‘We would never get these topics elsewhere in the curriculum ...Citizenship helps you prepare for the world more than other subjects, it is real life stuff we learn’. At a school in Portsmouth, a Year 10 student commented, ‘It is equally important as Maths, English and Science’.

### **3. Diversifying the curriculum - teaching equality and diversity in Citizenship**

3.1 Much of the current debate about decolonising and diversifying the curriculum has focussed on history; but the debate needs to go beyond retrospective adjustments to the choices policy makers or schools make about the range of significant people and events from the past that are included in teaching. In many ways Citizenship picks up where history ends. Citizenship education plays an essential role in developing knowledge and understanding about the world today through teaching politics, democracy, power, the law, human rights, justice and the economy, as well as the changing nature of communities, identities, diversity in the UK and the UK’s relations with the wider world. Pupils learn the knowledge required to think critically about complex issues, evaluate sources, weigh evidence, problem solve, take part in debates, advocate their viewpoint, sustain arguments and take forward democratic actions with others on matters of concern as part of learning to participate responsibly in democracy.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/act-building-resilience-project>

3.2 Black History Month is often cited as the main opportunity for students to learn about black civil rights campaigners. However, many agree with us that we need to go **Beyond Black History month**<sup>2</sup>. In Britain, many students are as likely to learn about Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela as they are black British civil rights campaigners, activists, politicians, and leaders. However a well-planned and taught citizenship curriculum enables a more diverse curriculum with opportunities for students to see people from diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious communities as civic role models both in the UK and internationally. Over time pupils build understanding of the diverse and changing world around them, a sense of social justice and moral responsibility and mutual understanding and respect. Essentially Citizenship education is key to helping all pupils regardless of their legal status, background, culture, or beliefs to see that they have voice and a positive role to play in shaping a more inclusive, democratic society.

3.3 A key issue for Citizenship is the disproportionate value placed on Citizenship education as a subject in the school curriculum. In the 2014 national curriculum review, the government retained Citizenship as a distinct national curriculum foundation subject at key stages 3 and 4 with a GCSE in Citizenship Studies. Last summer over 20,000 pupils attained the GCSE, an increase of 11% on the previous year and the fourth successive year of growth. The recent reforms to the Ofsted inspection framework placed greater emphasis on inspection of the quality of education based on the national curriculum. Yet a recent freedom of information request showed that Ofsted have not yet undertaken a single 'deep dive' detailed inspection of Citizenship in any school since September 2019. While we know through our own monitoring and research of the subject some schools place a high value on the subject and see Citizenship education as fundamental to providing a broad and balanced curriculum, in others it has been marginalised and is chronically under resourced. This imbalance and the lack of available Ofsted data makes it almost impossible to assess the consistency of Citizenship education across schools nationally or to comment on the quality of education that pupils receive.

3.4 We urgently need to ensure that **all pupils in all schools** receive their entitlement to good quality Citizenship teaching in line with the requirements set out in the **DFE Programmes of Study for Citizenship**. The requirements include specific teaching about diversity, community, equality and the consequences of discrimination including racism, and these (summarised below) are the basis for developing a good quality Citizenship curriculum in this area. However, teachers need to translate these requirements into a well-planned and sequenced Citizenship curriculum. Teachers need the appropriate Citizenship subject knowledge and confidence to bring teaching to life with topical issues which may be sensitive and controversial in their nature. Citizenship is a contemporary subject that requires teachers to regularly update their teaching by making good choices about the sources, case studies, statistics, news and information they use to unpack concepts and ideas in a balanced and impartial way to ensure pupils build and deepen their subject knowledge and understanding over time. When global events such as the Black Lives Matters movement happen, it is the Citizenship curriculum and the Citizenship teacher who creates the space for the issues to be examined and discussed in a safe learning environment.

3.5 DFE Citizenship Programme of Study Citizenship includes:

Key stage 1

Pupils should be taught

- that they belong to various groups and communities, such as family and school

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<sup>2</sup> This is the title of a teacher CPD programme being run by ACT during 2020-21:

[www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/news/02112020-1853/new-beyond-black-history-month-cpd-teachers](http://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/news/02112020-1853/new-beyond-black-history-month-cpd-teachers)

- to identify and respect the differences and similarities between people
- that family and friends should care for each other
- that there are different types of teasing and bullying, that bullying is wrong, and how to get help to deal with bullying.

#### Key stage 2

Pupils should be taught

- to realise the consequences of anti-social and aggressive behaviours, such as bullying and racism, on individuals and communities
- that there are different kinds of responsibilities, rights, and duties at home, at school and in the community
- to resolve differences by looking at alternatives, making decisions and explaining choices
- to appreciate the range of national, regional, religious, and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom.

#### key stage 3

Pupils should be taught

- the precious liberties enjoyed by the citizens of the United Kingdom (including the Equality Act 2010)
- the nature of rules and laws and the justice system, including the role of the police and the operation of courts and tribunals
- 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.

#### key stage 4

Pupils should be taught

- local, regional, and international governance and the United Kingdom's relations with the rest of Europe, the Commonwealth, the United Nations and the wider world
- human rights and international law (including global issues such as migration, trade, and aid)
- the legal system in the UK, different sources of law and how the law helps society deal with complex problems
- diverse national, regional, religious, and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding
- the 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.

#### **GCSE Citizenship Studies**

3.6 Alongside the key stage 4 national curriculum, schools can opt to offer their students GCSE Citizenship Studies. The DFE subject content requires teaching about 'Identities and diversity in UK society' to include:

- the complex and diverse nature of identities of people living and working together in UK society, and the factors that affect individual, group, national and global identities, and the concept of multiple identities

- that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is comprised of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and the impact of this on identity debates
- the changing composition of different communities, the recent impact, challenges and benefits of migration, and the movement of people over time to and from the UK
- the need for mutual respect and understanding in a diverse society and the values that underpin democratic society.

3.7 In recent GCSE Citizenship Studies exam papers candidates have been required to respond to questions on topics including identity, diversity, equality, disparities and migration including:

Explain two reasons why many migrants from the Commonwealth have preferred to move to the UK than to other European countries (4 marks)

Using an example explain what is meant by multiple identities (2 marks)

State one reason why there may be inequalities between UK citizens from different backgrounds (1 mark)

Explain why it is important for the UK Government to collect and publish information about race disparity (4 marks)

Essay: Law in the UK does not keep up with changing attitudes, values and beliefs, nor does it reflect the changing composition of the UK population. How far do you agree with this view? (15 marks)

#### **4. Closing the 'Civic Gap' through the Citizenship curriculum**

4.1 One of the central purposes of the subject of citizenship is to educate pupils about the democracy and the political system they are growing up in so that they become informed, active and responsible citizens who understand their political rights and civic duties and responsibilities. The 2017 Government Race Disparity Audit shows whilst black British citizens are as likely to vote as white citizens, and more likely to volunteer locally, there is a worrying trend towards younger black citizens feeling that the state system is unfair. In addition research led by Bryony Hoskins in the same year found children from all class backgrounds had equal access to citizenship education and this did have a positive effect on attitudes towards democratic participation. In fact, the cumulative effect of citizenship education throughout secondary schooling was particularly significant for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, leading to the conclusion that citizenship education 'has the ability to reduce social disparities in political engagement'. Engaging in local issues and learning about political campaigns and processes through the Citizenship curriculum helps to ensure pupils channel these frustrations into productive, active citizenship and local action.

#### **5. Exemplifying best practice in Citizenship through the Oak National Academy**

5.1 ACT is the curriculum partner for Citizenship at the Oak National Academy. The curriculum we developed for Oak is based on an important first principal to:

‘Consider the contexts and diverse backgrounds of all pupils and any issues that will be particularly sensitive or controversial for them when planning and sequencing lessons.’

The intention here is to model for schools the fundamental principles on which to plan a rigorous Citizenship curriculum that both considers current events in society and equips pupils with the knowledge needed to interpret and understand the society they live in and how this can affect them and their communities. Curriculum planning principles also encourage schools to consider how to ensure Citizenship is rigorous and challenging, build the essential knowledge as a foundation, makes use of topical and controversial issues in a safe learning environment, and sets high expectations.

5.2 With these principles in mind 150 lessons and teacher resources have been developed including on topics that address and exemplify how to teach about racism and inequality in society as well as all the other key concepts in the subject. See <https://classroom.thnational.academy>

## 6. Recommendations

4.1 Schools need to know Government take seriously the issue of ensuring the curriculum reflects the ethnic diversity of the country and equips all pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life. This should include clear expectations about how Citizenship plays a critical role in a broad and balanced curriculum and teaching about an inclusive, fair and just, democratic society for all, in which racism and all forms of discrimination are not accepted.

We recommend four essential actions are taken:

- I. Ofsted need to undertake an urgent programme of inspections into the curriculum including ‘deep dives’ into Citizenship and other subjects to assess the impact of teaching race equality and ethnic diversity and promoting social cohesion.
- II. DFE should update curriculum guidance for subjects highlighting where Citizenship contributes to teaching about the diversity of the UK and important concepts relating to politics, justice, equality, and rights for all citizens.
- III. All initial teacher training courses should require a module on Citizenship education to support new teachers in developing their subject knowledge and pedagogy in relation to teaching about controversial and sensitive issues and in promoting equality, diversity, and citizenship.
- IV. DFE should provide support to subject associations including ACT to develop CPD for existing teachers on adapting, updating, and diversifying the curriculum to reflect the changing ethnic diversity of the country, the importance of teaching equality and promoting social cohesion.

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## References

Association for Citizenship Teaching [www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk](http://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk)

DFE Primary Citizenship Programme of Study <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/citizenship-programmes-of-study-for-key-stages-1-and-2>

DFE Secondary national curriculum Citizenship programme of study <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-citizenship-programmes-of-study>

DFE GCSE Citizenship Studies – subject content <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-citizenship-studies>